



A
MONSTROUS
CHRISTMAS
IN THE
CAMP



LILY MAYNE

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Warning: *Explicit sexual content, 18+ only, mentions of death and grief, alcohol consumption, pimple popping, blood and pus, restraint, use of sex toys, very brief mention of Moth's past abuse, mentions of anxiety, chastity, lingerie, graphic description of death, mentions of nausea and an instance of vomiting, inhuman genitalia.*

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ANCHOR

“Alright, everyone.” I raised my voice to be heard over the din of all the raiders murmuring excitedly to each other as we gathered in the diner. “I know we’re all excited for the party later, but we’ve got to go through the normal camp stuff first.”

That was me—the stick in the mud. The one who had to reel everyone back in so things didn’t get out of hand, so that twenty years of staying safe out here didn’t turn to shit in an instant.

It wasn’t that I minded it, as such. I was good at it. I liked lists and schedules and taking inventory. I liked *order*, and I was good at keeping it. But I knew it made me the boring one. Cat had been the calm figure of authority in the camp. A natural born leader who people instinctively turned to, because he was levelheaded and good-natured and easygoing. He was good at dealing with the raiders—calming them down, diffusing tense situations, getting them to see that we were only acting in everyone’s best interests.

But Cat wasn’t here anymore. So now both jobs fell to me. And I fucking hated it.

Everyone quieted down, raiders and beasties shuffling and turning to face me before going silent. Every time I looked at all the monsters who were now a part of our camp, I wondered if Cat would have made the same decisions that I had. I knew some of the raiders hadn’t been happy to have them here, but I’d given them all a chance to have their say. A fair vote. What else could I have done?

Besides, I hadn’t wanted to split up any of these new monster-human couples. Not just because the thought of losing Ghost and Rig and Lilac had been painful, but because—well, who was I to stand in the way of love? I’d experienced it, and I’d lost it. I wasn’t going to put someone else through that.

Pushing back the painful thoughts of Bug, and Cat, and all the other people I'd lost, I cleared my throat and gripped my clipboard tighter.

"Okay, so there's not much to go through. Everyone's wall shifts will be short tonight so that we all get a chance to enjoy the party. But that means *everyone* has a shift, and I'm sorry, but no drinking until you've done yours."

There were a couple of groans and mutters, so I quickly continued. "A few of you who don't drink have offered to take the last shifts in the early morning." Giving Aury and Ghost a quick smile, I said, "Aury and Ghost are doing a couple, so make sure you thank them for that. And I'll be up there at dawn."

I wasn't going to drink. No way could I drink. I'd be too tense. Our camp was pretty quiet most the time, but tonight we'd be a conspicuous beacon of light and sound in the pressing blackness of the Wastes. All it would take was one military helicopter to fly overhead and get interested, and that would be bad for everyone.

But I wasn't going to stop everyone letting loose and having fun after an awful year. We always celebrated Christmas—though usually much earlier than this, actually at the right time—but it hadn't felt right to do anything when Seraph had been in so much pain in his cage outside of the camp wall. But it was typically a quieter affair, and we all gathered in the diner because it was too cold to be outside.

Now, the air was warmer, the atmosphere in the camp was nicer and calmer than it had been in months, and Rig had gone all out for this year's celebration. Edin had already excitedly told me that he was going to get a huge tree to sit smack-dab in the centre of the camp.

"I know everyone wants to have fun, and we have a lot of booze courtesy of Rig and Gloam"—I nodded at the bottles and cans already lined up on the counter, everything they'd brought back from Mary's place—"but try and keep your wits about you, yeah? No wandering off into the Wastes. No climbing up to the wall and falling over the edge."

God, I wouldn't be able to relax at all. I'd probably end up sitting by the camp entrance like a guard dog, making sure no one drunkenly decided to check out the view from the wall and plummeted to their death.

"Once you've done your shift on the wall, return your weapon to me and I'll put it in the bar." I didn't think anyone was stupid or careless enough to brandish a gun about while they were drunk, but I *had* witnessed enough stupidity over my life to err on the side of caution. "Other than that... have fun."

Nodding at Rig and Gloam, I smiled and said, "Once you've done your chores, you can help Rig and Gloam decorate the camp if you want. Wall schedule will be here." I held up the sheet of paper before putting it down on the counter. "Unless there's anything else anyone wants to bring up while we're all here, we're done. Thanks, everyone."

Everyone started shuffling, turning to leave. Hunter was muttering to Charlie as they left the diner with Moth, but Edin beamed at me and ambled over.

"Would you like to come and pick the tree, Anchor?" he rumbled in his deep voice. "We will be going into the forest later to find a good one. The *biggest* one."

I chuckled, nodding at Rusty and Nun as they wandered over to check the schedule. "I trust your judgement, big guy."

I wasn't sure if I *actually* trusted Edin's judgement most of the time, but it wasn't like he could cause much damage picking out a tree.

He grinned, revealing his little fangs. "We will bring back the best tree for your camp. Make sure it is a fine party before many of us leave."

My smile faltered, an ache tightening my chest. I tried not to think about all the people who were going to be leaving—setting off for the

monster world to go to some weird sacred place for them to get married or something. I worried about how the camp was going to manage without Ghost and Rig and Lilac in the time they were gone, but that wasn't what hurt.

They were my family. Aury and Gloam were now too, though I didn't know them anywhere near as well, and I hadn't spoken to Seraph much, but he was so important to Lilac. God, *Lilac*. How was I going to survive without Lilac? Now that Cat was gone, he was my only true friend here. The only one I could be honest with—the only one I could talk to about all my fears and worries.

Thinking about them all leaving made me want to hand over the reins to someone else and just take off. Try the Wastes out on my own, see how long I made it. Bug and I had made unrealistic, half-hearted plans before—just silly, whispered conversations in the middle of the night about going out there and seeing everything. Exploring all the places that had been abandoned by humanity.

She'd always been adventurous, always gently trying to get me to loosen up and relax. I wasn't good at relaxing, but my tightly-wound nature had complemented her free spirit, somehow. We'd worked. We'd been inseparable, ever since Cat and I found her just a few years after we'd built our camp, when there were only about five of us here. We'd found her on a scavenging run, but she hadn't been scared or desperate for her life when we came across her in an old grocery store. She'd given us an easy, relaxed smile as she stuffed packets and tins into her rucksack, asking us where we were headed.

Her gorgeous dark eyes had sparked with intrigue when we told her about our camp, and she'd accepted our offer to come and see it—and maybe join it. We'd already known we needed more people to keep it running. On the long walk back, she'd told us that she'd been on an exchange programme from Singapore when the monsters came. She said she'd been heading to one of the military's safe zones with a big group when she decided that she didn't want to end up crammed in with so many people. So she'd turned around and

headed back, deciding she'd take her chances alone—see how long she survived, how much she could experience while she still could.

I'd been half in love with her already by the time we reached the camp. I'd been young and awkward then, ganglier and skinnier than I was now, and consciously aware that I tended to rub people up the wrong way because of my bossy nature. I was convinced that she wouldn't like me because I'd already been able to tell how different we were.

But she had. And she'd stayed. She'd stayed with me.

Sometimes it felt impossible that she'd died the way she had. I knew we were living through an apocalypse and all, but someone dying from a simple cut—that seemed medieval. Unthinkable. Apollo had been with us by then, but there was nothing he could do. He'd tried to keep the tiny cut clean when Bug finally noticed that it looked a little puffy and inflamed, but he didn't have the equipment or medicine to fend off blood poisoning.

The grief still made it hard to breathe sometimes. Knowing she'd died in so much pain, and so needlessly. It had been years, but it hadn't got all that much easier.

Realising Edin was still standing in front of me, I forced a smile onto my face. "It'll be a great party. Thanks for all your help with it."

I had to pull myself together. I couldn't be the sad sack moping around the camp, ruining the mood for everyone. Taking a breath, I glanced down at the clipboard that was almost permanently glued to my hands.

"Better go take inventory of our food stores now that Bo and Daisy have started cooking for the party." I gave Edin another smile. "Have fun getting the tree."

He grinned at me and turned to amble out of the diner, hustling over to where Hunter was standing with Aury and Ghost. He pressed a smacking kiss to the side of Hunter's head, rubbing his cheek over

his short hair as Hunter rolled his eyes but smiled. I watched for a few seconds, before turning to head through the kitchen to the back door.

Keep myself busy. I was good at that too.

WYN

My lip curled with disgust as I watched the camp below from the door to our room.

There were just so *many* of them. Little humans scurrying about, all working together, talking. *Laughing*. What did they have to laugh about anyway?

Why didn't they ever fucking shut up?

They were all so annoying and talkative and... *excitable* about the stupidest things. Like the boxes of gaudy decorations the aytarin's lover had pulled out of the old bar. I recognised them from before the tear. Humans would put trees in their houses and cover them in junk and string lights everywhere. They would give meaningless gifts to each other and eat too much food and do all these weird little rituals, year after year, again and again. The same songs playing in their homes. The same meals on their tables.

Apparently, this camp still observed the tradition, even though I had heard Lilac—the only half-decent human here aside from Danny—telling Seraph that it was normally done earlier than this, when there was still snow and the days were shorter.

And now we were stuck here for it. And Danny had already said that he wanted to *take part*. A hiss tightened my throat, but I tamped it back as I watched the aytarin help his lover heave even *more* boxes out of the old bar. The other humans were already gathering around, pulling out faded decorations and threadbare tinsel as they laughed and talked, all their faces painfully dull, all their voices grating and monotonous.

Sometimes I wondered how it was possible that Danny was human. He wasn't anything like them. He was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. He was sweet in a way that I thought I would have

despised, but instead, it just made me burn with the urge to protect him. To keep him safe.

Considering how clumsy he was, I was glad I had the ability to do so well. But even so, he was still graceful in his own way. His long limbs and silky hair and softly accented voice. The way his eyes shone when he smiled at me, in the way he smiled at no one else. His warm skin pressed against mine. His steady breaths against my neck while he slept.

No. Danny was nothing like the rest of them. He was perfect. He was beautiful and elegant and—

“Can you pop this giant pimple on my back?”

I sighed, turning to step back into our room and close the door behind me. “Yes, my sweet.”

Danny was standing topless by the bed, twisting in a circle as he tried to peer at a big red bump on his shoulder blade, topped with a yellow-white head. My fingers twitched as I approached. I would never admit it, but there was something quite... satisfying about popping the little spots he occasionally got on his back.

“Jesus, it’s massive.” He was still trying to look at it over his shoulder, even though there was a mirror on the wall beside him. He grinned at me as I shoved back my hood. “Looks ready to blow. It’ll be a good one.”

I grunted, gently forcing him to stop moving with his back to me. The spot looked angry. I could practically see it throbbing. He was right—this *would* be a good one. Crouching a little to get a better look, I placed my thumbs either side of it and carefully squeezed, trying not to hurt him.

It exploded, pus shooting out.

And splattering on my face.

“Holy shit, I *heard* it pop.” Danny laughed in disbelief, peering back and going still when he saw me frozen in place. There was a lump of pus on my lip. I could *feel* it.

“Oh no,” Danny croaked, covering his mouth with his hand and trying to muffle a snort behind it.

My eyes shot up to his, searing with the promise of retribution if he dared to laugh. I didn’t dare speak—I did *not* want to open my mouth—so I straightened up as calmly as I could and walked over to the roll of tissue paper on the dresser.

With my back to Danny, I tore off a square and frantically wiped at my mouth and chin, trying to suppress a shudder when the tissue came away dotted with pus and tiny specks of blood. I didn’t care about the blood. But the *pus*.

“Wyn,” Danny said hesitantly from behind me, voice tight with suppressed laughter. “Baby, you okay?”

“I’m fine,” I scraped out, scrubbing my sleeve over my face. I could still *feel* it.

Warm hands slipped under my coat to palm my back as Danny appeared beside me, resting his cheek on my shoulder. “Aw, come on. You’ve seen me poop before. This isn’t any more gross than that.”

“You have never *pooped* directly onto my face,” I gritted out, but all that did was make Danny snort with laughter again.

“That’s true.” He turned me to face him, giving me a big smile. “Don’t worry, it’s all gone.” Then he paused, before reaching up to wipe something off my neck. “All gone,” he repeated brightly.

I shuddered, but forced myself to stop wiping my chin. “Does your back feel better?”

“Yeah, so thanks.” He peered back. “But it’s bleeding.”

I ripped off another square of tissue and walked around him to press it to the spot, narrowing my eyes at it just innocently sitting there on his back. After exploding onto my *face*.

“So.” Danny peered back to give me a winning smile. “Excited about Christmas later?”

I grunted.

He laughed. “It’ll be fun. And you’ve got Edin to hang out with. Plus you’ll get gifts!”

“I don’t want gifts,” I muttered.

“People like giving gifts.” Danny waved his hand. “And we’ve gotten presents for everyone else.”

“No,” I said immediately, pulling the tissue away and crumpling it in my fist. “*You’ve* gotten presents for other people. Not us. Don’t say they’re from *us*. Don’t put my name on them or anything.”

Danny turned, frowning at me. “But you went and got them.”

“Because you *made* me.”

Danny had sent me out with a list of things he wanted to give to the camp. I’d had to go to a city to get everything—including *gift wrap*—and now the stupid pile of presents sat in the corner of our depressing little room. My lip curled every time I looked at them.

“I’m not gonna take all the credit for them.” Danny wrapped his arms around my neck, grinning up at me slyly. “Everyone will know you had to go and get them anyway. So they’ll either think you care just a little, or they’ll think you just do everything I say.”

I cocked my head, wondering which I preferred. Definitely the latter. It was glaringly obvious that Danny had me wrapped around his little finger, and I didn’t give a single shit.

I *did* give a shit about other people thinking I gave a shit about them though.

“Just make it clear that you forced me to go and get them,” I grated, sliding my palms up his bare back—making sure to avoid the big angry spot.

“Even the ones for Edin and Moth? And Seraph?”

I pursed my lips. “Those can be from us both.”

“What about the one for Chuck?”

“Fine,” I gritted out. “That one can be from us both too.”

“And I know you still like to pretend that you don’t like Lilac, but—”

“Just—” I rubbed my eyes with thumb and forefinger. “Fine, just say they’re all from both of us.”

Danny grinned, lunging up to kiss me. “I’ll make it up to you,” he murmured against my mouth. “Seeing as I’m kind of destroying your reputation. The one you *claim* not to care about.”

“I *don’t* care,” I insisted. “But... how will you make it up to me?”

Although, I already had some ideas. I pictured the black gift box hidden under the bed, and my mouth stretched into an evil grin.

“What’re you smilin’ about?” Danny asked me suspiciously.

“Nothing, sweet.”

CHARLIE

The night of festivities for the camp hadn't even started yet, and I already had my hand down Moth's pants.

See, it was just kind of impossible for me *not* to mess with him when I saw him across the camp being all arrogant and aloof while talking to others, when just last night he'd been a panting, sweating, begging mess beneath me in bed. A mess that I loved very much. A mess that I took great pleasure in turning *into* a mess.

Moth was standing outside the old bar talking to Wyn and Edin, slouched against the wall with his ankles crossed and a cocky smirk on his face as Edin said something and gestured wildly. Moth laughed, and I heard a faint huffy sound come from the Soul Eater's hood. Honestly, when Wyn laughed, I kind of pictured his face remaining frozen. No expression. Just that little huff coming from his mouth, like a robot attempting to seem human.

Deciding I'd left my boyfriend alone for long enough, I started sauntering over, a grin already curving one corner of my mouth. Moth glanced over at my approach and straightened, his eyes darting a little nervously from me to Wyn. I resisted the urge to roll my eyes. He was *always* convinced that I was gonna purposefully try to embarrass him in front of Wyn. Which, I mean, yeah. Fair.

"Well hey there," I drawled when I reached the trio. I could practically feel Wyn's eyes rolling as Edin shot me a big beaming smile.

"Hello, Charlie," he rumbled as Moth leaned in to give me a kiss, shuffling closer to me automatically. It always made my heart squeeze when he did that.

But he went ramrod stiff when I casually slipped my arm around his waist under his coat, then promptly snuck my hand down the back of his pants.

“Excited for the party later?” I asked brightly, giving no outward indication that I was currently squeezing the base of Moth’s tail.

I could see his face turning bright pink in the corner of my eye, but he stayed silent as Edin chuckled. Wyn snorted derisively, crossing his arms as he leaned back against the bar and turned his hood away.

“Yes,” Edin told me with an excited smile. “I have already asked Rig if I can be Santa again. I was worried Gloam would want to do it, but he assured me that he is happy for me to play the Christmas man.”

I nodded earnestly, smoothing my fingertips back and forth over the underside of Moth’s tail. He let out a tiny strangled sound, shifting on his feet.

“You did great before,” I told Edin, then smirked at him. “Gonna give Hunter another dick rock? Seeing as he had to leave his behind at the homestead?”

“I have been looking,” Edin told me solemnly, brows pulling low. “Scouring the area for one that adequately portrays the might of my cock. No luck yet.”

I tutted in sympathy while trailing my fingers a little ways down Moth’s crack, then back up to massage the base of his tail. He was practically vibrating beside me, face bright pink, breaths coming faster.

“Don’t worry, buddy, he’ll be happy with whatever you give him.” Deciding to mess with Wyn a little—why not make it a double whammy?—I looked at the grumpy old bastard and added, “How about you, grandpa? Got a good gift for Danny?”

He hissed at me, the feral sound coming from the black depths of his hood. “I give Danny gifts all the time, *human*. And they are always good.”

“Well, he *did* tell me about the time you gave him something called a menstrual cup,” Edin said doubtfully.

Wyn went stiff, fingers twitching against his biceps. “That was a joke,” he muttered.

“Was it?” Edin’s head cocked. “Because he told me you were confused when he said he didn’t have the right parts to use it.”

“I thought it was—” Wyn let out a snarl. “Shut up, Edin.”

Moth was basically panting beside me now, because I hadn’t let up on messing with his tail for a second. Deciding to give him a moment of reprieve, I slid my hand down to his ass and squeezed. His butt cheeks clenched, tail trying to lash under his pants.

“What *have* you got Danny for his Christmas gift?” Edin asked curiously.

I could hear the smirk in Wyn’s voice when he rasped, “Something he will be opening in private.”

“Ooh, an item for fucking?” Edin asked eagerly, undeterred. “What is it? Can you get me one?”

I pursed my lips, resisting the urge to slyly ask Wyn if he was adding to his *collection*. Moth had reluctantly told me that he’d found Wyn in the same sex shop in the city, grabbing items from the shelves. From what Moth had described seeing in the mound of toys piled up in front of the Soul Eater, I could only imagine what those two got up to. Not that I tried to imagine it.

And it wasn’t like we were much better.

“As if I’m going to give you and your oafish human sex aids, Edin,” Wyn drawled, inspecting his blackened fingernails.

Edin pouted. “But you got those things for Gloam—”

“I am not a fucking sex toy courier, Edin,” Wyn snapped, then jabbed a sharp, blackened finger at me. “And *you*. Stop fucking molesting Moth in front of us.”

My hand finally went still as Moth choked out a barely audible, “Jesus Christ,” from beside me. Face flushed, he turned to glare at me as I sheepishly slipped my hand out of his pants.

“Can I talk to you?” he gripped my arm and dragged me away before I could reply.

Glancing back with a snicker, I saw Edin blinking owlishly at us while Wyn stooped and gestured over Chuck, no doubt to get back at me for the grandpa quip by, I don’t know, teaching her how to castrate me while I slept.

Moth pulled me all the way up the motel stairs and into our room, shoving me back against the door when it closed behind me.

“You are such a shithead,” he muttered, but crushed his mouth to mine before I could even come up with an innocent-ish response.

I grunted, trying not to grin against his lips. But then my mouth was *far* too busy anyway as Moth aggressively thrust his pierced tongue inside. His hands were already reaching between us, long fingers fumbling with my belt and fly. My cock perked up immediately, and I had a brief moment to wonder if I could convince him to put on the pillowcase tunic and leggings before this went any further.

But Moth was already tearing his mouth free and dropping to his knees, shoving my pants and underwear down to mid-thigh.

“Such a shithead,” he repeated, but followed it up by sucking my hardening cock into his mouth. My breath hitched, hips twitching as I reached down to thread my fingers through his pale hair. I licked my lips, groaning when he circled the head with his tongue.

“I can’t help it, slayer,” I rasped, gripping his hair tighter. “I see you out there being all cocky and smug and it just makes me so hot to

picture what you're like when we're alone. Like this. Needy and desperate and begging for it."

"I don't fucking beg." He glared up at me as he swiped his tongue up my length, eyelashes fluttering when my cock jerked.

I choked out a laugh, hips arching forward so he could reach my balls. "You beg all the time, and I fucking love it. You're so hot, Moth. You're perfect." A curt moan left me when he sucked one of my nuts into his mouth. "Shit, especially when you're doing this."

Abandoning my sac, he sucked my cock back into his mouth with a low, desperate moan and started bobbing his head, cheeks hollowing. The back of my head hit the door with a *thunk* as my thighs began to quake, fingers tightening in his hair.

"Fuck," I gasped, my eyes almost crossing when he sucked up my cock with a long, mindnumbingly tight draw. I was hard as nails now, leaking onto his tongue as he lavished the head with wet, seeking licks.

"T-touch yourself," I got out, moaning when pale eyes shot up to meet mine. Forcing a tiny smirk onto my face, I added, "I know you're already dripping wet, baby. Just from me playing with your tail out there."

Moth's brows furrowed into a glare, even as he sucked my cock back into his mouth. But his hands dropped from my hips and shot down to fumble with his fly. His hips jerked when he slid a hand into his underwear, eyes fluttering closed as a hoarse moan vibrated around my dick.

"Are you wet?" I murmured, even though I could hear that he was. It made my cock even harder, throbbing wildly against his tongue.

"Mmm." He sounded drugged but frantic, getting to that place where his brain shut off, as he masturbated feverishly and tried to swallow my cock like he'd receive a grand prize if he succeeded.

My chest was heaving, breaths loud and ragged in our quiet motel room. “Let me see,” I rasped. “Pull your pants down. I want to see you fucking yourself with your fingers.”

Moth shuddered, tongue winding around my cockhead, but then he pulled back and fisted my wet dick, stroking it slowly. I saw his throat bob with nerves—which meant I was possibly in for some self-conscious dirty talk—before his mouth twisted into a tiny smirk.

“You want to see?” he rasped, feathering his tongue over the tip as he gazed up at me.

“Yeah,” I panted, resisting the intense urge to shove my cock back into his mouth. “I love watching you.”

“Do you?” he asked demurely, tugging his hand out of his pants and trailing wet fingers up my thigh.

My brows pinched. Why was he stopping? Just as I was wondering if now was the time to break out my angry-horny-soldier roleplay routine that he’d previously requested, Moth sat back on his heels and released my dick.

“Okay.”

“Okay what?” I croaked, struggling to keep up, my cock bucking into the air like it was trying to entice him back.

“You can watch me.” He stood and moved away, over to the tiny desk, to grab the old wooden chair and drag it across the room until it rested by the bed.

Facing the bed.

My face lit up as Moth glanced at me over his shoulder and murmured, “Come here.”

Oh *hell* yeah, I’d be going over there. I’d be going over there right this goddamn *instant*. I shuffled forward as best I could with my pants around my thighs, clutching the waistband so they didn’t fall all

the way off. Moth snickered but said nothing, instead giving me a gentle push into the seat when I reached him.

“Wait there.”

He moved away again as I lounged back in the chair, grinning and feeling like a fucking king. Moth was gonna put on a show for me, huh? He was still a little shy in bed, but getting better at voicing what he was thinking and feeling and wanted. Getting less self-conscious about his body and more open and relaxed with it.

It made me so proud of him. I couldn't imagine how hard it was to push through a lifetime of insecurities, to let himself be vulnerable with another person. I was lucky—I'd always been confident, unafraid to go after what I wanted, uncaring of putting myself out there and being so exposed to other people in such an intimate way. I hoped it helped him, in some ways—hoped it made him see that he had absolutely nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed of. And I thought I did a pretty good job of letting him know just how beautiful and desirable and perfect he was. I couldn't keep my hands to myself around him, even if it was just pressing my shoulder to his when we were eating in the diner, or holding his hand, or kissing him on the cheek when I passed him in the camp. He always liked to act exasperated by it, but I knew he fucking loved it. My prickly little half monster man.

I couldn't see what he was doing back there—could only hear some rustling—but I didn't want to turn around and spoil the surprise. My hard cock twitched as I wondered if he was getting a toy to use. Maybe something I could use on myself while I watched him.

I jolted a little when warm hands settled on my shoulders, squeezing them gently before trailing down my arms—and urging them back around the chair. Long fingers clasped my wrists together before fabric bound them.

Hoo boy, this was getting good. I grinned, trying not to bounce in my seat. We'd ruined the nice red rope Moth had brought back from the sex shop—wasn't *my* fault that branch knocked me out and Moth

had to snap it to get his arms free—so I didn't know what he was using, but I also did not give one single fuck.

I shared a look with the head of my dick, which was proudly saluting in fervent agreement for whatever Moth had planned, then jumped again when Moth cinched my wrists tight. I flexed my fingers. It wasn't so tight that it'd cut off my circulation, but he probably thought I wouldn't be able to get free. I smirked a little. I was a former soldier. I'd had extensive training in how to get out of all kinds of situations—including being tied up.

Not that I *wanted* to get free right now. But instinctively I wriggled my wrists a little to find some give, and quickly discovered... there wasn't any. And then it somehow finally registered, way too late. Wait... now I couldn't touch him or *myself*. I shared another quick, distraught look with my dick. I was supposed to just *sit* here with a raging hardon?

Maybe not. Maybe he was gonna suck my dick again while he touched himself, and he just wanted to tie me up for it. Okay, I was down with that. Or maybe he was going to climb onto this rickety old chair with me and ride me with wild abandon while stroking his cock —

My thoughts cut off abruptly when Moth walked into view. He sat down on the edge of the bed directly opposite without saying anything. His cheeks were flushed, and his throat bobbed with nerves, but he held my gaze as he lifted his hips and reached down to tug off his pants and underwear.

He hadn't taken his boots off—or his coat, or even his freaking sword for that matter—so he left them bunched around his ankles before shifting back until his heels rested on the edge of the mattress. Then, after another nervous swallow, he leaned back on his straightened arms and let his knees fall open wide.

My eyes immediately locked on between his legs, cock jerking in the air. His slit was flushed and misted with wetness, but his dick wasn't out yet. With his thighs spread so wide, I thought I could see the

head of it starting to peek out, but then he cupped a hand over his pubic mound and hid it from view.

“You want to watch?” he asked, his voice low and throaty as his fingertips shifted, sliding over the bottom of his slit.

I realised I hadn’t said anything for a while—which wasn’t like me—so I licked my lips and parted them to tell him yes, I abso-fucking-lutely wanted to watch, but all that came out was a croaked, “Ungh.”

Moth huffed, mouth curving up into a tiny smile. I glanced up at his face and tried to smile back, but my gaze almost immediately shot back down to his hand—his hand that had started moving in earnest, fingers gliding elegantly up and down his slit.

A strangled sound left me as I started to pant. God, that had *no right* looking as good as it did. Moth’s hands were beautiful—fine-boned and strong, with long, elegant masculine fingers. When he crooked his middle and slid it inside, my cock jerked in envy.

His thighs twitched as he huffed out a sharp breath, then went down onto his elbow, splaying his long, lean body out before me even better. His shirt had ridden up a little beneath his coat, showing me the bottom of his flat, tattooed stomach. God, I wanted to lick it. I wanted to lick *all* of him. My eyes roamed greedily, taking it all in. The two long fingers now stuffed inside him. The slickness coating the delicate scales that fanned out onto his inner thighs. The lash of his tail between his legs. The sweet, plump curve of his backside as his hips arched a little.

He kept the heel of his palm pressed against the top of his slit, preventing his cock from sliding free. I knew he loved the sensation of being stuffed full, so full he almost couldn’t take it. Swallowing around my ragged breaths, I parted my lips to suggest he come over here and sit his pretty ass on my cock while he did that, but before I could, he was reaching into his coat pocket and pulling out the curved vibrator he loved. *A lot.*

“Fuck yes,” I rasped, ass lifting off the seat as my hips jerked, cock straining for him. My fingers twitched in their restraints, and the knowledge that I couldn’t do anything but sit here and watch him made the urge to come even more pressing.

Moth fumbled to turn it on with slick fingers, then swallowed as he lowered it and ran the tip up and down his flushed slit. His cock had slid free the moment he moved his hand, and it bobbed over his belly. My mouth watered at the sight of it, slick and deep pink, with that long slit at the head already leaking.

The vibration of the toy grew more muffled as he slid it inside, hips jerking and a clipped groan falling from his mouth. He laid back fully on the bed, bringing his other trembling hand down to trail his fingers over his leaking cock.

“Fuck,” I bit out, my dick throbbing and so hard it ached. My hand instinctively tried to yank forward so I could fist it, and I groaned in frustration when the fabric binding my wrists kept me stuck tight.

Moth’s head tipped back against the bed as he slid the vibrator in and out slowly, his pale hair fanned around him like a halo, his sword hilt sticking up over his right shoulder. It couldn’t be all that comfortable to have it pressing into his back like that, but he didn’t seem to care whatsoever. He was moaning, throat jumping as he fucked himself and stroked his cock in a trembling fist.

I was panting like a dog, my tongue practically hanging out as I stared, unwilling to even blink and miss a second of it. I realised my hips were arching, humping the air in time with his thrusts. Pre-cum dripped down my length, my nuts drawn up tight, thighs trying to spread wider but instead just pushing into the stupid armrests.

“Ungh, shit,” I gritted out through clenched teeth. The wet sounds of Moth fucking himself were driving me wild. I wanted in there more than I’d ever wanted anything. “Fuck, you look so good,” I croaked between manic breaths. “You’re killing me, slayer.”

He let out a shuddery breath and lifted his head to peer at me, pale eyes hazy with pleasure. Licking his lips, he rasped, "If you can get free in time, you can make me come."

It was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. I immediately started yanking on my restraints, shifting frantically in the chair until it almost toppled over. Realising my wrists were definitely stuck, I lurched up and tried to simultaneously knock the chair back while lifting my bound arms over the back of it. It couldn't have looked all that sexy—my hard dick swinging wildly and smacking against my stomach, pants falling to my knees as I wriggled around—but Moth groaned from the bed at my obvious desperation, making me all the more determined.

Finally the chair tipped over, the back of it abrading my spine through my shirt as it slid to the floor with a tiny crash, but I was *free*. Well, kind of. I thudded to my knees beside the bed, arms still restrained behind my back, my chest heaving.

"Come here," I croaked, my voice like gravel.

Moth's eyes flared. He slid the vibrator free and dropped it on the bed, then hurriedly shifted closer and lifted his trapped ankles to hook them over my neck. The moment he was within reach, I braced myself on my knees and leaned down, his lean thighs quaking either side of my head.

"F-fuck," he whimpered as I went straight into tonguing him ravenously, moaning noisily against him while I tried to get as deep as possible. My fingers twitched at my lower back, stomach pressed into the side of the bed and my hips rocking into nothing. When my straining cock brushed against the edge of the mattress, I let out a garbled moan and plunged my tongue even deeper.

"Ch-Charlie," Moth panted, fisting my hair tight with one hand while the other shuttled over the top half of his cock, the slick sound of it making me even more frantic.

I attacked the base of his cock, where it emerged from his slit, with sucking lips and a feverish tongue, licking him all over before trailing my mouth up to slide my tongue between his fingers as my heavy gaze locked with his. His chest was heaving, hand shaking as he uncurled a finger from around his dick so I could suck it into my mouth.

He let out a shaky groan, hips flexing up. Releasing his finger, I slid my tongue back down to sink it inside him again, then licked over the scales fanning out onto his inner thighs, wanting to catch every drop of his slickness.

Moth cried out, head falling back onto the bed as he writhed. His boots dug into the back of my head as he tried to yank me closer, coming close to suffocating me. But fuck it, if this was the way I went, then so be it. Zero regrets.

I couldn't stop thrusting my hips, grinding my cock into the side of the bed. It wasn't the greatest sensation, to be honest, but I was too far gone to care. It was definitely enough to make me come, given how worked up I was. My nose pressed into the base of Moth's cock as I licked again and again, feeling almost drunk with lust. I could feel his hand jerking the head of his cock in rapid, squeezing pulls, and when his thighs started to shake either side of me, I knew he was seconds away.

"Fuck—Charlie—Fuck—" His standard pre-nut litany started up, making me smile in rabid satisfaction against him as I licked and sucked everything I could reach. "Fuck—fuckfuckfuck—fuck yes—fuckyes fuckyes—"

His channel spasmed around my tongue as he loosed a ragged shout, lower back arching off the bed, his entire body stiff and trembling. I moaned in bliss, then jerked with a hoarse laugh when I felt his cum hit my forehead and slide down my nose. I licked it up greedily when a drop of it reached my upper lip, moaning again more sharply as I rutted my throbbing cock against the edge of the mattress.

“Mmmfuuuck,” I moaned against him as I went stiff, before hot pleasure exploded in my lower body and my cock started pumping out cum against the side of the bed. My hips jerked erratically with each spurt, limbs going weak and my scalp tingling as I panted into Moth’s slit, which pulsed with aftershocks as his body went boneless on the bed.

When my orgasm ended, I rested my cheek on his quaking thigh and groaned in utter satiation through panting breaths. Heart still thudding wildly, I croaked, “You made me come.”

“What?” Moth snorted a hoarse chuckle and struggled up onto his arms, cheeks flaming pink as he looked down at me between his spread thighs. “I didn’t do anything.”

I quirked a brow at him. “You’re kidding, right?”

Dipping my head, I licked him softly just to hear him suck in a sharp breath as his thighs jerked. Grinning against him, I looked up and murmured, “You do realise this doesn’t discourage me in the slightest from messing with you out in the camp.”

He huffed and rolled his eyes, but reached down to gently push my hair back from my forehead. “Yeah, I know,” he grumbled, but his mouth tipped up into a tiny smile.

Letting out a sigh of contentment, I turned my head to kiss his inner thigh. “I love you.”

He shivered, smoothing his thumb over my cheekbone as he hoarsely said, “I love you too.”

I gave his thigh a final smacking kiss before grinning up at him. “So, looking forward to later?”

He cringed, finally lifting his trapped ankles over my head so I could sit up straight. “Um, I guess.”

I frowned at his unconvincing mutter, watching as he stood up off the bed and hiked up his pants before going around to untie my wrists.

“You’re not looking forward to it?”

He huffed from behind me, pressing a kiss to the back of my head once my wrists were free. “I dunno. I guess... I mean, all the monsters will probably hang out together, and... I don’t know...”

My chest squeezed tight. Ignoring the cum smeared all over my shirt and dick, I stood with a wince—I was getting too old to be on my knees for that long—and tugged my pants back up. “You don’t want to hang out with them?” I asked as Moth returned to bed and sat down.

He shrugged uncomfortably, then smirked and gestured at my face. Realising his cum was still all over me, I pulled off my already soiled shirt and wiped hurriedly. Voice muffled by the fabric, I asked, “Why don’t you want to hang out with them, baby?”

“It’s not—” When I dropped the shirt, I saw his cheeks flaming pink again. Then he huffed and rolled his eyes. “You know what I mean, Charlie.”

I sat down beside him and lifted a hand to cup the side of his neck. “They all love you, Moth. Hell, you don’t think Wyn is going to keep you glued to his side all night?”

He flushed and shrugged again, so I chuckled and added, “He’s practically adopted you at this point.”

Which made me really fucking nervous.

“Besides,” I continued, “I really don’t think it’s gonna be like, humans and monsters separated. It’s everyone celebrating together. I’m not gonna wander off and leave you, Moth. I mean, unless you want some time with the other monsters—”

“No.” He clutched my thigh. “I’ve never—um, I’ve never really celebrated Christmas before, so I want to be with you tonight. If that’s okay.”

Chest constricting, I cupped his face and leaned in to give him a deep kiss. I pushed back all the rising fury over the shitty people in his past life, who'd abandoned him and abused him and left him to fend for himself since he was a tiny kid. He didn't need reminding of it right now.

Moth snuffled against my lips, making a face as he pulled back. "Your face smells like cum."

"Damn right it does." I kissed him firmly again before he could jerk his head back, then proceeded to press smacking kisses all over his face as I tugged him down onto his side.

He laughed, squirming against me. "Charlie."

"I'll make sure you have an amazing first Christmas, Moth," I mumbled, chest aching as I pressed a final kiss to his neck before resting my head on the mattress, our noses just inches apart.

He gave me a tiny smile. "I know you will. I mean, you've already done a pretty good job."

I grinned at him proudly. "Why, thank you. But then you had to go and complain about my face smelling like *your* cum after all my hard work—"

"Alright!" He chuckled and leaned in to kiss me. "There, see? Thank you for your service."

I smirked and gave him a mock salute. Moth's eyes sparked with interest, and I just *knew* he was imagining me roleplaying as angry-horny-soldier. My insides stirred as I shot him a sly smile. Maybe later, once I've had time to recover from coming so hard all over the side of the bed.

Speaking of which...

"We should probably clean up." I heaved myself up and scrubbed a hand through my hair. "And get out there and help with the decorations and stuff."

“Uggghh.” Moth flopped onto his front. “Rig and Gloam are handling it, aren’t they?” he asked, voice muffled.

I laughed, reaching over to pat his ass. “Doesn’t mean they should be left to do it by themselves. Anyway,” I added slyly, “you need to be able to say that you’ve been a good, helpful boy when you sit on Santa Edin’s lap later.”

Moth flipped onto his back and stared up at me in horror. “Fucking pardon?”

I managed to suppress my laughter, instead nodding solemnly at him. “That’s part of it. You have to sit on Santa’s lap and he asks you if you’ve been good this year before you tell him what you want for Christmas.”

Moth gaped up at me for a few seconds before his eyes narrowed. “Are you fucking with me?”

When I snickered, he sat up and gave my shoulder a weak shove. “Shithead.”

“Okay, well, I mean, that *is* kinda part of it, and I’m sure Edin won’t mind people sitting on his lap, but I’m pretty sure that seat will be taken by Hunter all night.” I chuckled again. “Hunter gets a little sappy when he’s drunk, and I’m pretty sure there is a *lot* of booze for later.”

“Sappy how?” Moth asked with interest.

I made a face. “Very... huggy. He’ll probably get tearful and tell you he loves you. If he isn’t too busy shoving his hand up Edin’s kilt.”

Moth grimaced as he slid off the bed. “Okay, well maybe he can hug me *before* he’s had his hands up there.”

“Hold on.” I scrambled up after him, wrapping my arms around his middle and pulling him close. “Do you want your gift now?”

His cheeks flushed, and he gave me a shy smile. “Uh, okay. If you want to. Give it to me now, I mean.”

“Yeah, I do.” I took a step back and let out a hard breath, feeling unaccountably nervous. “Uh, okay, so... I wanted to do this when you told me about your mom’s—about your bracelet, but I wasn’t sure...”

Moth had stiffened slightly at the mention of his charm bracelet. I knew he’d felt painfully exposed telling me about it a while back when we’d been curled up in bed one night.

“So...” I fumbled with my right ring finger, tugging off the plain gold band that had sat there since I was sixteen. Fuck, why was I so nervous?

“I’ve had this for years,” I told Moth, fiddling with it. “It was my dad’s old wedding band, but he gave it to me to keep when it wouldn’t fit his finger anymore. It’s—I guess it’s kind of been my good luck charm. It was the only thing I managed to keep hold of when those koleb fuckers took me and dumped my pack, seeing as I was wearing it.”

Taking a breath, I looked at Moth. He was frozen in place, staring down at the ring. “I don’t expect it to replace your charm bracelet, obviously, but I was wondering if... if maybe you wanted something of mine as well. To keep.”

Moth was blinking rapidly, throat bobbing. He scrubbed a hand over his cheek, then nodded as he loosed a tiny, shaky breath.

Sagging in relief, I gently took his hand. My fingers were a touch thicker than his, so the ring fit snugly on his right middle finger. I rubbed my thumb over it once it was on, chest getting tight and hot from the sight of it on Moth’s long, elegant finger.

He tugged his hand free and slunk his arms around my waist, dipping his head to bury his face in my neck. “Thank you,” he mumbled, fingers digging into my bare back.

I kissed his temple, pulling him closer. "I'm glad you like it."

He tried to hide his glassy eyes when he eventually stepped back, still blinking fast and ducking his head as he turned away.

"Your gift is gonna seem so lame in comparison now," he croaked, quickly wiping his nose as he crouched to reach for something under the bed.

"No it won't," I said instantly. "You didn't have to get me anything."

"Well it's not even really a gift," he muttered, straightening up to face me with his hands behind his back. His throat bobbed, face flushed pink. "Um, Rig told me that people used to exchange Christmas cards, so, uh, so I thought..."

Letting out a hard breath, he brought his arm forward and thrust something at me. Blinking, I wordlessly reached out to take what appeared to be a makeshift envelope, made from a page torn out of an ancient magazine.

My throat ached fiercely. He'd written me a card? God, I was pretty sure I was going to start blubbing before I'd even finished reading it. He was getting so much better at writing, even though he complained that the process was slow and frustrating. Maybe doing this had shown him how much he'd improved already.

As I carefully started opening the envelope, he fidgeted and blurted, "I can't draw for shit, so I asked, um, I asked Lilac if he would just draw something on the front. Just a... Christmas thing or whatever. I don't know."

I stared down at the card in my hands, just a piece of yellowed old paper folded in half. On the front, drawn in pencil, was a fat robin sitting on a sprig of holly against a snowy forest backdrop. *Merry Christmas* was scrawled above it in elegant handwriting that I guessed was Lilac's, with my name written at the bottom in big, messy letters. Moth's handwriting.

I had to bite down hard on my lower lip as I opened the card, my vision already turning blurry.

To Charlie, it said in that same shaky, uncertain scrawl.

Merry Cristmas. Thank you for making me so hapy. Your the best person I know. I love you.

*Love,
Moth*

PS: This is your Cristmas gift: I wil wear the elf stuff wenever you wont.

I couldn't move after I finished reading it, clutching onto the card as my chin wobbled. When I didn't say anything, Moth shifted anxiously in front of me.

"Sorry," he said tightly. "It sucks. It's a crappy gift—"

I burst into tears.

Maybe I was feeling extra emotional because I'd just nuted so hard with my face buried between Moth's thighs. Maybe it was because of the festive atmosphere in the camp, everyone happy and excited, monsters and humans coming together to celebrate and forget about all the shittiness in the world.

Except—no. It wasn't any of that. It was just because of this.

"Jesus," Moth choked out, sounding embarrassed. "Is it really that bad? I can—"

I jerked it to my chest when he tried to snatch it away, shaking my head.

"It's perfect," I wept, carefully laying it on the bed with shaking hands before throwing myself at Moth. "It's the best thing anyone's ever given me. Thank you so much."

“What... really?” He sounded doubtful as he wrapped his arms around me.

“Yes,” I blubbered, burying my face in his neck. “Do *not* tell Wyn I cried.”

He chuckled hoarsely, pressing his lips to my hair. “Of course I won’t. But... So it’s okay? Was my spelling really bad?”

“No.” I sniffed wetly and lifted my head to kiss him. “And that is so much better than some crappy old ring.”

“It’s not crappy,” he said immediately, bringing his hands between us to fiddle with it. Then he rested a hand on my chest, fingers playing with the hair there as he shyly asked, “Did you—Did you read the bit at the bottom?”

I let out a watery laugh, stepping back to wipe my eyes. “Yeah, I read it.” Trying to stop myself from blubbering like a fool, I jokingly added, “Don’t pretend like you didn’t love playing a sexy elf as much as I did.”

He made a face. “I mean, as long as you don’t try an accent again.”

I snorted, scrubbing at my nose. “I won’t.”

Picking up the card, I opened it to read his words again reverently. It just made more tears spring to my eyes, so I kept my head bent as I let out a shuddery breath. “Will you give me another card for my birthday? And any other holiday we can think of. Or maybe just write me one once a month. I want to keep all of them.”

Moth snuffled a tiny laugh. “I don’t think I can ask Lilac to draw a card every month, but... okay.” His voice turned shy. “So you really like it?”

I blinked fast, tipping my head toward the ceiling to try and stop a fresh onslaught of tears. *Pull yourself together, Charlie.*

“I love it,” I croaked, looking at Moth to give him a watery smile, and feeling my heart squeeze tight when he gave me a huge, pleased grin back.

HUNTER

When I heard my best friend's familiar chuckle as I helped Gloam and Rig hang up tinsel and long strings of icicle decorations outside the diner, I glanced back to see Charlie and Moth walking down the motel steps hand-in-hand.

I stilled, frowning as Moth said something and kissed Charlie's cheek, then headed off in the direction of Chuck, who was hanging onto the back of Lilac's pants as he spoke to Anchor and studiously ignored the little creature.

Gloam took the last of the tinsel from me, so I turned and headed to meet Charlie halfway as he ambled casually in our direction.

"What's wrong?" I barked as soon as I reached him, gaze snapping over his face.

Charlie and I had been almost inseparable for over twelve years. We'd seen each other cry plenty of times. Frustrated, tired tears when we were hungry and cold and sick of shitting in a hole in the ground and sleeping outside. Melancholy tears when we reminisced about the past or the people we missed as we'd been holed up in some shitty hideout while on a mission. Happy tears when he made me laugh so hard I thought I was going to piss myself, giving me bright moments amid the drudgery the military had offered us.

So I knew, even from a distance, that he'd been crying. His forehead always got a little splotchy when he cried, and his eyes were red-rimmed and still looked glassy. This close, I could see his eyelashes clumping together wetly.

My hands curled into fists. If Moth had made him cry... Well, I didn't know what I would do. Chew him out? Threaten bodily harm if he ever hurt Charlie? I was pretty sure Charlie would kill me himself if I actually punched Moth in his pretty-boy face, and it wasn't like I really wanted to do that. I *liked* Moth.

But if he'd upset him...

Charlie smiled, shaking his head and clapping me on the arm. "It's all good, man."

I stared at him hard, silently demanding an explanation. After a pause, he rolled his eyes.

"He just gave me an awesome Christmas gift." His face softened, grey eyes drifting over to where Moth was feeding Chuck bits of cracker as she perched on his shoulders. "Like, the best gift ever."

I grunted, easing back and folding my arms. "Was it another elf-themed sexcapade?"

He snorted. "No. But don't you fuckin' tease Moth about that, Hunter." He lowered his voice, expression hardening. "That's not cool."

"What?" I rolled my eyes. "I haven't. And I won't. But I spent the last decade of my life observing shit very, very carefully, Charlie. You really think I wouldn't notice him coming back from your little jaunt in the forest with his hair all pretty and a fucking twig crown on his head? Looking exactly like an *elf*?"

Charlie pursed his lips, trying to fend off a smile. "He *did* look damn good."

"Besides," I said quickly, because I wasn't overly interested in standing here and watching my best friend's face get all glazed over from thoughts of freaky forest sex with his half monster boyfriend. "I already have Edin blurting out details of our sex life around the camp. I'm not gonna subject someone else to that."

"Yeah, 'cause you hate it so much," I thought I heard him mutter.

"What was that?" I asked sharply, glaring at him.

“Nothin’. Anyways, it was the good kind of crying, teddy bear.” He gave me a wide grin. “Don’t worry, I’m great. You gonna be drinking later? It’s been a while since you got all teary-eyed and told me how much you love me.”

I scowled, scrubbing a hand over the back of my neck. “Shut up. And, uh... I don’t know. Not sure I wanna let my guard down that much,” I added as I scanned the camp.

We’d been here a while now, and they did seem like good people. Especially now those assholes who’d hated the monsters so much were gone. But that didn’t mean I was eager to make myself vulnerable around them—even more vulnerable than I already was, sleeping inside the camp walls.

Honestly, this place felt like a ticking time bomb to me—a sentiment I’d only shared with Edin. I didn’t see how the military couldn’t be aware of what was going on here—monsters and humans co-existing in peace—and if they weren’t, it was surely only a matter of time until they found out. And I didn’t think they’d be too happy about it.

But I didn’t want to be the asshole who put a dampener on this fake Christmas celebration by muttering suspiciously about having to stay alert because the military might turn up one day. Might raze the camp and kill all the “traitor” humans. Take all the monsters back to cells to torture them.

My gut squeezed painfully, eyes automatically scanning the camp to seek out Edin. But he wasn’t here—he was out in the forest with Aury and Wyn, finding a tree to put up in the middle of the camp. When I’d asked him how he planned to actually get it *into* the camp, he’d just *pffed* and said, “Bah, irrelevant details.”

I tried not to picture the military skulking through the forest, assault rifles raised, signalling that they were ready to incapacitate the three monsters innocently felling trees. They’d managed to get Edin before when he was distracted. Shoulders hiking up with tension, I jerked my chin toward the diner, where all the boxes of Christmas

decorations were sitting. Might as well do something productive while I waited for Edin to get back.

“Let’s go help.”

“Sure,” Charlie said easily, falling into step beside me. “I’m looking forward to seeing Santa Edin again.”

My mouth quirked. “Yeah, he’s excited.”

“What’d you get him for Christmas?”

“None of your fucking business,” I replied without any heat. Charlie chuckled, punching me on the arm.

“That means it’s either dirty or you’re still frantically trying to think of something.”

“Or it just means it’s none of your business.” I gave his head a gentle shove, lips twitching when Charlie clutched his chest dramatically.

“You wound me, teddy bear.” He crouched to pull open one of the old cardboard boxes, rifling through it. “Damn, they got a lot of stuff.”

I sank to my haunches in front of another box. “Been collecting it for years, I guess.”

“Mm.” Charlie grunted, before I heard him suck in a breath. “Oh fuck yes,” he muttered, making me glance over quickly.

“What?”

“Nothin’.” He quickly shoved something red behind the box, out of sight. I narrowed my eyes at him.

“Charlie…”

“Seriously, it’s just… something I want to give to Moth later. Okay?” He gave me a meaningful look, so after a second I huffed and looked away again.

“Gonna play Christmas elves this time?” I asked mildly, grinning when Charlie beaned me on the side of the head with a candy cane-striped bauble.

GHOST

“Hope the party doesn’t disturb you ladies too much later,” I told Ginger as she pecked around in the dirt by my feet.

Crouching, I smoothed my fingertips over her feathers just as Trixie bobbed her way over, clucking softly. Bianca chased her off with a threatening flap of her wings, fiercely possessive of the feed I’d just scattered.

Rolling my eyes, I threw another handful toward Trixie, then jumped out of my skin when a loud *crack!* echoed from the forest behind the camp. The girls squawked, flapping their wings and scattering around the yard when the ground shook a few minutes later, a huge boom shaking their little wooden coop.

Guess they’d found a tree Edin deemed suitable then. Straightening up, I brushed off my gloves. After checking the girls had enough water, I left the yard, locking it behind me, and made my way around the motel to see Gloam and Rig on the upper floor, hanging tinsel along the railing. Charlie and Hunter were over by the diner, the former snickering as he reached up and shoved a Santa hat on Hunter’s head over his ball cap.

Moth was standing with Danny, Chuck perched on his shoulders and happily crunching down on the bits of cracker Danny was handing her. Some of the raiders were going about their usual jobs, while others were getting involved in decorating for the party later. Spike and Keen had their heads bent over a huge tangle of fairy lights. Nun and Rusty were ferrying all the booze out of the bar.

Everyone seemed to be in good spirits, excited for the party later. I was... kind of looking forward to it, as long as Edin didn’t try and get everyone to play party games or something. Or Charlie. That seemed like the kind of thing Charlie might do.

I didn't mind the smaller Christmas celebration we usually had every year, in the diner. But that was always quieter—we never had much booze, so it didn't get rowdy.

I had the feeling Edin was *determined* to make this party rowdy.

Hopefully Aury wouldn't mind sitting on the sidelines for most of it. I didn't think he would. He'd already told me that he wasn't going to drink because he had no idea how he'd react to it. I wasn't a big drinker, anyway, and never to excess. I always just ended up with intense hangover anxiety, which, yeah. I could do without.

My pulse leapt when Aury's huge wings appeared at the top of the camp wall. I smiled when he spotted me immediately and waved, my cheeks digging into the hard plastic of my gas mask. Waving back, I watched as he settled on the corner of the wall and crouched to fiddle with the chicken wire roof.

My eyes widened when an enormous tree started rising up behind him, as if it was shooting up out of the ground and growing impossibly big. But then I saw the cloud of black smoke hovering near its pointed top. Was Wyn *seriously* carrying that gigantic tree by himself?

I jumped when Edin burst out of the container entrance nearby, grinning wide as he jogged over to me.

"Ghost! The tree is here!"

"Yeah, I... I can see," I croaked, turning to look back up at it now blocking out the sun. Which Wyn was probably doing intentionally. He seemed kind of dramatic. "Um... Edin? How are you actually going to get it into the camp?"

As if on cue, Aury rose back up into the air and yanked on the chicken wire roof. It peeled away from the edge of the wall like the lid of a tin can.

I choked on a breath. "What—Our roof—"

“We asked Rig, do not worry.” Edin gave me a gentle pat on the shoulder, making my whole arm jerk down. “And we will fix it after. You camp will stay safe, little Ghost.”

“But it—it was soldered—”

“I can fix it,” he said airily with a wave of his hand. “Can’t be too hard, eh? Anyway, where shall we put the tree?” He strode forward and stopped in the centre of the camp with his hands on his hips, peering around. “Yes, here. Here is good.”

“It might—” I hurried forward. “Um, it might be in the way there—”

“It must take pride of place, Ghost.” Edin cupped his hands around his mouth, his voice booming as he yelled, “Bring in the tree, Wyn.”

I fidgeted anxiously, edging back as the black smoke cloud lifted the tree higher, over the camp wall, and started lowering it inside.

“Where, Edin?” Wyn’s bored drawl came from everywhere at once. “Hurry up. I think there’s still an animal in it.”

“What?” I squawked, then went red under my mask as several nearby raiders, who were watching, glanced at me. “You maybe— We probably shouldn’t bring any animals into the camp—”

“Fuck, it’s a squirrel!” Wyn’s hoarse rasp echoed around the camp—a split second before he let go of the tree.

I froze in place, staring wide-eyed as its cracked stump plummeted to the earth and hit the ground with a deafening thud. Then the enormous tree immediately began tipping onto its side. Toward us.

I could vaguely see a black, winged shape shooting through the air toward me, but before Aury could make it, Edin was scooping me up like a football and sprinting for the motel. Raiders scattered, yelling as they ran for the edges of the camp to get out of the tree’s way.

“Wyn, you fucking dolt!” Edin boomed, a split second before another heavy thud shook the ground. I cringed, dangling under his arm,

trying to peer back to find Aury.

“There’s a fucking *squirrel!*” Wyn shouted, as if that was a good reason for dropping a giant tree and nearly crushing half the camp.

As the sound of wildly rustling leaves faded, Edin set me on my feet and we turned to see the tree on its side, stretching across the camp between the motel and the diner.

There was silence for a few seconds as everyone stared in shock. Aury landed beside me, immediately grabbing my shoulders and pulling me back into his body.

“Are you alright?” he asked frantically, wrapping his arms around me and burying his face in my neck.

“I’m—I’m fine,” I got out, just as a tiny furry head popped out of the felled tree’s branches.

“Get it out!” came from the ominous black cloud hovering over the camp.

“Wyn!” Danny yelled up, frowning hard as he stood beside a stunned Moth. “What’s the matter with you? It’s just a freakin’ squirrel.”

“They’re evil.” I could hear the shudder in Wyn’s voice. “Cunning. Too quick. Get it out of the camp, Edin, or I’m not helping you lift up the tree.”

Edin huffed, hands on his hips as he surveyed the scene. Chuck crept down from Moth’s shoulders and began cautiously approaching the squirrel, which was now perched on the ground beside the tree, frozen in place.

Moth darted a glance up at Wyn. “I’ll get it,” he said eagerly, beginning to stalk toward the squirrel.

Edin grunted, striding forward. “I’ll help.”

Chuck was a few feet from the squirrel now, hesitantly approaching, her head tilted curiously. The squirrel grew even more still. Its tail puffed up and quivered, then it took off.

Moth lunged for it, landing on his belly with a pained grunt. Edin jogged after the squirrel as it darted down the tree's trunk. He made a failed grab for it and cursed when it shot away. "Little fucker."

"Wyn, come down here and help!" Danny yelled as Charlie scrubbed a hand down his face, muttered something to Hunter, then made his way over to Moth, who had scrambled to his feet and was already taking off after the squirrel again.

"No," Wyn rasped, still a black cloud floating above us. "Get that fucking thing out of the camp."

Chuck clearly thought the squirrel was playing a game, chirping excitedly as she loped after it toward the diner. I could hear Moth yelling at Edin to go left while he went right so they could cut it off around the back.

I stared in disbelief before Aury chuckled, pressing a kiss to the back of my head then turning me to face him.

"Do you like the tree?" he asked me eagerly. "Edin let me pick it."

"I—" I glanced back. Danny was still yelling at Wyn to come down, while Edin and Moth chased after the squirrel toward the shower stalls. "Yeah," I said weakly. "It's great."

Aury beamed down at me when I turned back to face him, cupping my cheeks and leaning down to kiss my forehead. "I am excited for human Christmas."

I smiled back, curling my fingers into his coat. "It'll be fun. But, um, do you want to stay up late for the party?"

He shook his head, smoothing back my hair. "No. I want to celebrate with you. The party will be loud."

My shoulders slumped in relief, but I forced myself to say, “I don’t mind. If you want to hang out with the others—”

“No, my Gage.” He kissed me again, his black eyes glimmering as he smiled down at me. “We will celebrate together. Just you and me.”

SERAPH

“Wh-what if they have changed their m-minds?” I asked worriedly, hunched over so I could peer out of the window at the camp wall looming beside our love shack.

Lilac glanced over from where he was making tea in our tiny kitchen, his dark brows twitching into a frown. “Changed their minds about what?”

“About w-wanting me in the camp.” Sighing, I sat back and picked up my half-carved cup. “F-for the Christmas party.”

Lilac’s small, elegant hands clenched hard around the handles of our mugs. “You don’t need their permission to go in there, Seraph. Just because we live in here doesn’t mean you’re not a part of the camp.”

I hunched my shoulders, lowering my gaze as I fiddled with the cup in my hands. “Th-they might n-not want me there though.”

“They do,” he said firmly as he sat down beside me. “They all want you there. Anchor even checked to make sure you’re definitely coming when I went in to find out about my shift on the wall.”

Heat crept into my face as I accepted the mug he offered. “R-really?”

“Yes.” Leaning in, he kissed my cheek. “But if you’re feeling anxious about it, we don’t have to go. We’ll have our own Christmas party here. Just the two of us.”

Huffing in amusement, I turned my head to nuzzle his ear and give his lobe a tiny lick. “You w-would probably prefer that.”

His mouth curved into a tiny smile. “I’d always pick being with you over being with anyone else.”

“I know. M-me too.” I looked down at my tea and shyly added, “B-but I w-would like to go. Just for lee-tol while.”

“Then we’ll go.” Taking a sip of tea, he nodded at the half-finished cup in my other hand. “That the last one?”

“Yes.” Setting my steaming mug on the windowsill behind the couch, I picked up my carving knife. “J-just a bit more sh-shaping and then I w-will sand it.”

“It looks great.” He jerked his chin at the neat row of handcarved cups on our recently fixed dining table. “They all do.”

“Do you think they w-will like them?” I asked, bending my head in concentration as I carefully sliced away tiny slivers of wood.

“Yes.”

I smiled a little, chest filling with pride. Lilac didn’t say much, but always managed to convey his unwavering loyalty and easy confidence in me with his few words.

He also managed to convey the unspoken threat that if anyone *didn’t* like their gift, he would make it very clear that it was in their best interest to at least act grateful.

It had taken me many weeks to carve enough cups for the whole camp. There were lots of them living in there, but I didn’t want anyone to be left out. So I had been carving well into the night, until my back ached and my eyes burned and my wrists were sore, not stopping until Lilac started kissing my neck to distract me from it, or sinking between my knees with a tiny smile, or appearing at our bedroom doorway naked with his cock already hard.

Then I had always stopped carving, without fail.

I had only a few hours left to finish this last one though, so I wasn’t going to let him distract me. Not that he was trying to—he was innocently sipping his tea as he watched me work, but already I wanted to throw the cup down and pull him into my arms. Rub my cheek over his hair. Wrap him up and envelope him completely in my overly long limbs.

As I always tended to, I kept a few of my eyes on him as I finished carving the cup, just because I loved looking at him. He noticed—not much escaped him—and he shot me wide, rare grin that made me chuff with laughter.

Transferring his mug to his other hand, he reached over and stroked the back of my neck in a soothing touch. A purr rumbled up my throat, some of my eyes sliding shut in bliss. Lilac had told me that he'd never been overly fond of touching or being touched without his express permission, but that he had trouble keeping his hands to himself when it came to me. He'd said it in his awkward, self-conscious way—he struggled to voice his feelings—but had laughed after I told him that he could, and should, touch me as much as he wanted.

And he did. I soaked up all his touches fervently and gave him back many in return. There were times when I could tell that he needed to be by himself, retreating into his own head while he was whittling or sketching, and it didn't upset me to know that sometimes he wanted to be left completely alone. I understood him. He had told me that I understood him better than anyone ever had. And it was its own kind of comfort to just be with him in a shared space, even if we weren't interacting. Just two bodies, separate but keenly aware of one another, content to simply be in each other's presence until we came back together with soft touches and murmured words and quiet fulfilment.

That was unless we were visited by some of the others, which happened often—practically every day. Lilac had dryly told me that they came to see *me*, not him, which made me frown in his defence even as I chuffed with pleasure.

We had already been visited by Danny and Wyn this morning, and I had assumed that they would all be too busy preparing for the Christmas party later for anyone else to come out to the love shack. But as I finished off the last cup, I saw Lilac's head turn toward the window behind us.

“Rig’s here,” he told me, lifting his hand from my neck to give him a slight wave. Setting down his mug, he kissed the side of my head and stood up nimbly from the couch.

Rig was a master of distraction, his brain always overflowing with new project ideas for us, his mouth sometimes moving too fast for me to keep up with his words. I hurriedly tried to finish the cup as Lilac opened the door to let him in, shaving off the last sliver of wood so that its outer curve was perfectly smooth.

“Hey.” Rig beamed at us both as he came into the love shack. “Did you see them bring the tree in?”

Lilac huffed. “Kind of hard to miss.”

He laughed, the fringe of his tan jacket swaying as he sauntered deeper into the RV. “Yeah, it’s huge, huh? Edin’s already got it up and running. Took a while because there was a squirrel in the camp, and Wyn is apparently scared of them or something? But Moth got it out eventually. Anyways, the tree is up and it looks amazing.” Brows pinching, he added, “I’ll have to fill the hole in somehow once it’s gone. Looked like he drove it about four feet into the earth.”

I grunted, reaching for the sanding paper. “He is strong.”

“These are awesome, Seraph.”

I glanced over to see him picking up one of the cups. He turned it in his hands, inspecting it, before letting out a little gasp. His eyes darted frantically over the rest of them.

“Hold on, is this a G for Gloam?” He grabbed one of the other cups and held it up to me, his eyes bright with excitement.

I chuffed, glancing at Lilac. He had sketched the initials of everyone’s first names on the cups in his elegant handwriting, so that I could carefully carve them into the wood.

“Yes,” I told Rig with a wide grin, chuffing again when he blinked rapidly, eyes getting shiny.

“Oh my god.” He scanned the other cups, gasping again as he picked up the one with a curly *Rig* on its side. I had carved his whole name because there were others in the camp whose name began with R, and I wanted Rig’s to be special.

“Is this mine?” he asked in a wavering voice, clutching it to his chest.

“Yes, R-Riig.” I smiled at him. “You can t-take it now if you w-want.”

“No, no, I’ll wait.” He carefully set the cup back down. “Gloam is definitely gonna tear up when you give him his.”

Lilac quirked a brow but said nothing, seeing as Rig was actually the one scrubbing at his eye and sniffing wetly.

“God, I freaking love Christmas.” Rig gave me a huge, watery smile. “We celebrated it for basically all of December when I was a kid. My abuela would cook so much food.” He sighed, looking a little sad. “It was so good.”

“W-we will make it good, R-Riig,” I told him, because I didn’t want him to be sad. “I’m sure B-Bo and Dai-zee have m-made nice food.”

The two camp cooks had also visited us a few times, sometimes bringing ingredients for Lilac to cook with, other times bringing big meals that Daisy would shove into Lilac’s hands before pinching his cheek, which always made him hunch awkwardly.

I liked them both very much. Bo had asked me to carve him some cooking utensils, and Daisy had asked for chopsticks. After Lilac explained what they were to me, I’d told her I would make her many, which had made her pinch *my* cheek in thanks. And unlike Lilac, it had made me beam with pleasure.

“Yeah,” Rig said enthusiastically. “They’ve been cooking all day. Rusty and Dino have been helping.”

I’d never met the raider Dino, but Rusty and Nun had come to see us once or twice in the time since Nun apologised for shooting her bolt

into my shoulder. The wound had long since healed, and I saw no point in holding a grudge. I liked them both. Nun had a big, booming laugh, and Rusty was soft-spoken and meek, though far less afraid of me than she had been at the beginning. Her white mask unsettled me a little, reminding me of the strange masks we had found at the camp of those cult followers, but I knew she was important to Lilac, so I was always kind to her.

But then, Lilac told me I was kind to everyone. Why wouldn't I be? They weren't the ones who had hurt me. Why would I inflict any kind of pain on another when they didn't deserve it?

"Hey, is that the last one?" Rig asked me eagerly. "Is it nearly done?"

I finished sanding the cup and held it up to inspect it, then nodded. "J-Just have to c-carve the initial."

"Okay, well, when you're done, you need to come help decorate the tree." Rig grinned at me. "We need our resident tall guy to hang the decorations up high."

I chuffed, passing the cup to Lilac so he could sketch the last initial onto its side—a simple C for Charlie. "Y-you have Au-ree and tiny smoke man to get up high. And Ch-Chuuck," I added, glancing at the wooden block I had carved for her to gnaw on. She liked trying to steal Lilac's figurines to chew.

"Everyone has to hang at least one decoration," Rig said stubbornly, pointing a finger at Lilac as he bent over the kitchen counter to sketch the C onto the cup. "Including you."

Straightening up, Lilac shot me a secret smile as he walked over and handed me the cup.

"I'll hang *one*. But then I have my shift on the wall." He smiled at me again. "Maybe you can help Rig while I'm up there. If you want to."

"Okay," I said, belly clenching with nerves as I glanced at the camp wall through the window.

“Wyn’s already asking where you are.” Rig paused. “Well, more like demanding to know why you aren’t in there yet with the rest of them.”

I snorted, then bent my head over the cup to carefully carve over Lilac’s sketched initial. The nerves fizzled away, replaced by excitement. I was interested to see the inside of the camp, but I was more excited to take part in the festivities with everyone else, to be welcomed by them all. I liked living out here with Lilac—I wouldn’t want to be in there, and neither would he—but it was still nice knowing that I was... wanted.

Rig fidgeted impatiently as he waited for me to finish the final cup. Lilac moved around our space languidly, finishing his tea before tugging on his coat and fixing his mask over his face. As he started packing up all the cups into a wooden crate, I blew the wood shavings from the one in my hands and unfurled my legs to add it with the others.

“Done?” Rig asked eagerly, bouncing on his toes.

I grinned at him, picking up the crate. “Yes. D-done.”

“Awesome.” He headed for the door, and I shifted the crate under my arm so I could hold Lilac’s hand as we followed him.

“You’ll be fine,” Lilac whispered, squeezing my fingers as we made our way around the camp wall toward the entrance. “If it gets too much, come and sit with me on the wall.”

“Okay,” I said quietly, clutching his hand tighter.

He lifted our joined hands to kiss my knuckles through his mask. “Tell me if anyone speaks to you poorly.”

His tone was casual, but I could easily detect the underlying threat. I snuffled out a laugh, glancing down at him. “Okay.”

Rig led us down a narrow walkway between two containers, then pulled open a metal door in the side of one with a flourish. “After you,” he told me with a grin.

I gripped Lilac's hand tighter as I hunched over to get inside. The air in here smelled sharp but musty, like the mild heat from the day had been trapped inside. I was glad all the snow was gone, though Lilac and I were always warm in our nest in the love shack.

Crouching down, I shuffled through the container and into the camp, anxiety making my chest vibrate. As I straightened up, the first thing I noticed was the huge tree in the centre of a grassy space. There were some lights and decorations already on it, raiders hanging things around the bottom while Aury perched near the top carefully twining tinsel through the branches.

I clutched the wooden crate as my eyes darted to take everything else in. A big building to our left with lots of doors. Two smaller buildings in the far left corner with cardboard boxes stacked outside, and more raiders pulling decorations out of them. In the far right corner was a big wooden structure with stall doors, and I immediately recognised Rig's work in them.

My eyes lit up when I spotted the big vegetable patch, seedlings poking through the soil. I wanted to go over and inspect it to see what they were growing in here, but then I noticed oily black smoke winding through the air toward us before Wyn appeared.

"Seraph, finally. If I have to put up with this bullshit, you do too." His hood turned toward Lilac and jerked in a tiny nod. "Lilac."

"Hey." Lilac looked up at me. "I need to go start my shift. You'll be okay?"

"Yes," I said, wanting to kiss him but I knew he wouldn't take off his mask. "S-see you later."

He rubbed my arm, leaning in to kiss it through his mask, before disappearing back inside the container entrance.

"What are those?" Wyn asked with mild interest, hood jerking toward the crate in my arms.

“Seraph made everyone cups,” Rig said eagerly, then shot me a guilty look. “Sorry, you probably wanted to tell him.”

“It’s okay,” I told him, staying still as Wyn immediately began rooting through the crate.

“You are talented, Seraph,” Wyn said, making me beam with pride. He extracted a cup from the crate with his black fingers and grunted when he saw the *W* carved into the side. “Ah, I thought this would be mine. It’s the best one.”

He didn’t see me roll my many eyes at Rig, who grinned behind his leather mask. A loud voice booming out my name made me look over, and I saw Edin ambling toward us with a big grin.

“You are a welcome sight in the camp walls,” he told me jovially, then looked around. “Where’s little Lilac?”

“He’s got a shift on the wall,” Rig said.

“He is n-not *that* lee-tol,” I added. My Lilac was the perfect size. Perfect for me to curl myself around him at night and keep him warm.

Edin laughed. “*Everyone* is little compared to you, my friend. Including me.”

“And especially W-Wyn,” I said slyly, snickering with Rig and Edin when Wyn hissed.

“Fuck all of you,” he grated. “I’m going to find Danny.”

After he’d flounced off in a stream of smoke, Rig turned to me and eagerly bounced on his toes. “Shall we go hang the decorations now, Seraph?”

“Okay.” I looked around. “Wh-where shall I put these?”

“I will take them and put them outside the bar.” Edin took the crate off of me with a grin. “I’ve made an excellent brew for us, Seraph.”

“B-Brew?” I repeated with a hint of trepidation.

“Booze,” Rig muttered to me. “Monster booze. He’s been fermenting it for a while.”

Edin beamed at me. “It will be very good. And now I must go and get myself ready. I am the Christmas man for the night, Seraph. I think you will love my outfit.”

I didn’t really understand what he meant, but I nodded with a smile and watched him amble off with the crate. Rig touched my arm and gestured at the enormous tree, so we started heading over to it.

I tried not to hunch over any more than normal as several raiders stared at me. Maybe they *had* changed their minds. Maybe they didn’t want me here anymore.

But then Nun and Rusty gave me a wave as they hung decorations on the tree. Daisy stopped on her way from the wooden stalls to pinch my cheek and tell me she and Bo had made lots of food for tonight. Anchor came over, clutching her clipboard, and gave me a big grin as she told me it was great to have me in here.

The moment Aury flew down from the top of the tree to give me a gentle smile, I relaxed. Aury always made me feel calm in a way that no one else did. The life seed he had given me thrummed in my chest from his nearness. It recognised him.

“You are well, Seraph?” he asked me in the rycke language, briefly touching my arm.

“Yes,” I replied in kind. I was getting better at picking out the different languages that muddled my brain and being able to filter them into one. But Aury’s tongue came especially easy to me. “This is strange, and I’m not sure they want me here.”

“They want you here,” he told me. “But I understand. It is the same for me. And Lilac is watching over you from the wall,” he added with a tiny smile, nodding at something high up behind me.

I glanced back, catching Lilac peering down at us from the top of the big wall. He gave me a tiny wave, so I waved back with a grin.

“Ghost probably won’t want to take part in the party too much,” Aury told me. “So if you want some quiet, come and find us.”

“Thank you,” I told him, just as Rig huffed and fidgeted beside us.

“Stop speaking in your secret language!” he said with a glare. “It’s *Christmas!* No leaving me out, damn it.”

I chuckled, ruffling his hair. “S-Sorry, R-Riig.”

His brown eyes grew lively. “I’ll forgive you if you put me on your shoulders so I can hang decorations higher than everyone else.”

Laughing, I hoisted him up with ease and settled him on my shoulders, gripping his knees to keep him steady.

He still wobbled as I straightened to my full height. His gloved hands clutched onto the top of my head. “Holy crap, I’m so freaking tall.”

“Now you c-can get up high.” I passed him the bauble Aury handed to me with a smile. “L-Let’s hang the decorations.”

EDIN

I checked my reflection one last time in the small mirror in our room, carefully adjusting the red hat over my right horn to make sure the fluffy white ball on the end was fully visible.

Mouth stretching into a wide grin, I turned for the door. I had shooed Hunter out of the room so I could get ready in private, wanting everyone to witness the glory of my Christmas man outfit all together.

And I was quite sure that Hunter would appreciate it the most.

I could hear them all talking and laughing out there, the faint strains of odd human music drifting up from the *record player* Rig had. He'd told me they had no records of actual Christmas music, but it would still add to the festive atmosphere.

Peering down one last time at my outfit, I decided I looked very good. Charlie had sneakily handed it to me earlier, saying it wasn't the *typical* Santa outfit, but I took one look at it and decided—yes. This would be *my* Santa outfit. If only because I was sure that it would drive my josdo wild.

My gaze snagged on the set of jingle bells resting on the bed, delivered with the outfit by Charlie. I glanced down at myself and frowned. There was nowhere for me to put them.

Unless...

Snatching them up, I hiked up my skirt and carefully tied them around my sac. There. Perfect. Now I would still jingle with every step, and it would be an *excellent* surprise for Hunter later.

Trying to tamp back my wicked grin, I flung open the door and stepped out onto the walkway that overlooked the camp.

"Ho ho!" I declared as all eyes turned up to me. "Hos for everyone!"

I was improvising a little—Charlie had told me that the Christmas man typically said, *ho ho ho*. But only three hos? Perhaps that would have worked at our little Christmas celebration at the homestead, when there were only three of us. But there were many of us here, and I didn't have the patience to say a 'ho' for every single person in the camp.

I heard a strangled sound leave Hunter as Charlie started cackling beside him, but when I grinned down at my grumpy little human on the grass below, his face was slack as he stared up at me, the drink in his hand forgotten. I knew that look well.

Preening, I sauntered to the end of the walkway and down the stairs, jingling with every step. My tail swished proudly, threatening to lift the back of the tiny red skirt that had replaced my kilt. Its fluffy white hem was faded and yellowed, but I thought it was still very effective. I *had* considered donning a pair of Hunter's intriguing undergarments to wear beneath it, seeing as its hem barely covered the tip of my cock. In the end I'd gone without. Humans were prudish, but they were all adults here. I was sure a few of them would be jealous if they caught a glimpse, but it was still just a cock. A mighty purple cock, but a simple, magnificent cock nonetheless.

"Scratch..." Hunter's voice was hoarse, his frame tense when I reached him. Charlie was still laughing, whereas Moth didn't seem to know where to look, his face flushed pink and eyes studiously averted. Such a prude, that one. Had he never seen a cock before? Maybe Charlie didn't have one—I'd never asked.

"Do you like my Santa outfit, josdo?" I rumbled to Hunter with a smirk, lifting a hand to stroke his scarred cheek. "Charlie said it is technically a sexy *Mrs Claus* outfit, but I think it fits me much better."

Well, it didn't really *fit* me, but I looked good in it.

"Where—" Hunter swallowed. "Where did you get that?"

“I found it earlier when we were going through the boxes,” Charlie drawled, slinking his arm under the back of Moth’s coat. “You’re welcome,” he added to Hunter with a smirk.

Hunter managed to give his friend a weak glare, but his eyes quickly drifted back over to me, trailing down my bare chest and stomach to the skirt.

“It came with a tiny little top,” I told him slyly. “But that barely even covered my nipples, so I went without.”

Hunter’s throat bobbed, a strangled sound leaving him. He threw back his drink and shoved the cup in Charlie’s hand, who was still snickering.

“Where—Where’s the jingle sound coming from Edin?” Charlie asked, biting his lip around a grin.

I smiled evilly at him and shook my hips once to make the bells jingle. Charlie cracked up while Moth’s eyes widened before he coughed awkwardly and looked away.

“Come, josdo.” I took Hunter’s arm. “Let us go and start the Christmas party.”

He let me lead him away, sliding his arm around my bare back. I felt his fingers fiddling with the waistband of the tiny skirt.

“What, uh...” He cleared his throat. “What did you do with the top?”

I smirked over at him. “It is still in our room.”

His face went pink as he cleared his throat again, then croaked, “Okay. That’s, uh... that’s good.”

Chuckling, I threw my arm around his neck and leaned in to nuzzle his ear. “Be sure not to get me too riled up tonight, josdo. Not unless you want everyone to see what will be buried inside you once the party is over.” Leaning back, I gestured at the skirt. “Although I must

admit, it is nice to feel such a cool breeze on my balls. Perhaps I will wear this around the camp more often.”

Hunter’s hand clenched around the skirt’s waistband. “How ‘bout this—you can wear it as often as you want when we’re in our room.”

I frowned. “But there is no breeze in our room—”

“Scratch.” He turned to face me, casting a furtive glance around. He must have missed the stream of sinuous black smoke curling toward us, because before I could warn him, he looked at me with hard eyes and said, “I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but if you don’t put on that tiny top later and fuck me while dressed as Mrs Claus, I am going to be really fucking mad.”

“Not interrupting, am I?”

Hunter jumped out of his skin when Wyn appeared directly beside me, a smirk colouring his voice as he crossed his arms. Face flaming bright red, Hunter clenched his jaw so hard a muscle jumped, then shot me a betrayed look that made my stomach hurt.

“Josdo, I did not know you were going to say that,” I said desperately as he turned and stomped off. “I would have warned you Wyn was coming if I knew—”

“Oops,” Wyn said airily, making me frown over at him.

“You torment him,” I growled, an uncharacteristic swell of anger making my hands clench into fists.

Wyn huffed and waved a hand. “Hardly. He’s too sensitive.”

“Oh, *he* is too sensitive, you crusty old bastard?” I snarled, turning to face him. Wyn’s shoulders stiffened, blackened fingers twitching by his sides. “Would *you* like your private conversations with Danny eavesdropped on by others? Perhaps I should tell everyone about walking past your room the other night and overhearing you begging for your human to—”

“I’ll rip your fucking horns out of your head, boor,” Wyn snarled, his dark hood getting in my face.

“I’d like to see you try, you bag of bones.” Before he could react, I had him in a headlock and was scrubbing my knuckles over his horn in the way I knew he despised.

He squawked, and a split-second later my arms snapped closed around nothing as he dissipated into oily black smoke and resolidified a few feet away with a snarl.

“I practically fucking raised you, you ungrateful swine.” He dissipated again when I lunged for him, jingling wildly as the bells swung under my skirt.

I growled in fury, whipping my head around to try and find him. “You goad me to anger and are too cowardly to even fight me—”

“I don’t want to fight you because every time you move, the entire camp can see your cock and the fucking bells tied around your balls!”

“They are my jingle balls,” I snapped, but paused and glanced around to see that everyone had frozen and was staring at us. Hunter’s handsome face was twisted into an expression that combined disbelief, worry and just a hint of smugness curling up the snarled corner of his mouth. A group of raiders was slowly inching away from us. Gloam was watching with a slight frown, as if he might intervene, while Rig gawked at my skirt with wide eyes.

Moth seemed as though he might be reconsidering his unshakeable worship of Wyn, but Charlie looked practically gleeful as he called out, “Edin, tell us more about what you overheard the other—”

“Shut up,” Wyn snarled from behind me, making me whirl around with a growl. “Edin, calm yourself. I was only—”

I lunged at him again, and once more he dissipated into black smoke as he grated, “You little shit.”

“Scratch.” Hunter was hurrying toward me, and I snapped my gaze to his face to try and calm down. He placed a hand on my heaving chest, the warmth of his palm sinking into my skin. “As much as I love you defending my honour, maybe today isn’t the day to get into a brawl with Wyn.” He lowered his voice. “Everyone really *can* see your dick every time you whirl around in that tiny skirt. And the, uh, the balls. *Bells*,” he corrected hurriedly.

After a pause, I snorted, the anger fleeing as quickly as it had risen. Unclenching my fists, I shook out my shoulders and cupped the side of Hunter’s head. “Then they are all lucky to see the majesty of it.”

Hunter pursed his mouth to suppress his smile. “Okay, well, I’d prefer if only *I* got to see the, uh, majesty of your cock. Okay? So maybe cool down. Beat up Wyn some other day,” he added with a smirk, which made me chuckle.

“As if he ever could.” Wyn’s snide voice from nearby made me whip my head around to stare at his stupid black hood.

“Come here and prove it, you old bastard.”

A strangled sound came from his hood. “Edin, I was just *joking*, you oversensitive boor.”

“You can joke at my expense, but not my Hunter’s.” I threw my arm around Hunter’s neck and tugged him closer. “You will *not* try to embarrass him again. Don’t make me tell Danny, Wyn.”

My oldest friend stiffened, fingers twitching. His hood turned as he looked around quickly, relaxing a little when he realised Danny hadn’t witnessed any of it.

“Fine,” he snarled at length, then huffed as he crossed his arms. His voice was sulky when he muttered, “Obviously I wasn’t *actually* going to rip out your horns.”

I burst out laughing, rubbing my cheek over Hunter’s head before pressing a smacking kiss to his temple. “I know you weren’t. It has

been a while since we got into a good scrap.”

Hunter exhaled heavily, scrubbing his face and muttering something under his breath. “I’m going to get a drink,” he grated in a louder voice. “You want one?”

I perked up, grinning wide. “No, josdo. I have been fermenting my own brew for many weeks now. Something just for those from our world.” Chuckling, I scrubbed his hair. “It might be too strong for you dainty humans. You’d best stick to your own weak drinks.”

Wyn’s hood cocked with interest. “You’ve made something strong enough for us, Edin?”

“Yes.” I ambled over to him once Hunter had walked off to join a snickering Charlie and perplexed Moth. All anger forgotten, I threw my arm around Wyn’s shoulders and led him toward the diner. “Took me a few tries, but I think I’ve concocted something with a good kick to it.”

Wyn grunted, giving my shoulder a brief squeeze. “Let’s find out.” He cleared his throat, then gruffly added, “Outfit looks good, by the way.”

I grinned wide, giving his horn a rough scrub just to hear him hiss. “I know.”

RIG

I couldn't help it—I started blubbering the moment everyone began exchanging gifts.

It was dusk, so all the fairy lights twinkled, and the big tree in the centre of the camp looked freaking *amazing* with all its shimmering tinsel and decorations reflecting the glow.

Everyone was gathered outside, talking and laughing and drinking. The record player spun out music softly by the diner, hooked up to the generator Lilac and Seraph had let me borrow for the night. There wasn't any Christmas music in Mary's record collection, but Charlie had enthusiastically told me that he *loved* music from the sixties when I'd put on the first record, so at least one person was happy.

We'd brought out some old tables so that Daisy and Bo could lay out all the food for people to pick at. There were bowls of nuts and dried fruit, a big vat of Bo's stew with a stack of bowls beside it, and Daisy's version of a Christmas cake.

Beside a huge steaming saucepan of mulled wine sat rows and rows of bottles and pre-mixed cocktail cans—there was a *lot* of booze. Everything we'd brought back from Mary's place, as well as water and warm apple cider for those who didn't drink alcohol.

Seraph and Lilac had handed out the cups that Seraph had carved for everyone, and I watched Apollo fill his with apple cider as he laughed with Bo. I clutched mine tight, already tearing up as I looked down at my name carved into its side.

The atmosphere had eased up after Wyn and Edin's weird little bickering match, which ended with them wandering off together like nothing had even happened. I was glad my beastie was so calm and levelheaded. Even though I'd heard that Edin and Wyn were literally

thousands of years old—way older than Gloam—he was a million times more mature than them.

I looked around for him, perking up when I saw him chuckling with Seraph about something while Lilac stood beside them, silently sipping from his own handcarved cup as he watched everyone mingle.

Despite my begging, Gloam had opted out of wearing a Santa hat, saying he didn't want to steal Edin's thunder. But he had attached some jingle bells to the leather harness over his big shoulders, which kept making me daydream about just how fast and frantic I could get those bells to jingle later when I had him in our bed.

As I sipped my mulled wine, I watched Edin carry two huge jugs over to where the other human-beastie couples had congregated outside the bar. There was actually a jingling sound coming from him too, but I couldn't see where he'd attached any jingle bells. He'd told me a while back that he was fermenting some kind of super-strong brew for the beasties to drink, so I wandered over, curious about it. I kind of wanted to try it, but Gloam had warned me that it would be very, *very* strong.

"Seraph, Gloam!" Edin called as he started pouring a dark, murky liquid into Wyn's cup. "Come and drink with us!"

I heard Gloam chuckle as he walked over with Seraph, whose giant hand was wrapped around Lilac's. "I'll try it for you, Edin, but I think I'd like to keep a clear head tonight."

I sidled up to him with a grin and stretched up on my tiptoes to kiss him. "I sure don't plan on keeping a clear head."

He smiled down at me, smoothing my curls back from my face. "And you deserve a night to relax, my love. I'll keep you safe."

"Thanks." I grinned, then my eyes drifted over to the jug in Edin's hand. "Hey, maybe I can just try a—"

“Oh no, little Rig.” Edin chuckled as he loped over to pass Seraph and Gloam their full cups. “This is too strong for you, and I am not eager to have my head knocked off by Gloam’s war hammer if you don’t wake up in the morning.”

I tried not to pout as he gave my cheek a gentle pat before walking back to hold his hand out for Aury’s cup. The big quiet beastie shook his head with a tiny smile, clutching Ghost’s hand.

“Maybe later, friend.” Edin clapped him on the shoulder, then moved on to take Moth’s cup.

Charlie immediately cleared his throat, shifting on his feet. “Uh, if it’s really that strong, I don’t know if—”

“I want some,” Moth interrupted, shooting Charlie a look. “I can handle it. I’m only *half* human.”

Charlie’s dark brows hiked up, and he looked at Hunter as if for support. Hunter just shrugged, sipping whatever non-lethal drink was already in his cup.

“Baby.” Charlie gentled his voice, turning to face Moth. “How about I go and get us some—”

“Bah, he will be fine.” Edin thrust Moth’s full cup back into his hands. “He will know if it is too strong for him. He’s not a child, Charlie.”

“I know he’s not,” he said through clenched teeth, frustration making his Texan accent a little stronger. “But—”

“Charlie,” Moth muttered, face going a little pink as he glanced around self-consciously. “Just leave it.”

Charlie exhaled a slow breath, jaw ticking. He gave a curt nod, then crossed his arms over his chest and watched Moth intently as all the monsters raised their cups.

“Hos for you all,” Edin declared, which made Charlie snort weakly and wipe his hands down his face, muttering to himself.

Seraph was fiddling with his cup, and he didn't take a sip as he watched all the others lift them to their lips. Gloam immediately coughed, and my eyes actually watered when the scent of the brew hit my nose.

"Christ, it smells like... kombucha mixed with paint thinner," I said, horrified.

Moth's face had gone a faint purple. After a second of trying very hard to hold it back, he clutched his throat and made a retching sound. Edin had downed his entire cup in one go and was smiling widely, but even Wyn was trying to hold back hoarse, raspy coughs as he smacked a fist to his chest.

"Edin, that is"—his voice was even more distorted than normal, like he was trying not to choke—"tart."

"It's good, no?" Edin beamed at the others. "A good kick to it. Seraph, you didn't drink yours."

Seraph's many eyes flickered around the group, filled with nerves. Lilac murmured something to him, but after a second he swallowed and raised the cup to his lips. After taking a sip, he cocked his head and poured back the rest.

"N-nice." He grinned at Edin, who beamed back. "Sm-smooth."

"*Smooth?*" Moth choked out, his voice still hoarse as Charlie smacked him on the back. "I think it's stripped away my stomach lining."

"Well isn't that just swell," Charlie gritted out as he took Moth's cup and poured what was left into Edin's. "Let's go get something else, slayer. Good luck getting your *special visit* from Mrs Claus later," he added to Hunter as they passed him. "He won't be able to stand after another cup of that."

"Edin can handle it," Hunter replied smugly.

“Ahh.” Edin threw back his second cup with a satisfied sound, then set it down beside the two jugs. “Now, to the gifts.”

I perked up immediately, clutching Gloam’s hand and dragging him over to the tree. Edin sauntered ahead of us, tail swishing beneath the hem of his tiny skirt, displaying the bottom of his butt cheeks with every step. I tried not to look. Kind of.

And he jingled with every step.

“Humans,” he declared once he was standing at the base of the enormous tree, backlit by the countless fairy lights twined through its branches, “and fellow monsters,” he added with a smirk.

Gloam chuckled beside me. Wyn huffed in amusement and slung his arm around Danny’s neck. Aury flushed and pulled Ghost closer to his front, while Lilac slipped his arm around Seraph’s waist and tucked himself under his long arm.

“It is time for gifts,” Edin boomed, preening under the weight of everyone’s gazes. “As your Christmas man, I have judged you all and deemed you to be... not evil! Except Wyn,” he added after a pause. Wyn just shrugged as Danny rolled his eyes, fiddling with the long, blackened fingers draped over his shoulder.

“Exchange your gifts now!” Edin ordered, placing his hands on his hips and lifting his chin like he was some general leading his army.

The raiders looked at each other uncertainly, then gradually started approaching people with their presents, wrapped in scraps of cloth or old magazines or bags. I bounced on my toes, dragging Gloam over to the sack of gifts I’d left outside the old bar.

“Can you see the names on them?” I asked him as I pulled them out, squinting down at the hastily wrapped presents. “It’s too dark.”

“I can see them, firebrand.” Gloam took them so we could begin handing them out.

Danny and Wyn—although Wyn insisted it was just Danny—had gotten people all kinds of good stuff. Brand new socks and shirts, fancy shampoo and body wash, gloves and scarves, good coffee and boxes of candy. They gave Lilac a big tin of herbal tea and Seraph an expensive-as-shit looking collection of woodworking tools.

Ghost had made Seraph a giant sweater. *That* was the one that made me start blubbing. The bottoms of the arms and the hem were striped, a hodgepodge of different fabrics he'd sewn together to make it long enough for Seraph's lanky body. The beastie beamed so wide all his sharp teeth jutted out, then quickly wriggled into it before picking Lilac up clean off the ground to nuzzle his face.

Most of the gifts from Ghost and Aury were handsewn. When my best friend gave me a set of pyjamas, I sniffled and pulled him into a hard hug. Gloam handed them their gifts with a smile, and Aury beamed when he unwrapped the set of newish gardening tools I'd found stuffed in a corner of the old bar.

We gave Ghost a stack of books that I'd found hidden under a pile of stuff in our room, and once the two of them walked off to start their shift on the wall, I looked around at everyone else eagerly.

Wyn was handing Moth a new dagger while Charlie looked on with a concerned frown. Edin and Hunter gave Danny a jar of peanut butter wrapped in black cloth, and I overheard Edin telling Danny that the cloth was *also* a gift, because he could use it to muzzle Wyn. As Danny burst out laughing, a hiss emerged from Wyn's hood, his fingers twitching as if he was a split-second away from snatching back the dagger he'd just given Moth to plunge it into Edin's shoulder.

I grinned, looking up at Gloam as he threaded big fingers through my hair and kissed the top of my head. It was a *little* different to the Christmases I'd had as a kid, but it was perfect.

DANNY

I was convinced that everyone knew what I had going on under my clothes.

Before the party had started, I'd gone to take a quick shower. And when I'd got back to our room, Wyn was waiting for me, lounging back on the bed with his hood down and a smirk on his face.

And a black gift box in his lap.

"Who's that for?" I asked demurely as I scrubbed my towel over my wet hair.

He huffed. "Come and open it, sweet."

Dropping my towel on the dresser, I scrambled onto the bed with a big grin, coming to a stop on my knees between Wyn's splayed legs. I went to reach for the box, then paused as I eyed it resting innocently in his lap.

"I swear to god, Wyn, if it's just your dick in there..."

His mouth twitched. "It's not."

Eyeing him suspiciously, I reached for the box again and lifted off the lid. I was only half relieved when I realised it really *wasn't* just his dick, but it took me a few seconds to work out what it was.

When I did, after lifting the first item out, my throat went all hot. A bark of nervous laughter escaped. "Oh."

"You don't like it, sweet?" Wyn asked slyly, reaching out to stroke my flushed cheek with long, cool fingers.

I swallowed, my cock twitching in my pants as I stared at the tiny black lace panties in my hands. Lifting them higher, I realised they had a pouch for my junk, like they'd actually been designed for

people with dicks. They'd fit way better than the ones I'd taken from that shopping mall.

"I like them," I croaked, then glanced down and realised there were several other things still in the box.

Face flaming and cock steadily hardening, I pulled out the next item. A black garter belt. Then sheer stockings. As I picked up a lacy bralet, I choked on a breath when the final two items were revealed.

"You are such a dirty old man," I muttered, fighting off a smile as I picked up the black butt plug and silver metal cock cage. My cheeks burned as I looked at Wyn.

He grinned evilly back, showing off all his sharp white teeth. Christ, he looked a split second away from steepling his fingers together and cackling like a villain.

I snorted, absently rearranging my dick before picking up the cage with hesitant fingers and staring at it in fascination. "Wow, that's... uh. Small."

"Well, the point of it is to stop you getting hard, isn't it?" He snickered. "Don't worry, I got the right size."

I shot him a weak glare, then looked down at the cage again before chuckling out an embarrassed laugh. "Okay, old man. I'll wear it for you sometime."

Wyn shifted the box off his lap and sat forward to kiss me, his hands dipping down to undo my pants. "Now."

"Mmph—" I tore my mouth free to stare at him in horror. "What?"

"You're going to put all of this on for me now, Danny," he rasped, tugging my pants and underwear down. "And you're going to keep it on until I'm ready for you later."

I gawked at him, sucking in a breath when my hard cock swung free and smacked my stomach. He huffed in amusement, mouth curving

in one corner.

“You’ll have to calm down first, sweet.” He gave the head of my dick a gentle flick.

“Ow!” I flinched, dropping the cage to cup my hands protectively over my junk as I glared at him. “Wyn!”

“Just speeding it along.” Snickering, he disappeared into a stream of black smoke and reappeared beside the bed, sinking into a crouch and yanking my legs to the end of the bed so he could unlace my boots and tug them off.

“I can’t wear all this now!” I hissed, gesturing at the door. “I have to go out there and—”

“No one will know, Danny.” He grinned up at me wickedly. “Except me.”

Goddamn him, that did sound ridiculously hot. Which was *not* helping my erection go down. Neither was glancing back at the cock cage, even though it looked kind of intimidating. But, oh my god, how would people not see it? Surely it would be all bulky under my pants. Wouldn’t the little padlock rattle against the metal?

“Wyn, I don’t know...” I said uneasily, even as my hand inched across the bed to feel the lacy fabric of the panties.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to, Danny.” He’d managed to strip my bottom half completely while I was distracted, and was now standing up to tug off my shirt. I let him, despite my nerves.

“Although...” His lips twitched as he suppressed a smile. “You will probably *want* the cage. Seeing as this...” He leaned over and picked up the plug. “Is going to be inside you. Unless you want to walk around the party with an erection all night.”

I made a strangled sound, shoving my damp hair back. “Okay, fine.”

At least the nerves were helping get rid of the boner issue. I stood up from the bed, fidgety and anxious as I stared at the plug in Wyn's hand. He dropped it back on the bed to cup my face, smoothing his thumbs over my cheeks.

"If you don't like the cage, we can take it straight back off." He grinned again. "But you will like it."

"Sure, whatever," I mumbled, my blush spreading all the way down to my chest as I shoved him weakly in the stomach. "You're such an ass."

He huffed, stepping back to look down at my now relaxed cock. I clenched my hands into fists when his eyes flared and he rasped, "Perfect."

Putting the cage on was an experience—and not all that fun at first. I felt ridiculous as I tried to stuff my balls through the ring, and I was sweating by the time I finally managed it, easing my dick through after until it sat flush against my pubic mound.

"This does not feel very sexy," I grated, carefully feeding my cock into the cage while Wyn watched eagerly. He'd wanted to help, but there was no way I'd be able to stay soft with his hands all up in my business.

He was right though—he'd got a good size. It was snug but not uncomfortable, and there was enough space between the metal bars at the head that I'd be able to pee without it getting everywhere.

I held very, very still when Wyn stepped forward to slide the pins into place, convinced he was going to catch some *very* delicate skin. But he didn't, and soon I heard a little *click* as the padlock locked, making my pulse leap.

"Beautiful," Wyn rasped, sounding like he wanted to take it off me already. I watched with wide eyes as he pulled a thin chain out of his coat pocket and threaded the tiny key onto it, giving me another evil grin as he fastened it around his neck.

Tentatively, I looked down and stared in disbelief at my cock, all neatly encased in metal. The ring behind my balls made them feel extra full, and the weight of the cage was a strangely pleasurable tug on my junk. Almost like Wyn's hand was holding me securely.

I gulped when his long blackened fingers came into view, and he trailed them down the metal bars. A single fingertip stroked over the exposed slit on my cockhead, making my hips jerk back. "W-Wyn."

Already my dick was tingling, trying to stiffen up. It swelled a little in the cage, the sensation so weird and unlike anything else. Swallowing again, I looked up at Wyn fearfully. "How long do you want me to wear this?"

He just shrugged, already lubing up the butt plug. *Oh god.*

Before I could blink, he'd spun me round and bent me over the bed. I sucked in a breath, cock tingling again as his big hand splayed between my shoulder blades to keep me pinned. "Wyn—"

I jerked when the smooth, tapered tip of the plug pressed against my hole. He paused, waiting for me to bear down, then slid it inside until the flared base nestled between my cheeks.

"F-fuck," I panted, knees trembling.

Wyn huffed. I could feel him fiddling with the base—checking it was snug and secure, I guessed—before helping me back up. The moment I straightened, I gasped as the plug shifted and pressed against my prostate.

"Oh my god, Wyn," I croaked, clutching his coat. "I don't think I can go out there like this. They'll all *know*."

"No one will know, sweet." He feathered his fingertips over my cheek. "I promise."

I let out a strangled sound and looked back at the fancy lingerie on the bed. "And—and all that too?"

“Yes,” Wyn rasped. “But put it on after I leave.”

Clasping my jaw in one big, long-fingered hand, he held my head still as he dipped down to kiss me.

“I look forward to unwrapping my gift later,” he murmured, mouth curving into a sharp smile against mine. “You remember your safeword if you need it to come off while we’re around other people?”

“Yes,” I grated, heat travelling up my throat.

“Excellent.” Grinning evilly, he gave my ass a sharp tap, making me jump, before turning for the door. “I’m going to find Edin. See you out there, sweet.”

After he’d slunk out of the room, I stood there breathing hard for a few seconds before turning toward the underwear on the bed. How had he talked me into this? Already trembling, I tugged the tiny panties up my legs and stared down as they encased the cage neatly, keeping the metal ring snug against my pubic mound.

Okay... my junk *did* look pretty good.

The panties had a thong back, and the gusset was a slight press on the plug, keeping me all too aware that it was there. I put on the garter belt and tugged the stockings up my legs, trying not to rip them. After fiddling with the garter straps for a minute or two to get them secured, I swallowed and reached for the bralet. I kind of couldn’t believe I was doing this.

Luckily the bra hooked at the front, seeing as I had literally zero experience with these things. Once everything was on, I fidgeted anxiously for a few seconds before padding over to the mirror.

My breath escaped me in a little puff as I stared at my reflection. Holy crap. Why didn’t guys wear this stuff more often? I looked... I looked *really good*. Suddenly, I was a million percent on board with Wyn’s evil little plan. He was going to lose his *mind*.

Feeling way more confident, I started pulling on my clothes. But just as I was fastening my pants, a sudden vibration—in my ass—made me yelp and jump out of my skin.

Oh my god, it was a *vibrating one*? Shoving my hand down the back of my pants, I felt around the base of the plug hurriedly, finally locating a tiny button. Hot all over, I exhaled in relief when the vibration stopped. I must've knocked the button while I was pulling on my pants.

But just as I was reaching for my shirt, the vibration started up again.

“Gah!” I fumbled with my pants as I looked around wildly. I *knew* I hadn't knocked it that time. But a few seconds after turning it back off, it started up again.

What? *WHAT*? Wait... Was it... was it *remote-controlled*?

My eyes shot to the door as I stood stock still, trying not to twitch from the vibration against my prostate. Was *Wyn* doing this?

Even as I moaned miserably and scrubbed my face, my cock was trying to fill in the cage. I cupped it through my pants, feeling no relief. Groaning, I hurriedly finished getting dressed and strode for the door as steadily as I could. The moment I tugged it open, the vibration stopped.

I knew my gaze was already slightly unhinged as I stepped outside and looked around wildly for Wyn. I spotted him helping Edin—who was dressed only in a tiny red skirt and two Santa hats over his horns, his ass practically hanging out—pour a gross-looking liquid from several dirty urns into jugs. But as I stomped down the motel stairs and headed for Wyn, he straightened, his hood turning in my direction.

My eyes narrowed, then widened as his hand crept into his coat pocket. A second later, the plug started vibrating, making me stumble on the grass. A shudder wracked my frame, and I glanced

around in horror, convinced everyone would know. Oh my god, would the monsters be able to *hear* it?

My legs shook as I kept walking toward Wyn. When Edin bent down to grab one of the jugs, I gave Wyn a subtle but frantic headshake. He huffed, but a second later the vibration stopped before his hand innocently slipped out of his pocket.

“Are you alright, sweet?” he asked demurely when I reached them, cupping my cheek. “You look a bit flushed.”

“I’m fine,” I gritted out, grabbing his coat sleeve. “Can I talk to you for a sec?”

“I’m afraid I’m busy helping Edin get his drinks ready for the party,” he purred, threading his fingers briefly through my hair. “Can it wait?”

“Not really,” I managed in a strangled voice. “Wyn—”

“Danny!”

I jumped, hairline beading with sweat as Rig bounded over with a big grin.

“You gotta come hang a decoration on the tree,” he told me enthusiastically. “Everyone has to hang one. Wyn refused, so maybe you can hang two.”

“Um, okay,” I croaked, then gave Wyn another meaningful look—meaning, *do not turn that fucking vibrator back on*—but he’d already turned away to help Edin.

Sweating, I walked stiffly beside Rig to the big tree in the middle of camp, convinced Wyn was going to turn it back on at any second. And *why* was my cock trying its damn best to get hard at the thought of it? I should’ve been mortified! I *was* mortified!

God, he was such an evil bastard.

After hanging a couple decorations on the tree, Rig cheerfully recounted the little tiff I'd missed between Edin and Wyn while I was getting dressed. Then, before I could escape, I was drawn into a friendly conversation with Gloam. At one point, the plug in my ass vibrated for about three seconds before stopping again. Gloam paused, head cocking as if he'd heard it, before continuing on as normal while my entire upper body flamed with embarrassment.

Then Daisy asked me to help her set up the food, and I couldn't say no to Daisy—I liked her too much and she successfully kept Wyn in check. Mostly. Periodically, the vibrations would start up for a few seconds before stopping again, making me jolt and clench my teeth to stop any whimpers from escaping.

I was sweating by the time dusk approached and everyone began congregating outside, except for the few raiders who had their shifts keeping watch on the wall. My panties were already uncomfortably damp with pre-cum, and my asshole couldn't stop clenching around the plug.

I was going to kill him.

After fucking him senseless.

Luckily no one noticed me fidgeting constantly as Edin poured his lethal homemade brew for all the monsters, and there was enough background noise that nobody—*please god*—could hear the plug vibrating wildly in my ass. Wyn had turned it back on before accepting his drink, and then he'd gotten distracted by how fucking awful it was after taking a sip.

"T-t-turn it off," I hissed to him when the others were distracted by Charlie coddling Moth, who probably should *not* be drinking that stuff.

"Hmm?" Wyn said innocently, bracing himself before taking another small sip from his cup. He wheezed, shoulders shuddering from the taste, before *finally* reaching into his pocket. My entire frame sagged when the vibrations stopped, but I was too keyed up at this point.

I gripped his coat, part of me so horny that my fingers were already twitching to tear open his pants. Maybe if I got my hand in there while no one was looking, I could get him worked up enough that he —

“Come on, sweet.” Wyn slung his arm around my shoulders and started leading me toward the tree, where everyone else was heading. “Time for presents. You’ve been waiting for this.”

“I don’t give a shit about the presents anymore!” I hissed, trying not to reach down and adjust my goods. “My cock feels like it’s about to fall off. This can’t be good for it!”

He snickered. “You’re fine. Unless—” He turned sharply toward me, his face hidden in his dark hood. “Is it *actually* hurting?”

Groaning, I reluctantly shook my head. “No, it’s just—Wyn, how much longer do I gotta wear this?”

“You’ve only had it on for a few hours, Danny.” I could hear the grin in his voice as he stepped closer and murmured, “Like it?”

“I—It’s—” I didn’t want to admit that yes, I fucking did. The anticipation was killing me. Knowing I wouldn’t be able to get any relief until Wyn decided, even when we did go back to our room, was *killing me*.

He huffed, wrapping his arm back around me to lead me forward. “You like it,” he murmured darkly.

He showed me mercy as we handed out all the presents, because he knew I really had been looking forward to this. Anchor loved the big cannister of fancy coffee we’d gotten her—okay, that Wyn had stolen—and Gloam was delighted by the stack of leather-bound notebooks and heavy fountain pen.

The gift-giving took a while, and then a group of raiders and monsters migrated toward the old bar to hang out and drink. I gave Wyn an expectant look, but he just huffed and tugged me over. I

fidgeted anxiously, shifting from foot to foot as Wyn sank gracefully to the ground beside Edin, who was stealing Hunter's drink to have a sip and declaring that he may as well be drinking water.

Everyone else started sitting down too, Seraph pulling Lilac's much smaller frame into the cradle of his long, loosely crossed legs, Rig snuggling up in Gloam's lap and rubbing his cheek over the monster's big shoulder. Moth and Charlie sat side by side, but Moth's hand smoothed over Charlie's thigh as he whispered something in his ear.

Okay, so it was... it was couples time, huh? Now that my crotch was at everyone's eye-level, I grew even more convinced that they'd be able to see the cage in my pants.

But I couldn't sit down. If I sat down, the damn plug was going to press in... places.

As if he knew *exactly* what I was thinking, Wyn huffed in amusement and reached up to tangle his fingers in mine. "Sit down, sweet."

"I'm good," I croaked. "I'll just go and—"

"Don't be silly." He drew me down in his impossibly strong grip. "Sit and *relax*."

I resisted, but when I saw his other hand start creeping toward his coat pocket, I quickly relented. "Okay, fine."

Wyn settled me on his lap, and the moment I was seated, I squeaked as the plug shifted and ground against my prostate.

"Are you alright, Danny?" Edin rumbled, reaching for one of the jugs.

"I'm fine," I wheezed, trembling on Wyn's lap, my caged cock leaking non-stop into my skimpy panties.

My legs shifted restlessly, the silky fabric of the stockings gliding against my pants. The bra felt a little constrictive as I tried not to

pant, and my nipples were already hard points dragging over the lace as I sucked in fast breaths.

“Want a drink, sweet?” Wyn murmured, his hood dipping to nuzzle his flat nose against my neck.

“N-no,” I got out. There was no way in hell I was touching a *drop* of alcohol and potentially missing out on getting relief after he’d put me through this.

“You’re so tense.” His arms were wrapped around me, keeping me close to his front, and one big palm slid up my chest in an outwardly soothing gesture. Except he was really just tracing the edge of the bra before brushing his fingers over the hard bud of my nipple.

“Not enjoying the party?” he purred in my ear.

“You’re a bastard,” I mumbled, my face and throat hot and flushed.

He just wheezed out a little chuckle, scraping his sharp teeth over my neck before lifting his head. “Yes.”

The cage was a weighty tug on my junk, impossible to ignore. Wyn shifted beneath me, and then one of his crossed legs pressed against my swollen balls. I let out a strangled sound, gripping his knees with clawing fingers. My nuts kept trying to lift but couldn’t. My cock swelled again, pressing into the metal cage.

I could barely focus on what was happening around me. The others were talking, laughing, and Wyn joined in as I sat there vibrating with the urge to grind my ass into his lap. And then my ass really *was* vibrating. I hadn’t even noticed Wyn slyly reaching into his pocket, but suddenly my hips twitched as unrelenting pleasure pulsed through my prostate.

My eyes darted frantically over the people around us. Did they *know*? None of them had seemed to notice, but then I saw Moth’s head lift and cock before he went still, like he was listening intently.

Like he was trying to place the faint, muffled sound he could suddenly hear, as if he... recognised it.

Face flaming, I turned to hiss at Wyn to shut it off, jumping a little when Chuck's flat face peered up at me from beside us. She chirped at me once then scurried off toward Moth.

"Wyn," I hissed, trying to keep my voice low. "Turn. It. Off."

He huffed, and I could practically feel him rolling his eyes as he reached back into his pocket. But then he went very still, hood cocking in confusion, just as I heard Moth say, "What's this?"

My head whipping round, I stared in horror as he picked up the tiny black remote control that Chuck had just deposited on his lap. Wyn grunted as I jammed my elbow frantically into his gut, but before either of us could speak up, Moth peered closer at it. And pressed a button.

"Nnngh." I clamped my lips together before any other humiliating sounds could escape me as the vibration in my ass got stronger.

Charlie peered over Moth's shoulder at the little remote control, giving Chuck's head an absent stroke as she clambered onto his lap.

"What's it do?" Moth pressed the button again. I almost rocketed out of Wyn's lap. Then Moth jammed his thumb on the button a few more times.

Oh my god. Oh my god. It was vibrating so hard now even I could hear it. Wyn cleared his throat as I scrambled out of his lap, but I couldn't straighten up. I hunched over, resisting the urge to clutch my ass, as I croaked, "W-W-Wyn."

"Danny, what's wrong?" Edin stared up at me with wide eyes, then frowned. "What is that sound?"

"Wyn," I yelped, then grabbed one of his horns in an unforgiving grip and yanked him to his feet. He hissed, shuddering as I squeezed. Everyone was staring at us. Edin looked almost scandalised as his

big purple eyes widened, fixed on my hand around Wyn's horn. He reached over and covered Hunter's eyes.

"Get. It. Now," I gritted out, shudders wracking my whole body, before turning to flee. Lilac side-eyed me with a knowing look, but stayed silent as I stumbled past him, and a nonplussed Seraph, with a vibrating ass.

Raiders stared as I staggered toward the motel. I practically crawled up the staircase, feeling like my entire body was vibrating from the force of the plug going wild in my ass. It finally stopped as I fell into our room, but before I could sob in relief, thick black smoke crept under the door and Wyn appeared in front of me.

"You *bastard*," I wheezed, already reaching down with shaking hands to tug my boots and socks off, a guttural groan leaving me as I bent down and the plug shifted.

Wyn chuckled, casually discarding his coat as he slipped past me and wandered toward the bed.

"Where are you going?" I barked. "Get back here now!"

His mouth twitched as he turned to face me, long fingers unbuttoning his loose shirt and slowly revealing his pale, scarred chest. "Come here, Danny."

Knees trembling, I crossed the room as my hands lowered to fumble with my fly. But Wyn stopped me, tangling our fingers together to kiss my knuckles. Then he directed my hands to his half-buttoned shirt.

"Me first," he rasped, trailing cool fingers over my flushed cheek.

Groaning in frustration, I fumbled with the buttons and shoved the shirt off his shoulders, my gaze locking onto that tiny key around his neck. I didn't look away from it as I ripped open his pants, then pushed him down onto the edge of the bed so I could kneel and get them down his legs.

I yanked off one big black boot, then the other, then the socks I insisted he wear—the thought of bare feet in leather was gross to me. After tugging his pants over his feet, I straightened and glared down at him.

He looked only faintly amused, which made me even madder—and hornier. But he finally started sliding his hands up my sides, taking my shirt with them. “Time to unwrap my gift.”

I shivered, lifting my arms to get my shirt off. A low hiss escaped Wyn as he splayed his hands over my lace-covered chest, before slipping his fingers underneath the bra to stroke my nipples once. I bit my lip to muffle my whimper, hands trembling as I undid my pants and shoved them down my legs.

When I straightened, flushing madly, Wyn’s eyes were glued to me. He looked a little slack-jawed, face glazed. *Finally*, a reaction that made a hint of smugness creep back in now that the strangely arousing horror of being out in public with a vibrating ass was over.

“So what do you think?” I asked slyly, grinning when his cock slid free between his legs.

My smug tone made his eyes snap up and narrow, before his mouth curved into a tiny, evil smile. Cupping my lace-covered, caged cock, he leaned in to press an innocent kiss to my belly.

“Beautiful,” he rasped, before grinning up at me again. “Perfect. Shall we see how you’ve been doing in this cage?”

“Um...” My cheeks burned as Wyn peeled the panties to one side, leaving them tucked against my junk. He huffed.

“They’re soaked.” Trailing his fingers over the cage, he made a soft sound of mock sympathy. “Look at this poor little cock trying its best to get hard.”

I glared down at him, giving his horn a weak shove, but all he did was ease my hips closer and dip his head, making my breath catch

in my throat. An embarrassing sound left me when his tongue emerged to feather over my weeping slit.

“You’re leaking so much,” he purred, licking again. “That little plug did a good job of milking you, didn’t it?”

“Wyn,” I groaned, fingers trembling as I threaded them through his hair. Part of me wanted to shove my cock into his mouth, cage and all, just to see if it would offer any kind of relief.

Before I could, he ducked down to lash my swollen balls with his tongue before sitting back. Giving his straining cock a stroke, he shifted back on the bed to lean against the headboard. Hand still wrapped around his length, he gave me a sharp grin and slid his heels apart on the mattress.

“Come here.”

I immediately scrambled onto the bed, my legs trembling. Settling between his spread knees, I placed my hands on his scar-roughened thighs. “C-Can we take it off now?”

“No,” Wyn rasped, trailing his fingers down his cock to stroke his slit. “I said me first.”

I gulped. “Wh-what—”

“I’ll let you out once you’ve made me come.” He slid a long finger inside and purred, “I bet you’d do anything to sink your cock in here, wouldn’t you?”

A strangled sound escaped me as I stared down at his hand, clutching his thighs tight. “Y-yes.”

“Prove it.” Removing his hand, he reached over to the nightstand and picked up that tiny remote. A second later, I jerked with a whimper as the plug started vibrating. “Do a good job and you’ll get your reward.”

Breathing hard, I leaned down and sucked his cock into my mouth without any hesitation, willing to do literally anything to get the cage off. Wyn hissed, fingers sliding through my hair and gripping tight. With my body bent at this angle, the plug vibrated unceasingly against my prostate. My cock tried to swell, pressing into the cage, leaking continuously as pleasure pumped through my ass.

I was moaning more than Wyn as I sucked him feverishly, desperation making me try to lodge his cock in my throat. Pulling back with a gasp, I licked down his length to tongue his slit, groaning at the taste of him. Wyn snarled, hips straining off the bed, so I plunged my tongue inside.

I probably wasn't doing my best work here. I was just trying to get him to come as quick as possible, and I could barely think anymore, the vibration in my ass making my entire body quake. Sinking my mouth back over his cock, I tunnelled two shaking fingers inside him and began to thrust.

A distorted groan ripped from Wyn's throat before he chuckled hoarsely. "Rushing a bit, aren't we?"

Using his grip in my hair, he eased my mouth off his cock until I could only get my lips around the head. I sucked with a whimper, lifting my eyes to gaze at him plaintively.

His lips peeled back from his sharp teeth, face tight with pleasure. "I bet if I left you like this long enough, you'd come anyway." He shot me a rabid grin, slowly sinking my mouth lower on his length. "Look at you. Trembling like a leaf. My desperate little human."

My moan was garbled around his cock. He hissed, finally easing his grip so I could bob my head in earnest, sucking so hard my cheeks hollowed as my fingers sought out that spot inside him.

When I found it, Wyn snarled and strained his hips off the bed. He started rocking into my mouth, fingers moving restlessly in my hair, head tipping back against the headboard.

“Fuck,” he bit out, sinking lower onto the bed, his hips bucking and almost making me choke. “*Fuck.*”

With a rabid sound, he tightened up around my fingers as his cock throbbed in my mouth, cum spurting to the back of my throat. I groaned in pure relief, sucking him through it until he was shuddering and easing my head back. I was humping the air, ass clenching feverishly around the plug, my restrained cock leaking all over the bed.

Well past the point of desperation, I slid my fingers free and lapped at his wet slit before kissing frantically over his scarred inner thighs and hipbones. “Pl-please take it off now.”

Chest heaving, Wyn chuckled and sat up, cupping my face and drawing me up to give me a deep, tongue-thrusting kiss. “So needy.”

“It’s your fault.” I shuddered, trying to climb into his lap. “*Please.*”

Groaning, Wyn clasped my hips to keep me in place, before I found myself being flipped onto my belly and a folded pillow stuffed under my hips, the cage pressing into it and putting pressure on my nuts.

A ragged gasp burst from me. “Wyn—”

“Let’s take this out now, shall we?”

Fingers tugged my panties to one side before jostling the base of the plug. Its unrelenting vibration finally stopped, letting me exhale a shuddery breath. I pressed my forehead into the mattress, panting as Wyn slowly eased the plug out, his other hand squeezing my ass cheek and spreading me wider.

“O-Okay.” I swallowed, breaths ragged. “N-Now the cage.”

But when I attempted to turn over, Wyn gripped my hips hard and situated himself between my legs. “Not yet, sweet.”

“What?” I squawked, but couldn’t even find the strength to lift my head and glare back at him. “B-But you said—”

“Soon, Danny,” he crooned, sliding his cock over my hole before slowly sinking inside.

I cried out, hips trying to buck as he steadily filled me. “W-Wait—but—y-you said if I made you come you’d t-take it off.”

“Mm. Yes.” His hips pressed flush against my raised backside. “But I didn’t say when.”

“Wyn!” I wailed, clawing at the sheets, thighs quaking as he pulled out and thrust back inside hard. “Y-you can’t fuck me like this! I can’t—This isn’t fair!”

He snickered, the sound tight with lust as he held my lower body still for his pounding thrusts. “So impatient.”

“*Impatient?* It’s been—” I choked when he released my hips to lean forward, angling his cock so that it slid firmly over my crazy sensitive prostate. “Oh f-f-fuck.”

He huffed, dipping his head to place a gentle kiss between my shoulder blades. I felt the padlock’s tiny key tickling my sweat-slicked skin.

“Better?” he murmured, shoving my knees out further with his to pound into me even harder.

“I—*ungh*—Please—please—” I wasn’t even sure what I was begging for anymore. For him to take the cage off? For him to not stop? I was past the point of rational thought. My caged cock ground into the pillow beneath my hips, my nipples were so hard that the rasp of lace was almost painful. My prostate, having been teased for hours, felt unbearably sensitive.

It wasn’t long before I was shaking wildly, crying out with every smack of Wyn’s hips until my voice was hoarse. He snarled above me, thrusting faster and faster as he leaned down to scrape his sharp teeth over my shoulder.

When he shuddered, slowing his hips and loosing a raw groan, I found the strength to lift my head and peer back at him pleadingly. My eyes were wet, lips trembling.

“Pl-Please.”

His inhuman face softened just a little, and he leaned in to nuzzle my cheek. “Alright, sweet. You’ve earned it.”

Before I could even sob in relief, Wyn was sitting up and taking me with him, keeping his length buried as he shifted us back until he was leaning against the headboard and my back was pressed to his front. I writhed in his lap, whimpering as he hooked his ankles around my stockinged calves to keep my legs spread wide.

He moaned, kissing my shoulder as his palms slid up and down my front, over the garter belt and bra, squeezing my pecs before slipping back down to snap the waistband of my panties. I jerked, grinding down onto his cock as he snickered.

“Maybe just a few more minutes—”

“No.” I practically shouted the word, tipping my head forward to stare blearily down at my caged cock. It was still trying to get hard, the head dripping. My nuts were faintly purple. Letting my head fall back against Wyn’s shoulder, I begged, “Please.”

He kissed the side of my neck before leaning back to remove the chain. I sucked in a breath and held it when his hands appeared in front of me, that tiny key gripped between long blackened fingers. Fisting the sheets, I stared with desperation as he unlocked the padlock, slid it free, then carefully eased the cage away.

The moment my cock was free, it stiffened so fast I went lightheaded. There was no way that base ring was coming off, not with how swollen my nuts were. It made everything feel even more sensitive, and I immediately began reaching down to stroke my dick, but Wyn grabbed my wrist to stop me.

So I reached with my other trembling hand, and he grabbed that one too, letting out an amused huff. His hips bucked once beneath me, bouncing me on his cock.

“W-W-Wyn.” I tried to get my arms free, but he drew both my wrists behind my back, secured between our bodies, and gripped them in one hand. “No!” I wailed, feeling like I might cry.

He made a soothing noise and kissed my shoulder, easing me back onto his chest until my wrists were trapped completely. My head tipped back, too heavy to hold up, and I turned my cheek to pant into his throat.

His free hand rubbed over my chest, teasing a nipple through lace. As his hips began to rock, thrusting his cock up into me, that hand trailed lower. My body tightened and tightened with every inch of its descent until I felt like I would snap, breaths hitching with weak sobs.

My hips spasmed as he bypassed my cock to cup my sac, his palm cool against the sensitive, overheated skin. Then, long seconds later, he finally trailed his fingers up over my length.

I yelled out, hips twitching wildly. Oh my god, my dick was so sensitive it was almost agony, so hard I could feel my heartbeat throbbing in it. When Wyn curled his long fingers around my length and squeezed, I exploded.

A hoarse shout burned my throat—maybe even a scream. My entire body shook as my head craned back, digging into Wyn’s shoulder. Wet heat splattered over my mouth and chin, and I heard Wyn loose a guttural groan as he stiffened beneath me.

Finally releasing my wrists, he clutched my chest and pinned me to him as his hips jerked. Sharp teeth sank into my shoulder, almost hard enough to break the skin. And I was *still* fucking coming. It felt like I’d never stop. My hands shot up to clutch his horns, which made him snarl and bounce me on his cock again, as I panted and sobbed through an orgasm so brutal I wasn’t sure if I’d survive it.

When it finally ended, I sagged back against Wyn's chest, going completely limp. My throat ached from the force of my cries. My whole body kept twitching with aftershocks, and when Wyn rumbled out a low sound and slid his hand languidly up my cock, I cringed and frantically shook my head.

"N-No, it's t-too sensitive."

He huffed, giving my dick a gentle squeeze before releasing it to palm my inner thighs. Nuzzling my shoulder, he rasped, "Look at you."

Swallowing, I lifted my weak head and peered down. Christ, that was a lot of cum. It streaked the black garter belt and lacy bra in white ribbons. I could feel it cooling on my chin and mouth. Licking my lips, I shivered at the taste of salt.

"I sh-shot really far, huh?" I managed to get out, voice wildly unsteady.

"Like a fountain," Wyn rasped in my ear, then reached up to grip my chin and turn my head toward him. His eyes flared before he licked the cum from my face and gave me a soft kiss.

Snorting weakly, I let my head fall back onto his shoulder. "You're such a jerk."

"You love me." He nibbled my earlobe.

"I guess," I grumbled, shifting my hips and wincing a little as my ass clenched around his shaft. "Although I gotta say," I added as Wyn carefully lifted me and laid me back on the bed, "that all felt more like a gift to *you*, not me."

"It's a joint gift," he said airily, sitting up beside me to carefully ease the metal ring over my drained nuts and softening cock. "You're not seriously going to tell me you didn't enjoy that." He gave my cum-streaked front a pointed look.

My face and throat burned, so I stayed silent and shot him a weak glare. His mouth curved into a sly smile, and he casually reached for the cock cage.

“Why don’t we put this back on now that you’ve—”

“No,” I barked, jerking up and scrambling off the bed before he could tackle me and shove it back on. “No way. Nuh-uh. Keep your hands to yourself, you dirty old man.”

He chuckled, setting it back down before standing up from the bed and stretching like a lazy cat. “Alright. Soon, then.”

“Ugh.” I fumbled to unhook the garter straps, keeping my head bent so he wouldn’t see my flushed cheeks. “Fine, soon,” I mumbled.

Wyn snickered, sauntering over to help me take the lingerie off. “You loved it,” he rasped, sinking to his knees to slide the stockings down my still-trembling legs.

Shivering from the feel, I pursed my lips to try and suppress my smile. But Wyn glanced up and saw it anyway, his own mouth stretching into a wide grin.

“Jerk,” I muttered affectionately, shoving his horn.

“Ungrateful brat,” he drawled without any heat, gently lifting my foot to get the stocking off. “I just made you come so hard you screamed loud enough for the entire camp to hear.”

“Oh my god.” I buried my face in my hands.

Wyn purred, pulling off the other stocking before clasp the backs of my thighs and leaning in to kiss my hipbone. “It was a beautiful sound.”

“Probably not to anyone else,” I croaked, dropping my hands with a sigh.

Wyn remained on his knees in front of me, trailing kisses from one hipbone to the other, before curling his fingers around the waistband of the panties to draw them down my legs.

“You were perfect.” He grinned up at me slyly. “Thank you for my gift.”

I snorted, reaching down to rub my thumb over the scarred side of his head. “You’re welcome.”

AURY

Everyone gathered together down in the camp, talking and laughing and drinking, but I was content to stay up here in the quiet with Gage.

We'd finished our shift on the wall, but instead of joining the party after getting back into the camp, I'd gathered Gage into my arms and flown us the short distance onto the roof of the motel, so that we could still be alone and undetected. I knew Gage liked stargazing, and the sky was clear above us through the chicken wire roof of the camp.

"Are you sure you don't want to join the party?" I asked him, wrapping my arms around him tighter and pressing my mouth against his neck. "Or I could go and get you a drink."

"I'm okay." He tipped his head back onto my shoulder. "Maybe later. If there's anything left."

"I don't think there will be." I chuckled and glanced down at the groups gathered below in the camp—just in time to see Danny stumbling toward the motel, hunched over and red-faced.

My brows twitched, and I glanced back at the group to see Wyn snatching something out of Moth's hand before turning to black smoke that curled through the air in the same direction as Danny. The rest of the group stared after them, except for Lilac, who was whispering something in Seraph's ear. A second later, Seraph chuffed with laughter.

Sometimes I yearned to be in the company of many—to be surrounded by people who actually *wanted* me there. Who didn't run away in terror. Even Chuck had finally warmed up to me, after many weeks of trying to handfeed her, just as I had done with the borolash.

But even so, right now I was content to just be with Gage. Holding him closer, I ignored the faint sounds of voices now coming from Wyn and Danny's room beneath us and buried my face in Gage's neck.

He made a soft sound and turned to face me, wrapping his legs around my waist so he was cradled in my lap. I drew my wings around us both, enclosing us in our own little world. Once he was out of sight from everyone else, I gently tugged his gas mask down until it hung around his neck, then cupped his face and kissed him.

Smiling against my lips, he pulled back and asked, "Do you think everyone liked their presents?"

"Yes." I trailed my fingertips through the hair at his temple. "Seraph put his sweater on straight away."

"I'm glad it fits him." He nestled closer and rested his head on the front of my shoulder, nuzzling my throat. "I was so worried it wouldn't. He's just so long."

I chuckled. "Yes, he is."

"Do you think they're all going to get really drunk?"

"Yes," I repeated. "Edin showed me the drink he's made. The monsters, at least, are going to be very, very drunk."

Gage lifted his head to eye me in mild alarm. "Is it bad?"

"Yes."

He snorted, which made my mouth curve up into a smile. Unable to stop touching him, I smoothed my fingertips over the mark left by his gas mask across the bridge of his nose and said, "I like them. It is nice having them all here."

"Yeah." He made a face. "You know how nervous I was about having Wyn here at first, but he basically just does whatever Danny tells him to. And Danny's nice."

I chuckled. “Yes, he is certainly... besotted. He’s still not too fond of me, though.”

Gage’s brows drew into an indignant frown. “Screw him, then. Isn’t he basically just a skeleton under that coat anyway? I heard he’s, like, *thousands* of years old.”

“He’s not a skeleton, Gage,” I laughed. “Telyths live for a very long time. He is just... set in his ways. He has seen many ryckes before me. And they were all...” I flushed. “Very bad.”

“Well *you’re* not.” Gage leaned in to kiss me soundly. “You’re the best. The gentlest person I know.”

I said nothing, trying to stop my head from twitching as memories flooded my brain. Hoarse screams. Pained, gurgled moans. Rising above that other camp and seeing all those humans, so small, so weak and defenceless. Feeling their innards squelch between my fingers. Hearing their bones get crushed in my fist.

I blinked fast and focused on Gage’s face again, the life seed thrumming, the beast under my skin always lurking, wanting to get out. It felt tamer now than it had that first time—more content. Just eager to protect Gage and the others it deemed as its *possessions*. But it was still always hungry for chaos. Always more than willing to wreak havoc and pain to protect what it coveted above all else.

“When do you think we’ll leave?” Gage asked quietly, fiddling with my coat. “For the monster world?”

I pursed my lips. “I don’t know. Soon, I think. The others have been planning. They don’t want to rush their humans—Gloam, especially, doesn’t want to force Rig into anything before he’s ready. He knows how sad Rig will be to leave the camp, even if it’s not forever.”

Gage watched me. “Do you think some of them will stay?” he asked quietly. I cocked my head.

“Perhaps. It *is* safer there.” I gave him a tiny smile. “No military.”

He stared at me for a long moment, brows pinching. “Do you want to stay there?”

“I want what you want.”

“No.” He shook his head. “You’re your own person, Aury. Everything we do—it should be both of us. Both our decisions, or a compromise.”

I lowered my eyes, parting my lips but staying silent at first. Eventually, I quietly admitted, “I’m... looking forward to going back. To seeing my world again, and showing it to you. And... And being out of the military’s reach.”

I heard him swallow. He took my hand, squeezing it tight. “If you want to stay there, we will, Aury. The military can’t get you there.”

I shook my head. “I can’t ask you to leave the camp behind—”

“I was ready to leave the camp behind before, remember?” He gave me a wry smile, then nudged my chest. “Until you abandoned me here.”

I flushed, misery tightening my insides. “Don’t.”

“I’m just joking.” He paused. “Let’s see what happens, yeah? When we get there. Let’s see... how we feel.”

My eyes widened as I lifted my head to stare at him. Gage—my sweet, anxious Gage—was telling us to just *wait and see*?

“I know what you’re thinking.” He chuckled. “And yeah, thinking about the journey there makes me *ridiculously* nervous. But...” Swallowing, he tangled our fingers together. “You make me braver, Aury. You make me feel safe. I don’t worry so much anymore. I mean, I still worry a *lot*, but... I know you’ll keep me safe.”

My throat tightened. Tugging my hand free, I cupped his face and pulled him in for a long kiss. He would never know just how much it

meant to me to hear him say that. No one had ever felt safe with me before. No one had ever trusted me before him.

No one had wanted me until Gage.

"I love you, Gage," I told him hoarsely. "You are everything to me."

"I love you too—" He cut off with a jump when a very loud cry came from beneath us. "Oh my god, what was that?"

I went still, ears pricking as I listened. Gage jumped again when another shout came from below, followed by Danny's hoarse voice crying out, "*Wyn!*"

"Oh my god, is he okay?" Gage asked worriedly. "It sounds like—like Wyn's *hurting* hi—"

"He's not," I interrupted, mouth twitching as my sensitive ears picked up the rapid, rhythmic creak of a bed. The pounding of flesh against flesh. The rabid snarls of Wyn. "They are... busy."

Gage stared at me for a second, before realisation sparked in his eyes. His face flamed red. "Oh god."

Chuckling, I gently fixed his gas mask in place before gathering him into my arms and standing, letting my wings unfurl and stretch. "Shall we go check on the girls before bed?"

"Yes," he blurted before I'd even finished speaking. "Please. Let's go. I don't want to—I'll never be able to look Danny in the eyes again."

"He is enjoying it, don't worry," I told him earnestly.

"Aury!" Gage hissed, nudging my stomach before clinging onto me tight when I rose up into the air.

GLOAM

My little firebrand was very, very drunk.

His brown eyes were glazed and slightly unfocused as he laughed at something Moth said, almost tipping over until I calmly held out a hand to keep him upright.

Moth was *also* very drunk, but Charlie seemed to be taking it easy with the alcohol—probably to make sure Moth didn't drink too much of Edin's lethal homemade brew. He and I shared a silent look that only the sober partners of two very drunk people would understand as Moth and Rig dissolved into snorting laughter.

I hadn't heard either of them say anything remotely amusing, but my mouth twitched into a smile as I smoothed back Rig's wild curls.

"What is funny, my love?"

He blinked up at me lazily, a sloppy smile on his face. "Moth said..." He paused and looked back at Moth. "Wait, what was it?"

Moth slow-blinked back, his pale eyes drifting as he pawed at Charlie's hair. Charlie endured it in silence, taking a tiny sip from his cup with a blank expression.

"Wha?" Moth squished Charlie's cheeks. "I thought *you* said something."

"Wait." Rig gripped onto my harness as he almost fell over again.

"No, *you*... Wait."

He and Moth stared at each other blearily for a moment, before they both started snorting with laughter again. Moth stumbled as he turned to face Charlie, slinging his arms around his neck.

"Why're you so hot?" he slurred. "And annoying."

Charlie laughed, wrapping an arm around Moth to keep him upright. "How am I being annoying?"

"You're not annoying, you're the best." Moth gave him a big kiss somewhere near his mouth. Charlie's eyes watered from the smell of Edin's brew on his breath. "You know what *is* annoying?" Moth then grumbled, twisting in Charlie's arm. "This fuckin' tail in my pants."

I knew salyiks had tails, but I had wondered if Moth had one. He religiously kept it hidden if so.

Rig's eyes went wide. "You've a tail?"

"Yeah and it's so annoying." Moth was trying to reach under the back of his coat, but Charlie stilled his hands quickly.

"Baby, why don't we go back to our room if—"

"Don't want to," Moth mumbled, almost falling over again as he tried to reach into the back of his pants. "Just want to get my tail out. S'buggin' me."

"Slayer..." Charlie tried to stop him again, casting me a worried glance. And I realised that if Moth usually kept his tail hidden, he might be mortified tomorrow if he got it out in front of the whole camp tonight.

"Moth," I said quickly to distract him, then tried to think of something to say as he stopped squirming and blinked at me blearily. "Do you like the gift Danny and Wyn got you?" I asked, seeing as the dagger tucked into his belt was the first thing I noticed.

His pale eyes lit up. "Yeah, it's awesome."

When he reached for it with fumbling hands, Charlie shot me another look that told me drawing Moth's attention to a weapon probably hadn't been a very good idea. I gave him an apologetic smile back.

"Hey, Moth." Charlie stepped in front of him and cupped his chin, forcing Moth to look at him and stop trying to get the dagger. "Why

don't we go sit down for a while? Maybe, uh, drink a little water."

"I want more of Edin's drink." Moth took off, weaving over to the group of monsters and humans sitting outside the bar.

Danny and Wyn had vanished for a while, but they'd reappeared from the motel not long ago. Wyn had been swaggering, his arm slung over Danny's shoulders, with Danny looking far less tense and anxious than he had before. Which gave me an idea of why they'd disappeared, especially when Wyn smugly declared that he was suddenly *very* thirsty and needed another drink, and Danny went bright red and shoved him.

Now, they were lounging on the ground with Lilac, Seraph, Hunter and Edin. Hunter had migrated onto Edin's lap, and was pounding his fists onto Edin's knees as he encouraged his isdernuc lover to competitively gulp down another cup of brew with Seraph and Wyn.

He cheered when Edin finished first, and I realised Hunter was *also* quite drunk when he pointed at Wyn—who he usually avoided interacting with at all costs—and said, "*Ha!* Edin can drink you under the fuckin' table, old man."

Charlie let out a strangled sound as he watched Moth make his way over to them, but before he trailed after him, he turned and gave us an awkward look. "Uh... Would you mind keeping the tail thing to yourselves? He's normally kinda self-conscious about it. You know, when he's sober."

"Of course, Charlie," I said, as Rig nodded vigorously and pretended to zip his mouth shut.

"We won't say anything, man," he told Charlie reassuringly. In a way. The words all ran together.

I gave Charlie a wry smile. "I don't think Rig will remember in the morning, anyway."

“Yes I will!” He glared at me as Charlie hurried off, so I cupped his cheek and smiled down at him.

“Will what, my love?”

“What?” He blinked sluggishly. “No, wait. Yes I will *remember*.”

“Remember what?”

“What?” he repeated, then turned, swaying until I steadied him, and saw Edin refilling everyone’s drinks. “Ooh, I wanna try some of—”

“How about something to eat, Adam?” I kissed the top of his head and gently steered him toward the food tables. I didn’t want to order Rig around, telling him what he could or couldn’t do, but he absolutely could *not* drink Edin’s brew. I was actually quite worried for the *monsters* drinking it, even Wyn, whose insides could probably withstand a nuclear blast at this point in his very long life.

Like the cockroaches in this world, I mused. They were fascinating creatures.

Once Rig was distracted with a slice of Daisy’s cake—snagging another can of pre-mixed cocktail at the same time—we went to join the others. Moth and Charlie were sitting on the ground, with Moth leaning heavily against Charlie as he chugged a can of beer. It seemed Charlie had been successful in deterring him from anymore of Edin’s brew.

Rig settled on my lap, rubbing his face against my chest and getting frosting everywhere. I smiled, pressing a kiss to his curls. As he cracked open his fresh can, I made a mental note to try and gently cut him off after this one. He was still mostly coherent, and I’d been plying him with water every now and then, but he was going to feel very, very ill in the morning.

But he deserved a night to let loose. He did so much for the camp, running himself ragged most days. I tightened my arms around him

and kissed him again. I would keep him safe while he relaxed and enjoyed himself. I could think of nothing better.

“Alright, my love?” I asked, not commenting on the trickle of sticky liquid trailing down my front as he slurped his drink and initially missed his mouth.

“Yeah.” He pressed a kiss to my chest, his lips cold. “I might be a little tipsy.”

I snorted and teasingly said, “Perhaps a touch.”

He grinned up at me, eyes unfocused and heavilylidded. But then they gleamed with a look I knew *very* well.

“Hey.” He tried to climb deeper into my lap, his free hand sneaking down to rub my thigh. “Wanna fuck when we get back to our room?”

I laughed. “I think not, firebrand. You’ve been drinking.”

“I’ll sober up!” he insisted, looking around too fast and swaying as his head no doubt swam. “I’ll go get some water—”

“I’ll get it,” Charlie said from nearby, propping Moth into an upright position and hovering for a second with his hands by his shoulders to make sure he didn’t topple over. He climbed to his feet. “Gonna get some for Moth.”

Moth snorted loudly, waving a hand and almost smacking Charlie in the groin. “I don’t need it.”

“Sure, slayer.” Charlie smoothed a hand lovingly over Moth’s head, gave me a look that pleaded with me to watch him, then hurried off toward the diner.

The moment he was gone, Moth leaned forward and hissed in a very loud whisper, “Hey, Wyn. *Wyn.*”

Wyn lowered the cup from his hood, shuddering at the taste of Edin’s brew. “Hmm?”

“Do that thing you did before.” Moth snorted. “When we went to the city.”

“What thing, mutt?” Wyn said easily, propping his wrist on his raised knee.

“When you dropped me then caught me mid-air.” Moth struggled to his feet and swayed. “S’not like we can even go that high. Jus’ to the camp roof. C’mon.”

Edin chuckled. “Ah, yes. I used to get him to do that to me when I was young.”

Hunter was blinking hard, trying to focus. His glassy eyes darted over to the diner, where Charlie was talking to Bo and getting a few glasses of water. “I, uh... feel like Charlie might not like that.”

“Just quickly.” Moth gestured for Wyn to get up. After a shrug, he did, while Danny sternly told him to be careful.

I cleared my throat. “I don’t think that is a very good idea, Wyn. You *have* been drinking.”

“I’m fine, it’s barely affecting me.” He *did* look steady as he reached for Moth. “Ready, mutt?”

“Yea—*oh shit*.”

Wyn turned to black smoke and shot into the air, Moth dangling beneath him, his legs kicking. He laughed in delight just as raiders began to turn and look up at the pair of them. I winced, glancing over at the diner in time to see Charlie casually turning around cradling three glasses of water.

He dropped them as all the blood drained from his face, his horrified gaze locking onto Moth high, high in the air above us.

“What—*Moth*,” he shouted, barrelling over—just as Wyn let go. Charlie let out a horrified sound.

Moth yelled in shock, plummeting to the earth. Wyn caught him about halfway in his descent and slowly meandered back down to the ground to set him on his feet.

“What the *fuck*,” Charlie shouted, snatching Moth up and yanking him away from Wyn protectively. “You *asshole*, you could’ve killed him!”

“I asked him to do it,” Moth said cheerfully, slinging his arm around Charlie’s shoulders. But he looked a little green, and I saw him swallow convulsively before he added, less certainly, “It’s fun. You should do it.”

Charlie ignored him. “You’ve been *drinking*, asshole,” he snarled at Wyn.

Wyn waved a hand as he sank back to the ground. “I’m fine. I’m not drunk.”

“You’re also a million fucking years old,” Charlie snapped, which made Hunter muffle a snort into Edin’s shoulder. “Your reflexes must be shot.”

That made Wyn snarl, fingers twitching. “My reflexes are *impeccable*, you—”

He cut off abruptly when a crushed can smacked into the side of his horn and fell to the ground. In the stunned silence as everyone stared at it, Rig cringed in my lap.

“Sorry,” he called over hoarsely. “I was aiming for the pile of empties behind you.”

“I think perhaps it’s time for bed, don’t you, firebrand?” I said hurriedly, gathering him into my arms and standing up. “Goodnight everyone.”

I couldn’t decipher how angry Wyn was as he sat there in silence, but I didn’t want to risk it. Danny was crying with laughter beside him,

and Charlie was pulling Moth away, still glaring at Wyn. Lilac and Seraph watched impassively, the latter with a dopey smile on his face. Hunter was whispering in a grinning Edin's ear and trailing his fingers down Edin's bare stomach to his miniscule skirt.

Yes, it was definitely time for bed. I set Rig carefully on his feet, keeping my arm wrapped around him as we made our way over to the diner to get some water. Once he'd started sipping it, I gently led him toward the motel.

"Have you had fun, Adam?" I asked him, smoothing back his hair.

"Yes." He grinned up at me, water dribbling down his chin as he tried to stroke my chest seductively. "But now I'm *really* horny."

I chuckled. "Let's see how you feel in the morning, love."

"Nooo, tonight." He stumbled, so I tucked him into my side. "I might puke if I move too much, but you could just sit on my face." His head lolled back. "Oh my *goood*, that would be amazing."

Chuckling again, I nodded at the few raiders we were passing, who stared at us with wide eyes.

"Not tonight, love. We are getting into bed and you are going to sleep." I paused. "Perhaps I will place a bucket by the side of the bed just in case."

MOTH

“Oh my *god*, Charlie, I’m *fine*.”

He’d brought me to the back of the bar, away from all the others, angrily muttering that I looked like I was about to puke.

“That probably wasn’t your best idea, slayer.” Charlie folded his arms as he regarded me, one brow raised in a stern expression.

Why does he look so hot like that? I hadn’t realised I could feel nauseated and horny at the same time, but it was happening.

“S’fine,” I mumbled, leaning my hand against the brick wall and trying to quietly take deep breaths.

Maybe getting Wyn to drop me *hadn’t* been such a great idea.

My mouth filled with saliva again, stomach threatening to heave, but I swallowed it back and blinked hard. Straightening up, I tried to give Charlie a confident smile. He blurred and morphed into two Charlies.

“Oh shit.” I snorted. “Imagine if there *was* two of you.”

“What?”

My eyes drifted as I pictured it. Two Charlies. Oh fuck, that would be *amazing*.

“Baby, will you *please* drink some water?” both the Charlies asked worriedly. Blinking, I managed to focus and he turned back into one.

After taking a deep breath to suck in some cool air, my stomach finally stopped roiling. I leaned back against the bar, tipping my head onto the cold brick. “I’m okay, I promise.”

“You’re plastered.” He walked closer, narrowing his eyes at me. “Did you drink more of Edin’s brew while I wasn’t looking?”

“No.” Guilt made me feel sick again. “Okay, a little.”

He scrubbed a hand over his face, then tilted his head back to the sky. “Okay.”

“Sorry,” I mumbled, suddenly feeling like a total idiot for getting drunk.

“Don’t be sorry.” Charlie pushed my hair back from my flushed face. “You’re allowed to get drunk and have fun, Moth. But that stuff is... probably not good for your human side.”

“I can handle it.” I held back a bile-tinged burp. Okay, maybe I couldn’t handle it.

Huffing a laugh, he cupped my face. “You’re cute.”

I tried to glare at him. “I’m not *cute*.”

“You’re cute as shit, slayer. But don’t worry.” He grinned at me. “I won’t tell anyone.”

My unfocused gaze drifted down to his mouth. Charlie had such a nice mouth. I remembered the feel of it between my legs earlier and found my hands creeping up the sides of his shirt.

“You’re so hot,” I slurred, leaning in to kiss him.

His chuckle was muffled against my mouth, and after a second he pulled back. “I’ll kiss you all you want after you’ve brushed your teeth, slayer, but you smell like you dove headfirst into a barrel of pure ethanol.”

“You love me,” I argued. “You should want to kiss me whatever my breath smells like.”

Rolling his eyes, he pressed another firm kiss to my mouth before pulling me against him, tucking his face into my neck. My eyes slid shut as I wrapped my arms around him tight. Charlie stumbled a little

as I basically flopped against him, but he managed to keep us both upright.

"This is nice," I mumbled with a long sigh. My eyes suddenly felt too heavy to open again.

He chuckled, before I felt his head suddenly pop up from my shoulder. "Oh man, I love this song."

"Huh?" I couldn't hear the music, but I lifted my head and tried to concentrate. A soft feminine voice was singing on the record player over a guitar, barely audible over the laughter and loud voices of everyone in the camp. "What is it?"

"It's called 'Dedicated To The One I Love'. It's by my momma's favourite group." He grinned at me, wrapping his arms around my neck. "Dance with me, slayer."

I balked, shaking my head too fast and having to swallow back more bile. "What? No. I can't dance."

"No one can see us." He started gently swaying me side to side, and my hands shot out to cling onto him as heat flooded my face. "See? It's easy."

"Is this all I have to do?" I asked uncertainly, glancing around to make sure no one had wandered behind the bar.

"Yeah." He snorted. "Well, maybe move your feet a little."

I scowled. "Move them how?"

"Just... side to side. Like I am."

I tried to copy him, feeling like a total idiot. But I must have been doing it right, because Charlie sighed and moved closer to tuck his face back into my neck.

"Thanks, slayer," he said quietly, and my chest squeezed tight as I pressed a kiss to his temple.

I could hear the music better now, the harmonised voices swelling and becoming clearer. My eyes abruptly got hot when I heard them singing the words '*my baby*', and I clutched Charlie tighter as we swayed together.

"I love you," I mumbled.

He smiled against my neck. "I love you too, ba—"

I puked. *Everywhere*.

I managed to miss Charlie, jerking back and turning from him when I felt the saliva flooding my mouth. He sighed, gently gathering my hair to hold it back and running his palm up and down my spine in soothing strokes.

"You'll feel better after," he said. "Bet that water's sounding good now, huh?"

"Sorry," I choked, eyes watering as I spat onto the grass.

"It's okay, baby. I got my dance." He rubbed my back again. "You're a good dancer."

I managed a weak laugh as I stayed hunched over, hands on my knees. When it felt like no more was going to come up, I let out a shaky breath and straightened. "Fuck. Sorry."

"No need." He cupped a cool palm over my forehead, making my eyes slide shut in relief. "Wanna go take a shower?"

I shuddered. "It'll be cold."

He snorted, hooking an arm around my waist. "I don't think that's a bad thing, slayer. You ready? We'll go the long way around so you don't have to talk to anyone, okay?"

"Kay," I mumbled, leaning heavily against him. "Thanks."

We managed to avoid everyone as we went and grabbed our towels, and the shower stalls were deserted when we got to them. I yelped when the freezing water hit my head after we crammed into a stall together and stripped off. Charlie laughed, quickly scrubbing me down, grinning when he lathered up my face and I spluttered.

He'd brought our toothbrushes, so I thoroughly brushed my teeth, grateful to get the taste out of my mouth. As we redressed, I could feel myself drooping with exhaustion.

"Bed?" Charlie asked cheerfully, towelling off my hair.

"Yeah, okay."

But as we made our way back across the camp, I peered over at the record player, which was sitting beside the diner with the generator. Side-eyeing Charlie, I stayed quiet as we headed up to our room and got undressed for bed.

He wrapped himself around me from behind the moment we got under the sheets, and I felt my body sink into the mattress as I let out a sigh. But I tried to keep my eyes open, because I had something else I needed to do before I went to sleep. Staring into the darkness, I focused on all the noise in the camp beyond our door and not on Charlie's steady breaths. He could drop to sleep almost annoyingly fast—like he just decided to sleep and in the next instant he was out. He told me it was a military thing.

Stay awake, I told myself stubbornly. But when I blinked again, all the sounds in the camp were gone. It was completely silent, and the room was even darker than before.

Shit. I'd definitely fallen asleep, but at least it wasn't light yet. Charlie had rolled onto his back and was snoring gently, so I slowly eased out of bed and crept across the room to pull on my clothes.

At least I wasn't drunk anymore, which would make this easier. Ignoring the faint pounding in my head, I glanced back once to make sure Charlie was still asleep before slipping out of the room.

The night air felt cold after the warmth of our bed, so I pulled my coat tighter around myself and walked quietly to the stairs. None of the raiders on the wall were looking down into the camp, and all the fairy lights were off. The diner was still and dark, only faint snores or total silence coming from the motel room doors I passed.

I grinned when I saw the record player still sitting beside the diner. Creeping across the grass, I glanced around again before unhooking it from the generator as quietly as possible. After tucking the stack of records under my arm, I hefted it into my arms and started running back to the motel.

Charlie would probably make me return it when he saw I'd stolen it, but maybe I could convince him to keep it. I thought about stealing the generator too so the record player would actually work, but that was Lilac's and Seraph's, so maybe not. We could find something else.

But if Charlie liked that song so much? Well, I was gonna make sure he could listen to it whenever he wanted. Even if he *did* make me dance with him when it came on.

LILAC

My mouth twitched when I heard a sleepy snort come from the bedroom, which I knew meant Seraph was finally waking up. It was already late morning.

Looking back, I wasn't quite sure how I'd managed to get him out of the camp and into the love shack. He'd been all long gangly limbs and grasping hands and sneaky tongue trying to curl into my ear or under my shirt. I'd stoically ignored all of it and tucked him up in our nest after forcing him to drink a big glass of water. Then I'd sat beside him and stroked his head until he passed out.

I had no idea what was in Edin's brew, and I didn't really want to know after watching Seraph drink it all night. I hadn't slept very well, waking up periodically to check on him, keeping my hand on his chest so I could feel his life seed thrumming gently, assuring me he was okay.

When he started exhaling his snarly little snores just before dawn, I'd relaxed and got up. As I'd made tea, I peered out of the window at the camp wall to see raiders up there yawning widely, looking hungover as hell even from this distance.

When Seraph snorted again and shifted under the blankets, I filled a glass of water and carried it into the bedroom. Some of his eyes were flickering open, and he blinked at me sleepily, still curled up in the nest.

"How you feeling?" I asked wryly, sinking down onto the side of the bed.

He grinned and sat up with a stretch. "F-Fine. Good."

I quirked a brow at him. "Really?"

"Yes." He chuckled. "I just n-needed a bit m-more sleep. I am fine."

I eyed him in silence. He actually did look... How the hell did he look *refreshed*? All his eyes were alert and clear, fingers steady as he took the glass from me and gulped down the water cheerfully.

I huffed. "How? You were hammered."

He sniffed imperiously. "I w-was not."

Rolling my eyes, I said, "Yes, Seraph, you were. You think I couldn't tell?"

"*How c-could you tell?*"

I gestured at his face and flatly said, "All your eyes were blinking at the same time."

He chuffed, looking like he wasn't sure how to answer that. Smiling, I cupped his face and smoothed my thumb over the corner of his mouth.

"Did you have fun?" I asked him, smiling wider when he grinned at me.

"Y-Yes. I liked the camp. Everyone was very n-nice."

They fucking better have been. I stayed quiet, leaning in to kiss his neck.

Seraph purred, long fingers tangling through my ponytail. When he started lying back and taking me with him, his purr growing deeper and raspier, I made a muffled sound of surprise against his neck and lifted my head to blink at him.

"Really? Now?" I asked, feeling familiar movement against my thigh.

He grinned, flipping me onto my back and looming over me. Long fingers snuck under my shirt, making me shiver.

"Y-yes, Lie-lack. Now." He dipped his head and unfurled his tongue to lave my earlobe. "If you w-want to."

“I want to,” I said quickly. Of course I wanted to. I’d just been anticipating spending the day nursing him through a wicked hangover, so this was... unexpected.

I jolted when he rucked up my shirt and dipped his head to flick my bellybutton ring with the tip of his tongue. It meandered up over a nipple, then *both* nipples at once. My breath shuddered out of me, cock thickening in my pants as I palmed his head and peered down.

My stomach dipped from the sensation of his tongue trailing back down as long fingers smoothly undid my pants and tugged them over my hips. How was he not hungover at *all*? I’d heard Moth throwing his guts up behind the bar last night. Even *Wyn* had been stumbling when everyone finally went to bed, leaning heavily on Danny as they made their way to the motel. Edin had swaggered into his room with Hunter tucked under his arm and a massive cockstand lifting his tiny skirt.

“Fuck,” I rasped quietly when Seraph’s tongue slithered around my cock, then down over my balls to flick my hole as he pushed my legs into the air. Okay, apparently Edin’s lethal concoction made Seraph *very* horny the morning after, not hungover.

He snarled, long fingers curled around my knees as he jacked my hips up into the air. My eyes widened as I grabbed onto the sheets, staring at his mottled tongue prodding my hole.

My head tipped back when it finally slipped inside. I clenched around it with a quiet moan, my brain still trying to catch up.

“Are you—” A hoarse groan escaped me as his tongue tunnelled deeper. “Are you sure you’re feeling up for this?”

He retracted his tongue to speak, which made me wish I hadn’t asked. Licking the crease of my groin, some of his eyes flicked up to mine. “Yes, Lie-lack. I w-want you.”

“Okay, that’s—” I gasped as he plunged his tongue back inside, the tip curling to seek out my prostate. “Yeah, there.” My fingers curled in

the sheets, chest starting to heave. “Right there.”

He snarled, tongue undulating inside me as he practically bent me in half. Pre-cum dripped from the head of my cock, landing on my chest and sliding into the hollow of my throat. I groaned, balls tightening from the sight of his sharp teeth so close. When he slid his tongue free to lave over my taint, I shuddered, then moaned as he gently lowered my legs to situate himself between my thighs.

My eyes locked onto his cock, deeply flushed and glistening as the protective plates fanned out over his hips. I sank my teeth into my lower lip, already craving the feel of those little tendrils latching on and keeping us joined together.

Seraph's breaths were snarling out of him as he gripped my hips, his thumbs almost meeting under my navel. “Yes, Lie-lack?”

“Yes,” I panted immediately. I still wasn't quite sure how we'd gone from Seraph waking up after a long night of drinking—drinking what probably amounted to poison—to this in under ten minutes. But I wasn't complaining.

“Fuck,” I sighed, forcing my body to relax as his cock started sinking inside. My eyes slid shut so I could savour the sensation, especially when those little tendrils latched onto my inner thighs and taint, sucking softly.

Seraph released my hips to lean over me, lips peeled back and tiny snarls rumbling up his throat. The long, thin protrusion above his cock slunk around my length when his hips met my ass, making my eyes flash open as my breath caught in my throat.

“G-Good, Lie-lack?” he rasped, sliding an arm under my back and lifting me clean off the mattress, until he was the only thing supporting me. I was fully impaled on his cock, and the realisation made my dick throb uncontrollably.

“Yeah,” I choked out, twining my legs around his waist and clinging onto his back. “Really fucking good.”

He chuffed, craning his neck to snuffle at my hair. He tightened his arm around me, cupping the back of my head until my face was pressed against his chest, and then his hips started to move.

“Oh shit,” I panted, digging my fingers into his back as he started thrusting fast. *Really* fast. My whole body was jerking, kept in place only by the long arm supporting my spine and the big hand cupping the back of my head. Seraph gripped onto the headboard with his other hand, thrusting wildly and snarling above me.

My legs started to shake, but I tried to keep them wrapped around his jerking hips. His long, thin protrusion coiled around my shaft, squeezing rhythmically, the tip of it prodding at my slit. I groaned gutturally, clawing at his back, my head spinning as I tried to keep up with his frantic pace.

Except there was no way for me to keep up. He was holding me practically immobile—keeping me in place for his manic thrusts, like I was nothing more than a cock sleeve. I fucking loved it.

“F-Fuck,” I gasped, my balls already tightening. I had *not* been expecting this.

Seraph snarled as his cock swelled even harder inside me. His protrusion tightened, squeezing my cock as he began to shake. Hips pounding faster and faster, I could do nothing but cling on, my breaths panting out of me until they turned into moans.

When Seraph cried out hoarsely, his hips jerking before he buried his cock deep, I squeezed my eyes shut and felt the orgasm burst out of me. I went limp, shivering at the intensity of it.

We were both breathing hard when it ended, but I quickly realised—Seraph wasn’t done. He purred, hips moving slowly, making me clench up with a rough groan. Then he pulled out and gently lowered me to the bed, before flipping me onto my belly in a split-second.

My eyes popped open as he hiked my ass up into the air, pushing my knees apart with his. I sagged into the mattress when his hard cock slid back inside. “Fuck.”

His hips immediately took up the same manic pace as before, jerking me forward on the bed as I moaned, completely limp beneath him. My cock tingled, trying to get hard again from the feel of him grinding against my prostate. When one huge hand uncurled from my hip to palm the back of my head, pushing it into the bed, I cried out and fisted the sheets.

“Fuck,” I gasped, lust-drunk eyes fixed on nothing. “Fuck—Seraph—”

“Good, Lie-lack?” he snarled, long fingers rasping over my hair as he held my head immobile.

“Yeah.” I sounded drunk. Managing to wriggle one hand down, I gripped my dick and stroked, shuddering from the sensitivity but *needing* it. As I fisted it roughly, it started perking up again, but I wasn’t so sure I’d be able to come a second time this soon. Unless—

“*Fuck*,” I cried when Seraph shortened his strokes so his cock ground against my prostate. Shuddering with pleasure, I tried to push my hips back into him. He snarled, tightening his grip on my head.

With a full-body shiver, I went limp again, trusting him to hold me still for his pounding thrusts. My eyes couldn’t focus. I was pretty sure I was drooling. Waves of bliss rolled over my whole frame. I could stay like this for hours. I didn’t even care if I didn’t come again.

Except by the time Seraph came for a third time and showed no signs of stopping, I wasn’t so sure that was true anymore. The mind was willing, but the body could only come so many times before I passed out. I was drenched in sweat as I collapsed onto my belly, my sensitive cock rasping over the sheets and making me moan pitifully.

“D-Do you w-want to stop, Lie-lack?” Seraph asked breathlessly, hips slowing to a crawl as he plastered himself to my sweaty back.

I blinked my eyes open slowly. We probably *should* stop. I hadn’t had this much sex in a single stretch in years. My whole body was weak and trembling. I wasn’t even sure if I’d be able to stand up.

“No,” I heard myself croak. “One more.”

Seraph chuffed, arching his back to snuffle at my hair. Then his hips began picking up speed again.

I had no idea how much time had passed when I eventually stumbled out of the bedroom and into the kitchen. Gulping down water, I tried to catch my breath. My knees wouldn’t stop trembling. I had to lean heavily on the counter, my entire body feeling strangely numb and tingly.

I stiffened when I glanced out the window and saw Edin and Hunter ambling around the corner of the camp wall, heading in this direction. Slamming down the glass, I stumbled back into the bedroom and reached for my clothes.

Seraph was lounging back against the headboard, looking entirely too smug and sated. “Are y-you okay, Lie-lack?”

I gave him a flat look as I tugged up my pants. “Edin and Hunter are coming.”

“Okay.” He didn’t seem at all bothered, standing up and stretching out his long limbs lazily.

I wriggled into my sweater and fixed my mask over my mouth, then quickly retied my hair. As Edin’s obnoxious knock pounded on the door, I schooled my face into its typical blank mask and went to answer it.

Edin grinned at the sight of me, before his brows twitched as he cocked his head. “Were you drinking last night, Lilac? I didn’t think you were, but you look...”

“Wrecked,” Hunter muttered, then coughed awkwardly when my eyes slid over to him and held as I remained silent.

“How is Seraph?” Edin asked. When I looked back at him, he was watching me shrewdly. A fang peeked out as his mouth tipped up into a tiny knowing smile. I narrowed my eyes at him but didn’t comment on it.

“He’s fine,” I said shortly, just as Seraph appeared behind me, tugging on his sweater from Ghost.

His many eyes brightened. “H-Hello, Ee-din. H-Hunter.”

“Hey, Seraph.” Hunter’s eyes crinkled at the corners as he smiled. “How you feeling?”

“V-Very good. Come in.”

I reluctantly stepped to the side to let them in, wondering if the entire love shack smelled like sex. / reeked of it, so. Good chance.

Hunter didn’t seem to notice as he stepped inside and followed Seraph to the living area, but Edin paused on the doorstep to give me an evil grin.

“So it affects Seraph the same way it affects me, eh?” He jovially nudged my arm, almost toppling me over. “I did wonder if it would.”

I refused to react, gazing up at him impassively. “Don’t know what you mean.”

“Mm.” His grin deepened as he went to move past me, but my hand shot out before he could.

Casting a quick glance over at Seraph and Hunter, I lowered my voice. “Do you have any more of that stuff?”

Edin boomed out a laugh, which made them both glance over at us. Clapping me on the shoulder—making my whole body jerk down—

he leaned in and muttered, “I’ll bring it later.”

I cleared my throat. “Thanks.”

“I think this Christmas was a success, Lilac.” Edin straightened up with a wide grin, looking around the love shack like it was his kingdom. “Charlie told me some of the poem you all used to say at this time. I worked very hard to make sure that it came true—that all had a good night.”

Stepping past me, he glanced back with a smirk. “Well. A good *morning*, in your case, by the looks of it.”



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