

EFFIE CAMPBELL

## DARK CORRUPTION

# **EFFIE CAMPBELL**



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If the man of your dreams fills your panties with his \*ahem\* *pleasure* while you dream, enjoy this unhinged spice-fest.

## **WARNINGS**

This book contains spicy content, depictions of death, torture and sexual assault. There are copious unhinged intimate scenes. There is violence toward numerous characters as part of the plot. Consent isn't always explicit, including breaking and entering and sleep stuff.

It is also written in the UK, and I use British English for spelling. If you are from elsewhere - forgive me! Remember that these are hot Scots and just imagine it in their voices, it makes it all better.

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### ONE

**EWEN** 

Music thrummed through my club. Partially clothed bodies writhed in the coloured lighting as the night wore on into the late hours, where deviance prevailed. The edge of the bar dug into my hip as I rested against it, listening to Adam, my bar manager, waffling about a patron he was obsessing over.

Scanning the main playroom and bar area, I paused to revel in the sight of a leashed submissive on her knees, sucking off her partner with vigour while being completely ignored. I wouldn't take my eyes off of her if she were mine. My fingers tightened into a fist, imagining her silky hair between them. Her dark hair was in a low, messy braid that screamed of already having been pulled. Wisps fell about her flushed cheeks, grazing the heated skin as her head bobbed. I'd want to see every little gasp and cry as I tormented her, not letting a single moment of it go to waste.

'Are you listening to me?' Adam asked, dragging me back into reality.

'I am now,' I replied, flicking my eyes to his exasperated face.

'Rob's phoned in sick, and he's supposed to perform with Ruby tonight on the main stage.'

Rob was a pain in my fucking arse. I'd have sacked him if it weren't for the fact that patrons absolutely adored him. The things he could do with a length of rope and some supple flesh blew my mind—when he showed up.

'Who have we got spare that can join up with Ruby?' I asked, rubbing the back of my neck. Ruby was pretty put prickly. While she loved to fuck, the kink side wasn't her bag. She tolerated the ropes okay if it meant she'd get an orgasm out of it, but on the whole, she was more likely to be in one of the orgy rooms or performing more standard sex acts—not the things I enjoyed. I liked to let my darkness seep into a scene, to see a woman pant and beg while letting me do anything I pleased. To suffer until I made her explode.

'No-one. The flu's taken out a handful of performers, and the rest are already busy.' Adam wiped down the bar as he spoke, ensuring it was kept squeaky clean. One thing I couldn't tolerate was my club looking anything less than perfect.

"We'll just have to pull the performance."

'Or...' Adam looked at me. 'You could do it.'

'Me? With Ruby? I don't think so.'

'It's just a performance. I'm not saying you need to screw her. Just grab a crop and get her to tease the crowd.'

'She wouldn't agree to it,' I said.

'She already has. You'll have to pay her double and keep the strokes mostly superficial.' Adam winked as I sighed.

I could have refused. It's my club, and they were my employees, but I also knew that people chose The Loft over other establishments for its luxury and top-class entertainment. They wanted to be tantalised by performers being put through their paces, sighing and moaning for their amusement.

'Fine,' I said at last. 'But I'm going to dock it from Rob for being a bellend.'



Ruby waited at the edge of the stage, slapping the leather end of the leash handle against her palm as she rolled her eyes. With her hip cocked to one side and a bored expression on her face, she was anything but submissive.

'About time, Ewen,' she said before pressing the handle of the leash into my hand, the metal chain leading to the collar surrounding her throat. 'What's the plan?'

'Get in and out as fast as possible while giving them a show.'

'Are you going to fuck me this time?'

I cringed internally before shaking my head. 'I'm not.'

'Honestly, I'm beginning to think you're celibate.'

*Might as well be*, I thought. It wasn't that I didn't have the chance; it's just that most women weren't into the same things as me. Pretending to be someone else just to get my dick wet left me feeling emptier than going without. I needed a partner to want the pain I gave her, not to be pretending for my benefit, and definitely not pretending for mine.

'Not everyone is desperate to fuck you,' I told her.

'Don't know what you're missing.'

'Just follow my orders, and it'll be over soon enough.'

'Are you going to crop me?' she said, eyeing the leather end of the black riding crop I held.

'Yes.'

'If you leave marks that last any longer than three days, I'll need you to pay my time off.' She jutted her chin higher and pouted.

'People will fuck you even harder with crop marks across your arse. But fine. I'll keep it light.'

It was no fun hurting women who didn't want it, anyway; Their reactions fed my hunger.

The sharp intake of breath. The melting when the pain subsided. The looks that said I want to kill you as much as they said please, don't stop.

A staff member announced us on stage, and Ruby dropped to her knees, scowling. 'I hate crawling.'

'Come on, let's get it over with.'

Every sigh and pout made me want to leave the stage. But the performance came before my personal preferences, so on we continued.

Eventually, I held Ruby at arm's length with a fist in her brown hair, and barely tapped her ass with my crop while she acted like I was flaying her alive.

Trying to avoid rolling my eyes, I used the crop handle to tilt her chin upwards. Her eyes gleamed with defiance as she whispered, 'I better not have any marks.'

She stole a glance at my crotch before frowning. Ruby was a woman used to having men falling over themselves to get near her. My lack of interest clearly didn't sit well with her.

'Can't get it up?' she whispered, her mouth tipping up with a smirk.

'Not for you, Ruby.'

She narrowed her eyes at me, her nostrils flaring.

As soon as we finished the show and stepped out of the audience's view, Ruby leapt to her feet.

'Why do you even own a sex club? I never see you fuck anyone. You don't even seem to enjoy any of the scenes you do. What are you? A eunuch?'

My muscles bunched as the temptation to spin her around and show her what I was really into flared. But anger was never a good reason to do anything.

So I fixed her with a stare and waited for her to grow nervous beneath it. It didn't take long.

'Sorry... Ewen. That was out of line.' She shifted from one foot to another and wrapped her arms around herself. Questioning your boss's sexual desires wasn't the best plan of action.

And the little bit of discomfort she displayed was the hottest that Ruby had ever been to me.

The way her eyes widened as she realised she'd misspoken. The way her chest rose in an anxious breath. Nerves making her fidget. It provoked at least a twitch from my dick.

# TWO

Muffled noises woke me, and I rolled over to see my clock's angry red digits reading three in the morning. I groaned, pulling my duvet over my head as my sister, Ruby, continued her noisy rampage in the kitchen.

I hated that she worked late nights at the club and seemed to think it was perfectly fine to act like it wasn't after midnight when she got home, even though she knew I had classes in the morning. The theme song from her current favourite reality show blared from the TV speakers, the sound seeping under my bedroom door, and as much as I tried to ignore it, I couldn't. After fifteen minutes of willing myself back to sleep, I got out of bed with a huff, pulling on a hoodie and some leggings. With tired rage fuelling me, I left my room to go have the same conversation I had with Ruby at least once a week. It would help for a day or two before being ignored entirely.

Rubbing my eyes, I walked down the short hallway leading to the main living space and heard an odd noise. A low groan. Walking around the corner, my mouth gaped open as my brain struggled to comprehend the scene before me. A hairy ass was the first thing I saw. Thumping up and down between spread thighs. Fingernails scraping down the man's back as he grunted. Ruby's face contorted as she moaned.

I ducked back behind the wall, my heart pounding. *What the hell?* 

I used that couch, too. My fists clenched at my sides as I screwed my eyes shut.

I absolutely didn't need to see my identical twin having sex in the bloody living room. Ruby usually had a little more decency than that. She at least made it to the bedroom when she had had men home previously.

Despite looking the exact same, we couldn't be more different. She was fun, and loud, and went after everything she wanted without hesitation. I... didn't. Our whole lives, I felt like she was out there living while I followed her from the sidelines. Watching. Waiting. Always just a bit duller next to the way she shone.

An urge hit me. An ugly, little messed-up need to take another look. Not because I wanted to see my sister in that way, but because it was like seeing myself through another lens.

Would I look like that if a man was on top of me?

Stealing a glance around the corner, a different view surprised me. Ruby's face pressed into the sofa as the man screwed her from behind.

Would my hips indent if his fingers gripped them like that? Would my skin flush at his touch?

The very thought made a twist of pleasure writhe through me. But unlike my sister, I had no experience with men. Because, at twenty-nine, I was still a virgin.

It was a constant source of hilarity for Ruby, who never failed to point out that one glaring difference between us.

My sister cried out, her fingers digging into the edge of the sofa as the man pounded into her. *Would I moan? Or scream?* The man was fairly attractive, and I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to have him inside me.

My gaze travelled from his muscled stomach upward to meet his eyes, which were fixed on me as he grinned.

My feet felt leaden as I dragged myself back to my room, closing my door behind me and leaning against it, my pulse racing. Holy smokes. He'd seen me watching them. Ruby would have a bloody field day if he told her.

Throwing myself back into bed, I buried my face into the pillow and let out a stream of muffled curses as the muted sound of their lovemaking filled our apartment—almost like the man was purposely making it louder so I would hear.

Putting in my headphones and upping the volume on a playlist, I drowned them out.

It had always been the darker depictions of romance that had pulled my attention. Never the flowers and love notes. Curiosity had gotten the better of me a few years prior when I tumbled down an online rabbit hole and into threads where people discussed being spanked and bit, and it turned them on. It turned me on when I let my mind wander to being under a man's control. Giving my body over to him for him to use.

When I finally fell asleep, it was to the thought of me beneath the man, spread wide around him while crying out because I needed more. My twisted little fantasies were never satisfied with just being impaled by a man.

In the dream, I begged him to hurt me, choke me, and give me what I desired. Something I could never ask for in the real world.

#### **THREE**

#### **EWEN**

'What do you mean, the shipment's wrecked?' I said, cracking my knuckles on the hand not gripping my phone.

'It's been sabotaged, boss. Someone's got marking dye all over the fake notes.'

'Fuck,' I groaned, reaching up to rub a hand over my stubbled chin. 'Look into it. I want you to find whichever fucker has stuck their nose in our business. When you find out, call me.'

I hung up the phone and slammed it down onto the counter.

Alfie, a family friend and owner of a hedonistic highland retreat, raised an eyebrow. 'Alright, mate?'

'Nah. They've hit again. Assuming it's the same arsehole as before,' I said, leaning back against the granite countertop behind me in our small family kitchen. With my brothers and sisters all having moved out, it was just me in the McGowan mansion most of the time. While the chef worked in the staffed industrial kitchen, this one had always been where my siblings and I gathered to grab a beer and a snack. Well, and Alfie, who used it as a home away from home when he was down in Glasgow.

'I'd ask who you guys pissed off, but I'm guessing the list is extensive.' Alfie grinned before opening two beers, handing one to me.

'There's no-one notable at the minute. Maeve and Cam have done a pretty good job of running the organisation lately.' The cold beer tingled against my tongue as I stopped to take a sip before continuing. 'They are making more connections than enemies now that Harold's gone. I don't think there's anyone I've annoyed.'

With the two patriarchs, Malcolm Sr and Harold, of our crime families dead, we'd joined forces through Maeve and Cam's wedding. While they spearheaded the organisation, all I usually did was run the money laundering side of my business and keep The Loft going. Unless someone needed to torture information out of an idiot or two. It had been a while since I incited any feuds.

'You've not annoyed some mafia princess, have you?' Alfie asked, giving me a smirk.

I shook my head. 'That's far more your style than mine. Don't shit where you sleep.'

'Ah, they get over it eventually. Plus, the stuck-up ones are fun when you corrupt them. Nothing sweeter than an uptight woman begging for more.'

Begging at all would be nice. It'd been too long... *Damn*, I needed to change the subject before I went thinking about it too much and getting a boner in the kitchen. Alfie would probably offer to take care of it, and that would be messier than I needed. Especially seeing as he'd already slept with my brother and his wife. Not a pudding I needed to stir.

'Are you staying down here for Logan's fortieth?' I asked. My siblings and I had been preparing for our eldest brother's birthday for a few weeks.

'Yeah, why not? It's a few weeks off, though, right?'

'Not until next month.'

'If you don't mind me rattling around the place for a few more weeks. I don't need to be up at Rosenhall for anything. Depends if you're fed up with my sparkling personality yet.' Alfie was a cheeky fuck, but he was easy to like. One of those guys who could get himself into a whole heap of mess, but always charmed his way back out of it unscathed. One day, it would catch up to him.

'You could move in, and I'd probably not even notice for a few weeks. It's not like I don't have the space.' Bar the staff, it was just me. Alfie's regular stays over the past eighteen months had been more comforting than I'd expected. When Logan, my eldest living brother, moved in with his wife, I'd felt alone for the first time. Between the six of us growing up together and the five of us left, there had always been a houseful of commotion. Now it was like a deserted hotel. Room after room of silence.

When Alfie wasn't there, I spent more and more time at the club just to have noise and life around me.

I couldn't wait to have the whole family back for Logan's birthday. He'd tried to resist the party, but I'd roped his wife Valentina in, and he couldn't refuse her anything if he tried. She still had him smitten even after two years together.

All of my siblings paired off, and I couldn't find a single woman I was remotely interested in.

Hell, maybe I'd end up giving in to Alfie after all.

### **FOUR**

#### **CORA**

Ruby's hairy man burst into my room, waking me. I let out a scream as I pulled the covers up around me.

He stood there in nothing but a pair of underpants and white socks.

'Sorry. Jeez, you weren't screaming like that when you were spying on us last night. Chill the fuck out.'

'What are you doing in my room?' I asked while I looked behind him to check for Ruby.

'Your sister busted her ankle. There's a cab coming to give her a lift to A&E, but I need to bounce. You'll have to go with her.'

'You're just going to ditch her when she's hurt?' What a creep.

'No, I'm going to get you to go with her. I've got stuff on and can't sit in a hospital waiting room for hours.'

A beep had him checking his phone. 'That's your ride. She's at the bottom of the stairs. You'd better get dressed quickly.'

He closed the door and left me sitting there, mouth open.

What a fucking asshole.

I only hoped Ruby saw sense and kicked his ass to the curb. Grabbing a pair of leggings and a hoodie and wrestling them on while I stuffed my purse and phone into my bag, I made for the door.

'Are you okay?' I asked as I took the apartment stairs two at a time until I reached her.

'I think I broke it,' she said, her eyes red rimmed. The ankle jutted out at an angle that was altogether unnatural.

'Holy shit. What happened?' Giving her my arm, I helped her to her feet and made our way to the waiting cab with her hopping beside me.

'It was an accident.' Ruby's voice was a little too sharp and insistent for my liking.

The driver opened the door for us and I sat her in the seat before going to the other side and climbing into the back beside her.

'Tell me what happened.'

'Honestly, it was nothing? Seth was leaving in a bit of a bad mood. I tried to grab his arm on the stairs and toppled over.'

Narrowing my eyes, I clicked my seatbelt into place. 'What kind of bad mood?'

'He tried to make out that you were watching us last night. When we were...' She glanced at the driver before mouthing, *fucking*.

Oh shit.

Fighting the heat that flushed my cheeks was impossible.

'Oh my god, Cora! You were?' Ruby's voice hit a new register, and I considered throwing myself out of the moving car. 'You sick little bitch.'

'I wasn't trying to watch you. Not spying or anything. You guys were making so much noise that I came through to tell you to knock it off. Finding you desecrating the couch was wholly accidental.'

'Don't be so uptight. People have sex. Well, most people do.'

'I don't care what most people do. Just have a little more thought when you trail some asshole home at two am.'

'He's not an asshole,' Ruby said, pouting out her lip.

'Yes, he is. He should be here where I am, and I should be on the way to university. Instead, he saw you hurt and tucked his tail and ran. That's not a good man.' The rough edge of the seatbelt dug into my fingers as I pinched it.

'Cora, one day you'll get it. Relationships are complicated. I can't blame him for having somewhere to be.' Despite the words, her eyes shone in the morning light. I knew fighting back emotions when I saw it. That same look had been on my face hundreds of times.

'You can blame him for not prioritising you.'

'I don't.'

Well, I did.



'Absolutely not,' I said, shaking my head at Ruby. 'Not a chance.'

'You have to. I can't perform with a broken ankle, and we need the money. I know you make money where you can with your photography, but it isn't enough to keep this place and pay the bills. My wages cover most of it while you study, and I can't take six weeks off with no pay.' Ruby sat on the sofa, her plastered leg resting on the coffee table in front of her.

'I've never had sex. How can you expect me to work at a sex club?' Sweat pricked at the back of my neck as I paced the floor in front of the TV. She couldn't be serious. There was just no way anyone would want to see me do what she did.

'You don't have to screw anyone. Performing is up to you, and it pays better. But you can just do hostessing, chat with people, and make them feel welcome. Maybe do a few podium dances...'

'No-one will believe I'm you, Ruby.'

'Sure they will. I don't talk about my home life there. You never know who will be listening. They don't even know I have a twin. They would never suspect me to be anyone but me.'

Ruby tugged at a perfume sample in the magazine she bought at the hospital. Tearing it open, she smeared it over her wrists as if nothing was amiss. The sweet floral smell hit me as I stormed past.

'I don't dress like you. I don't wear my hair like you. I don't have your kind of makeup.' I grasped at straws as we went through the same conversation for the tenth time.

'You know I'll sort all that for you. No-one will suspect a thing. It's only for a few weeks, and I need you to do it for me. I've been supporting us while you've been doing your degree. I need you to suck it up for a few weeks, Cora.'

Any other job and I would have done it with no problem. But how could I walk into a sex club acting like I'd worked there for months when I'd never even set foot in a place like that? A wave of dizziness threatened to send me to my ass, and I perched on the edge of the sofa, pushing my face into my hands.

'I can't,' I whispered.

'You don't have a choice. We need the money.'

'I'll pick up a job. Down at the cafe downstairs or in a bar. There's got to be somewhere that would have me.' The desperation in my words made me cringe.

'You'd have to work full time to make anywhere near enough to cover things, and you can't do that and still attend your lectures. You'll make more working three nights a week than you'd make at any of those places in a month. Plus, I really don't want to lose the job.' Ruby shuffled over to me and wrapped an arm around my waist.

'They can't fire you for breaking your leg.'

'It's hardly a normal career where I can sue them if they do. I'm freelance. They can do what they like, and the owner's kind of a hard ass. Cold, quiet, and miserable. He'd love an excuse to get rid of me.'

'Wow, Ruby, I'll add that to the pro's side of my list. That doesn't make me want to work there any more than I already did.'

Ruby looked up at me with wide eyes and a pleading expression. 'You know I wouldn't ask if I didn't really need you to fill in. It's been forever since I last asked you to be me.'

'Yeah, but sitting your maths prelim exam for you differs from working in a freaking sex club. You know I'm not experienced in all that stuff.'

'What better way to learn about it than from professionals? Being around an entire club worth of sex-positive people? You'll learn loads, and you won't even have to do much. Serve drinks, flirt, and dance a bit. There are even non-sexual performances you can do, and you get paid really well for them.'

I closed my eyes, feeling my resolve crumbling as it did far too often whenever my twin sister was involved.

'Like what?' I asked, hearing the resignation in my voice.

'Spanking. You being the spanker, or the spankee. Walk a guy on a leash and make him lick your boots. Being tied up. That's a fairly easy one, especially if you ask Rob to go lightly on you.' Ruby grinned as I slumped down beside her, throwing an arm around my shoulder and pulling me into her side. 'Thank you. I owe you big time.'

'I haven't said yes yet.'

The grin that crossed her face let me know she knew she'd won without me having to actually agree to it.

When it came to Ruby, resistance was futile. As far back as I could remember, she had always been our ringleader, the one pulling me into adventure and chaos. For better or for worse.

All I had to do was get through a couple of weeks. I could do that. *Right?* 

#### **FIVE**

#### **EWEN**

The snivelling dirtbag tied to the chair cried out as I heaved the garden shears closed. His blood-curdling scream echoing in the cavernous warehouse.

'Tell me who the fuck you're working for,' I grunted, the bone finally cracking. The severed finger falling to the floor with a splat.

'Fuck. Stop. Please?' The man's babbling pleas were barely coherent through the heinous sounds he made as pain wracked his battered body.

'Who are you working for?' I asked, rolling up my sleeves and grimacing at the splash of crimson marking my shirt cuff. Thank god I didn't have to do my washing. Between a sex club and trying to track down the rats nibbling away our profits, the bodily fluid levels were excessive.

'I don't know.' Great heaving breaths punctuated his words as his face took on a squalid shade of pale. Time was running low. The fucker was going to bleed out on me. He'd held out for hours.

'Who do you report to?'

The man's head lolled back, his swollen eyes closing for too long. There was a definite rattle in his breath, too.

'Hey,' I said, pulling his face up with a hand beneath his jaw. 'Talk to me. Tell me, and I can make the pain stop.'

The glassy eyes blinked open, focusing on me for half a second before closing again. 'Burner phone... don't know... paid cash.'

With icy rage bubbling through me, I pulled my knife from my pocket, flicking the blade out and aligning it with the weakly pulsing point on his neck. The breath he exhaled was almost palpable with relief when the sharp metal point nicked his flesh. Instead of trying to escape, his body pressed closer. He knew as well as I did that the punishment for rats was extermination. I only hoped that what he got out of it was worth the price.

Lifting my left hand, I cradled his other cheek and ran a thumb gently over a tear rolling through the bloodstains. 'Go well. Make better choices if you get another go around.'

The knife slid into his neck with only a brief resistance. Blood gurgled as his body fought the intrusion, jerking against his bonds. While his mind may have been resigned to death, the body didn't give in so gracefully. I held his face as he bled out, letting comfort be the last thing he felt. Ultimately, he was just a small piece in someone else's much larger game, paying the price for those pulling the strings.

The man's head rolled forward limply as I stood, removing my hand from his greying skin. Using his trousers, I wiped my knife clean before clicking it closed and setting it back in my pocket.

Pulling out my phone, I rang one of my trusted guys. 'Gerald, I need a clean-up crew. I'll send you the coordinates.'

Great red splashes stained my hands, drying into the myriad of lines that made my skin look like an aged map in the dim light. The adrenaline waned after the tension of torture, and it left me as hollow as ever. His death didn't matter to me, per se, but every life I took stole a little more from my soul. He played stupid games and got caught. Over the past few years, I'd learnt just how much I'd do to protect my family. What I needed was someone to go home to. A warm body I could sink into and shed the day's stressors with. Someone who needed the pain I offered. Someone who craved it. Someone who needed me. Someone I could cherish.

Instead, I had a cold bed waiting.

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## SIX

**CORA** 

No matter how tightly I pulled my oversized coat around me, the night air nipped at my body. Flickering lights and thumping music tumbled out from the nightclub entrance across the street as I worked up the courage to go inside. Not through the main entrance but the sleeker, more discrete door near the end of the old stone building that didn't have a queue of shivering young folk waiting.

Ruby had schooled me well in what to expect the moment I walked through the door. But nothing could have prepared me for the way my legs quaked at the reality of actually setting foot in the kinky club, or how quickly I was losing my nerve. My breath snagged in my throat as a wave of rising panic swept over me. How the hell did I let my sister talk me into it?

Stepping back, my shoulder collided with someone.

'I'm so sorry,' I said, turning around to find myself face to face with a pretty redheaded woman.

'Oh, hey, Ruby!' she said, her voice positively chirpy. Shit, she knew Ruby. Trying to mimic my sister's expression, I grinned.

'How's it going?' I said, hoping to god she didn't ask me anything specific. I'd just have to pretend like I knew who the heck she was. Ruby had told me about her co-workers, but there was too much to remember. My brain whirred through possible names, trying to retrieve the info my sister had given me.

'You know, same as usual. Mike's being a dick again.' The woman looped an arm through mine and set off across the road toward the club. I had no real option but to be dragged along with her.

'Um, okay,' I stuttered as a taxi zipped past us. 'If he's that bad, why don't you just dump him?'

Hopefully, my assumption that Mike was her boyfriend was right. Otherwise, I'd have failed at the first hurdle.

'You know why.'

When I looked none-the-wiser, she rolled her eyes. 'Honestly, Ruby, you never listen to a word I say. The sex is too good to let him go.'

'It can't be so good that it's worth putting up with shit from him?' I'd seen people having sex. It didn't look that amazing.

'It is,' she said as we entered through the door, a security guard smiling as he let us pass. 'He eats me like a man possessed. Like full on lips, tongue, teeth and everything. I swear to god he makes my legs shake for an entire hour after he's finished with me. How can I get rid of a guy who actually enjoys going down on me? That's like fucking gold dust.'

The receptionist quickly checked both of our ID cards, mine having Ruby's details, before typing something into her computer. She then gestured for us to proceed up the stairs. As I leaned over to retrieve my ID card, I glimpsed the other woman's card—Molly. That's the one. Ruby's words came flooding back. She and Molly got on well enough, work friends but not spilling over into the real world.

'Surely, you could find someone just as good in bed who is also nice to you outside of it?' I said to Molly as we took the sweeping staircase to the upper floor. The decor grew more ornate as we climbed, polished wood and gold detailing coming into view with every step. Awe struck me. It was like stepping into a whole new world.

Molly laughed loudly before bumping me with her shoulder. 'Now we both know that's a fucking joke.'

I hadn't been trying to be funny... and I didn't get the joke.



Half an hour later, I followed Molly out of the changing room, sticking close to her like a child in a shopping mall for the first time. I had followed Ruby's instructions precisely—applying the dark eye makeup, donning cherry-pink lips, and adopting her signature hairstyle—lots of volume and curled near the ends. She said it made men think she looked freshly fucked. When I glanced in the mirror, the image that stared back at me resembled her so closely that it felt strangely unsettling. It was like looking at the most familiar stranger. It made me feel like someone else. Braver. Hotter. Hell, sexier.

Walking into the club in heels, a corseted basque, a pair of tiny black hot pants, and little else had me wanting to crawl back inside myself. Every look, however fleeting, made me want to hide. The barman, Adam, called me over and passed me a tray of drinks. I tried to avoid staring at the split in his tongue as he spoke. It was separated up the middle, and when he caught me looking despite myself, he made each side move independently.

'What up, Ruby? Cat got your tongue tonight?' he said with a grin that made me skitter away with the drinks to find the right table and place them down with a barely disguised tremble.

Time seemed to inch by at a snail's pace. All I wanted was to go home, curl up in my bed, and pretend the whole night was a fever dream. Everywhere I looked was image overload. People in racy outfits, people in no outfits at all. The sound of flesh hitting flesh rang in my ears as the night progressed. It was all too much.

Adam sent me to take a load of paperwork down to the boss's office, and I slowed as I walked through a dark corridor full of floor-to-ceiling windows. Some were obscured with frosted glass, but others were on full display.

My pulse quickened as a man knelt between a woman's thighs, licking and sucking at her while she rocked her hips against his mouth. When she grinned at me, I scurried past, my cheeks heating.

Further down the corridor, I couldn't help but watch as two men stood toying with a woman. Bent fully over at the waist, one man forced his cock into her mouth as she spluttered, while the other held her hair in a fist and lay hard slaps against her rear. Somersaults in my stomach had me unable to look away as my breaths shortened. A twinge between my thighs had me glancing up and down the corridor, embarrassed at my gawking, the boss's paperwork digging tightly into my palms .

Completing the task niggled at me, but I couldn't stop watching. A fierce need flowed through me as the woman wriggled between the men, with tears welling up in her eyes. Her arse reddened under the man's swift spanks and he traced his fingers between her thighs to show the other man her glistening desire. It made my insides twist in a way I couldn't explain.

When he reached down and pulled his belt from his trousers in a slow, precise motion, I let out a tiny squeak.

'Like that, do you?' A deep male voice said behind me, making me jump. 'Keep watching, Ruby.'

Standing stock-still, I tried to focus on the scene before me. My body was hyper-aware of the man behind me. My back prickled with his nearness, yet he refrained from touching me.

I tensed as the belt met the woman's flesh with a delicious slap, and I let out a small gasp as she squirmed and cried. The red stripe that stayed on her skin made me want to see it on myself, to run my fingers over the mark. Would it feel warm?

'I thought you didn't like this sort of stuff,' the man said, his words caressing my ear now.

'I don't.' I swallowed as the performance continued to send electric bolts right through me. My head swam, and I needed to get back on track.

Clearing my throat, I turned to face the man and managed not to trip over my jaw at the sight of him. He was like something out of a wet dream. All dark hair and piercing blue eyes. Eyes that made me want to shrivel away from him and reach out to touch him at the same time.

I was unable to do either.

A smirk turned up the corner of his mouth while his eyes flicked down over my corset.

It could only be one man from Ruby's descriptions: Ewen McGowan. The asshole owner of The Loft, and my boss for the duration of my filling-in. Ruby had waxed lyrical about what a total dick-wad he was, but she'd failed to mention how panty-meltingly attractive he'd be.

'I... uh... was just... um.' My cheeks heated as I stumbled over my words. I gave up trying and shoved the papers at him, flinching when his fingers brushed my hand.

'Are you okay?' he asked, raising an eyebrow a fraction as those icy eyes held me captive. 'You seem... out of sorts.'

'Yup. I'm good. Grand. Absolutely great.' Backing up, I tried to put my Ruby face back in place, accidentally bumping into another patron. I turned and apologised before fleeing back into the main club room.

For the rest of the evening, I couldn't help but look out for Ewen, both hoping for a glimpse of him and praying not to see him. I stuck to getting drinks, helping clients get private rooms, and keeping my head out of the water. The night left me in a spin. There was no downtime for me to reflect on what I was supposed to be doing, so I just stuck it out and hoped for the best until, at long last, the night was over. My feet ached and my eyes burned by the time I made it home.

It was going to be a hell of a long six weeks.

## **SEVEN**

**EWEN** 

I'd never felt blind hatred for someone I liked before, but seeing Alfie flirting with Ruby brought it firing through my veins.

What the fuck was wrong with me? I didn't even like Ruby. She was vain, blunt, and irritating. If Alfie wanted to get it on with her, it shouldn't have bothered me. The hair rising on the back of my neck told me that some irrational part of me cared.

The whole week, something had been off about Ruby. She was quieter, and oddly wide-eyed at the goings on around her. She'd worked in my club long enough to have seen it all before. I'd heard her physically whimper at one point and been unable to rid my mind of the delectable little noise for days.

It felt like she was intentionally screwing with me.

I already had my hands full dealing with whoever was messing with our supply chain coming into Scotland; the last thing I needed was some jumped-up pain in the arse causing trouble at my club—my safe space, a place that was mine.

Alfie joined me at the bar and gave me one of his cocky grins. 'That Ruby is a bit special, eh?'

'Don't fuck my staff, Alfie,' I said, sounding angrier than I meant to. He narrowed his eyes at me before his grin grew even wider.

'You like her, huh? And here I was beginning to think you were celibate.'

'It's not that. Just can't be arsed with the tears when you fuck them and leave them hanging.' Reaching behind the bar, I pulled out a bottle of whisky and two glasses, pouring us both a generous amount.

'I've never had any complaints. I might not call them, but I leave them thoroughly satisfied.' Alfie took a seat on a stool, facing out toward the main club room. 'But you do like her. You didn't stop glaring at me the entire time I spoke to her.'

'Just leave it.'

Alfie held up a hand in mock surrender, but his eyes still gleamed in the way they did when he was up to no good. 'I'm just saying that she's a pretty girl who's practically a puddle at everything going on around her. You're an attractive guy with an absolute boner for her. Why the fuck not? What are you holding out for?'

Ignoring his words completely, I downed the last of the fiery amber liquid in my glass.

I tried my best to keep my eyes anywhere but on Ruby for the remainder of the night.

To pretend I didn't notice the way she blushed when a girl tongued a man's boot as he chatted to friends.

That I didn't hear a wistful sigh when the hiss of a whip met a man's flesh.

That I wasn't obsessing over every fucking breath she gave.

It was like an entirely different being had possessed her. What gave?



A tower of pizza boxes teetered on the table in my brother Mac and his wife Katie's kitchen as we gathered around it. Logan set a box on the table, opening it and grimacing.

'Who the fuck ordered the pineapple?'

'That's mine!' Katie exclaimed, leaning across the table to claim it. As she sat back down, Mac's hand slid over her waist, pulling her gently toward him before whispering something in her ear that instantly made her blush. Logan's wife, Valentina, popped a bottle of champagne open as

Maeve and Cam walked into the room, tossing their coats over the back of a seat.

'It feels like forever since we got together,' Maeve said, messing up my hair on her way past me.

'It's only been a few weeks,' I said, running a hand through my hair. The dinners got more insufferable as they went on. They were all so sickeningly enamoured with their partners. And I hated being the third—no—the seventh wheel. I should have brought Alfie.

'Who has the olives?' Cam said, opening another pizza box.

'That's mine.' At least the pizza would be good. The place local to Mac and Katie's house was epic. Silver linings.

'I wish Esther was here,' Maeve said, taking a seat. She hated that our sister lived in Spain with her hubby and two wee ones. While she understood why they made their home there, being the only sister close by in our band of brothers annoyed her. At least Valentina and Katie, my sisters-in-law, had somewhat appeased her need for a girl gang. Maeve had taken over our syndicate when Logan no longer wanted to, and she also assisted in running her husband, Cam's, side. Her day-to-day life was largely filled with men from all walks of organised crime. And from what I'd heard, her adopted kids were being typical teens, and a pain in the ass.

'She'll be back soon enough for Logan's birthday,' Mac said before taking a bite out of his pizza, the mozzarella making a long string from the slice to his mouth.

'What are we going to do about the rats infiltrating our nest?' I asked.

Maeve groaned, and Cam threw a balled-up napkin at my head. 'No work at the table.'

'Playing happy families won't make it go away.'

'We're not playing. We are happy,' Valentina said before Logan pulled her onto his lap and kissed her neck.

'Och! He's just a grouch because he needs to get laid,' Mac said.

'Caring about someone fucking with our business doesn't make me a grouch.'

'Tell your fucking face, mate.' Mac said, and I glowered.

Maeve sighed and put her piece of pizza down. 'He's right, though. Whoever it is started small but is getting bolder. Shipments have been damaged and stolen, and our guys are turning up dead. Someone has a vendetta, and we're going to need to find out who.'

- 'What about the one Ewen caught the other day?' Logan asked.
- 'Got nothing out of him,' I said.
- 'Maybe we need someone less heavy-handed with the torture?' Maeve suggested.
- 'I wasn't heavy-handed.' Well... not out of the realms of ordinary torture, anyway. 'He didn't know anything. Whoever's behind it isn't leaving a trail.'
- 'I'll get our hackers on it,' Cam said, resting a hand on Maeve's back when she smiled down at him.

It was a start.

#### **EIGHT**

**CORA** 

The short dress I'd taken from Ruby's work wardrobe left me feeling flustered. Lashings of ribbons that formed tantalising ladders down my sides mostly held it together. I'd seen Ruby wear it and had always imagined myself in it. I'd never worn something designed purely for decadence over function.

Getting into it was proving altogether more difficult.

I grunted as I struggled to tie the ribbon under my left arm, twisting my torso to reach it. Every time I did, the material shifted, leaving me lopsided.

'God damn it,' I muttered, feeling hot and bothered by the faff.

'Arms up. I'll sort you out,' Molly ordered as she came into the dressing room. When I paused, she rolled her eyes and pushed my arms up over my head to make adjustments to the dress. The fabric clung to my skin, leaving little to the imagination, yet the rows of bright red ribbons along my sides gave it a hedonistic edge. I couldn't help but wonder what it might feel like to have someone undo them.

Someone like Ruby's hot boss...

Molly gazed at me as my face flushed in the mirror as she finished tying the final ribbon. 'Okay, what's up with you?'

'What do you mean?' I asked, pulling out some eyeliner and leaning close to the mirror to apply it.

'I've known you for months, and this past week, you've been acting like some wide-eyed fawn, blushing at every dude who smiles at you. I've watched you ride a guy on stage without so much as a blink. Did you fall over and knock your head or something?'

My fingers trembled as I focused on the eyeliner, dragging it to a point. 'That sounds crazy.'

'It does. But I know I'm not. You look like Ruby, but you don't act like her. If I didn't know better, I'd say you were having some insane parent trap style swap.'

Swallowing hard, I tried to laugh it off. Unconvincingly.

'Holy shit. You are!'

Rounding on her, I swiftly slapped a hand over her mouth, only narrowly missing her with the eyeliner, and whispered 'Shhhhhh. Not so loud.'

'You're a fucking twin?' she mumbled from behind my hand as her eyebrows raised.

'Yes. Please don't say anything.'

I let my hand drop to my side and leant back against the dresser.

'But... why? Ruby could just ask for some time off if she didn't want to come in.'

'She broke her leg, and we need the money. Ewen would fill her place if she couldn't come in for six to eight weeks. We can't afford to lose her wage.' Nerves pricked at my spine as Molly eyed me sceptically. Until a sunny smile lit up her face.

'Well, this makes things more interesting, doesn't it? So, who the hell are you?'

I dropped my voice and glanced at the doorway. 'I'm Cora.'

'Do you usually work in places like The Loft?'

Laughing, I shook my head. 'Not even slightly. I'm a photography student.'

'This past week must have been a bit of an eye opener. You could have told me, you know. I don't bite. Well, not unless they pay a bit extra, or I really, really like you.' Her eyes glittered, and I relaxed my shoulders.

'I know Ruby doesn't bother interacting at work that much. She's more wham, bam, thanks for the pay packet, and out. I didn't know who I could trust. I don't want her to lose her job. She supports us both while I'm studying.'

'Your secret's safe with me. I can help you out with anything you need. Think of me as your club guide. I can fill you in on the lingo and help defend against any douchebags.'

'Thanks, Molly. That's kind of you.'

'Have you been involved in the kink scene before? I know Ruby isn't so into the kink side of it. How much did she let you know before throwing you in here?'

'She filled me in a little.' I bit my lip as I considered how much to tell her. Would she look down on me for my inexperience? But I was also lying to enough people. Having Molly on my side, knowing the full extent of my situation, could be helpful. 'I've never been involved in the kink scene. Or any scene. I've never... you know...'

A range of emotions contorted her face as she mulled over my words. Her eyes widened when she finally grasped what I was saying. 'You're a fucking virgin?'

'Shush,' I whispered, glancing toward the door. 'I'm not sure the entire staff needs to know.'

'Holy shitballs. You can't be working here as a bloody virgin. This is a sex club.' Molly sat down on a stool and slowly shook her head at me.

'Listen, I don't have to have sex with anyone, right? We're not paid for that. I can serve drinks, help people find rooms, and dance a bit. It's only a few more weeks. I have to do this. For Ruby.' And for me. To know that, for once, I was the one supporting her when she needed me.

'No, you don't have to have sex. But you'll be expected to perform.'

'It's fine. I can do anything for twenty minutes at a time. There are worse things to suffer than being put on show. We have limits, right? Red, amber, green? Ruby told me that people always have to respect them here, so I can stop anything at any time.'

'Well, yeah, that's true. It can still be intense, though.'

'I'll be okay, I promise. I'm pretty good at grinning and bearing it.' I tried to inject confidence into my words—confidence I absolutely didn't feel.

'Promise me that if you need to tap out, you will. And that if there are any issues, you'll come to me.'

'I promise.'



Stretching out my weary legs, I was so glad it was Sunday tomorrow and a day off from both uni and work. Almost at the end of my second week. A third of the way through. My calves and arches ached from wearing heels for hours on end. The ribbon dress made me feel desirable, but after a few hours, it irritated my arms every time I moved them. Only an hour or so to go...

The barman, Adam, passed me a glass of water with a smile. 'Quiet night, huh?'

'Yeah,' I said, taking a sip and closing my eyes as the cold water hit my tongue. 'God, I can't wait to get these heels off. The red ones are so uncomfortable.'

'You complain about them every time you wear them. Get some different ones.'

The fact that Ruby complained about them too made me smile. Maybe we weren't completely different after all.

'You should just ask one of the sub guys for a foot rub. Then you are working and get to ditch the shoes.' Adam rinsed the used glasses as he spoke before stacking them into a dishwasher tray for the kitchen guy.

'They'd do that?' The thought of a stranger touching my feet gave me the heebie-jeebies, but the idea of sitting on my ass and taking off the heels was pretty damn appealing.

'What's gotten into you? You know they do. I see you utilise them at least once a week.' Adam looked up at me, and I lowered my glass, fidgeting with the condensation on the edge.

'Sorry. Of course, they do. I'm just super tired this week. I get a bit forgetful when I'm run-down.'

Maybe a foot rub wouldn't be so bad...

'Emilia is stuck in the bathroom after eating bad sushi. I need you on stage in five, Ruby,' a commanding voice said behind me.

I pivoted on my heels and swallowed when I met Ewen McGowan's piercing gaze.

'I... was just going to...'

He sighed and held up his hands. 'We don't have time for mock resistance. What do you want? Double time? Triple? I just need you up on the stage edge in five minutes.'

He stalked off, leaving me gaping like a freshly caught fish as my stomach clenched. Where the hell was Molly? She could help.

Except that Molly was currently sitting on some guy's lap, whispering in his ear while taunting him with a key on a chain.

'Best get your arse up there,' Adam said. 'You know he hates being made to wait.'

Shit.

Oh shit!

Feeling like a shaky-legged foal, I made my way to the central stage. It gleamed a polished dark wood and was lit with a series of candelabras on the dark red walls. A low-hanging chandelier highlighted the centre stage, and in the wings, Ewen waited.

How the heck was I going to do a performance with him while keeping my true identity a secret? My heart pounded as I took the side stairs and stopped a few feet from him. Ewen looked positively bored. Not a hint of emotion on his face as he eyed me.

'What are your terms, Ruby? The usual?'

My mind raced as my throat seemed to block up. Holy hell.

This man—this icy asshole—was about to touch me, not to mention whatever the fuck else.

I itched to turn and flee, to call Ruby and tell her that the deal was off; that there had to be another way. The only problem was that there wasn't another way.

Twenty minutes. I could do anything for twenty minutes. He'd take control. All I had to do was deal with it.

I could do that.

I had to.

Clearing my throat, I tried to channel my sister's voice and expression, pretending to be as brave as her. 'Triple time. No sex. Nothing too extreme. Safe words.'

Ewen nodded before running his fingers over a rack of implements. His eyes flicked to mine as I watched him consider a variety of toys. Wooden paddles. Long and short whips of varying thicknesses. Crops. My breath caught as he caressed a riding crop with a dark leather tip, and his eyes narrowed at my reaction.

'This one?' he questioned.

Doing my best to sound nonchalant, I shrugged and said, 'Whatever, Ewen. I don't care.'

The idea of the leather stinging my skin made me want to hide. Would I cry? Would it leave marks? Would I be able to handle it?

Ewen placed the crop down briefly and picked up a leather collar, beckoning me toward him.

'Lift your hair out of the way.'

I scooped it up in my hands as he slid the cool leather around my neck, fitting it snugly against my throat. His breath swept over my ear as he leaned in to fasten it at the back of my neck, and I swore electricity shot through me.

Blinking up at him, his eyes darkened. Letting my hair fall around my shoulders, he attached a metal leash to the collar, which hung against my chest and made me shiver. Ewen dropped to his knees and slid my heels off, placing them neatly to the side. I bit my lip as his fingers grazed my skin.

'Don't I look better with them on?' I asked as he looked up at me.

'No. I want you to be able to concentrate on me. Not those.'

The polished wood was smooth and cool beneath my aching feet. One small blessing about having to do the performance.

Before I could say another word, Ewen tugged on my leash, and I let out a yelp as he pulled me out on stage. Patrons sat at tables surrounding the stage, some having a drink, others engaging in their own illicit activities. So many eyes on me. Panic rose as we reached the centre of the stage. The leather collar began to feel suffocating with the sensation of being dragged, and I tugged at it.

Ewen turned and faced me, an eyebrow arching at my reaction.

'Hey, it's okay', he whispered, his fingers enveloping my hand in a reassuring grasp. 'Just follow my lead.'

Ewen walked behind me, gathering my hands on my lower back as he brushed his body against mine, his lips close to my ear. 'They just want to watch you be a good girl. I know that's not in your remit, but just pretend for the next few minutes. Imagine you were capable of following orders.'

Then his heat was gone as he walked a slow circle around me, eyeing every inch of my ribbon-covered frame. He held the crop lightly in one hand, tapping it against his leg. Every step put me on edge, my pulse quickening as I waited to see what he was going to do.

Lifting the crop, he drew the leather end up my leg, my skin tingling as it skirted higher and higher. I tried to stay calm, to fight down both the urge

to run, and the urge to whimper. I should have hated the asshole boss's crop, but it sent funny feelings through me.

He continued taunting me with gentle strokes, up my arms, down over my stomach, over my throat. Staying still proved nearly impossible. Biting my lip to silence any noise, I focused on a spot above the bar, trying to ignore the confusing feelings melting my insides.

I jumped when he tapped my thigh with the crop, not hard, but enough to make me startle.

'Spread them,' he said, his voice gruffer than I'd heard it before.

Without thinking, I stepped wider.

'Mmm. So you can listen.'

Ewen continued his torment, dragging the crop up my inner thighs until I squirmed, and I wanted it to graze the flesh between them.

No. No, I didn't want that. Did I?

I trembled when he moved behind me and I couldn't see what he was doing. When a sharp pain cracked against one of my thighs, I cried out and screwed my torso around to stare at him in shock. The lash with the crop hadn't even been that hard, but the surprise of it caught me completely off guard. Reaching out, he wrapped my leash in his other hand, until there was no give between my collar and his fist.

'I didn't say that you could move.' His breath was heavy in my ear.

'Are you using your safe word?' he whispered. It almost sounded like a challenge.

I could make it all stop.

With one little word.

'No,' I said, swallowing, his heady scent filling my nostrils.

'Interesting.'

He held tight next to my collar, keeping me still as he angled himself to taunt me with the crop from the side. He grazed it up my thighs again, this time ever so briefly catching my panties before continuing back down the other thigh.

The whimper broke free that time.

His jaw clenched at the noise, and he laid a lash of the crop against my ass, sending fire over my skin.

'Oh, god,' I moaned. He followed with another two sharp cracks that had me writhing.

My breath came in short pants as he dropped the leash and took a step back, his face a mask that I couldn't read.

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### NINE

**EWEN** 

What the hell had gotten into Ruby?

Either she'd gone to acting classes over the past few weeks, or she had suddenly found a desire for the crop.

It was like she was a completely different person.

A red mark gleamed on her thigh where I'd tested her. The urge to pull her ribboned dress over her ass and see the marks I'd made burned at me. With every moan that escaped her lips, a dark possessiveness stirred within me, one that I knew I had no right to entertain.

I disliked Ruby. She wasn't my type at all. So why the fuck was she making my dick hard with nothing but her delightful little moans? Each of her tortured pants burned at me. What I wanted was to throw her over my shoulder and drag her backstage to make her choke on my cock. I needed her tears. I craved hearing her whimper my name. I'd kill to hear her break and beg me to stop.

*Fuck, what was she doing to me?* 

And why now?

'Knees,' I barked. When she dropped instantly, her mouth forming a little O shape, it took everything in me to hold back.

I slid the leather tip of the crop beneath her chin and tipped her face upward until she was staring right into my eyes. The blush that crept across her cheeks couldn't be faked. Could it?

'Do you want me to stop?' I asked, not knowing what would be worse, a yes or a no.

She shook her head.

'Look at what you're doing to me.' Her face was level with my dick, and her gaze fell to meet it. The straining against my trousers left little to the imagination. Her chest rose sharply as she dropped her eyes to the floor.

'No,' I growled, 'Look at what you've done to me. I've a mind to make you take care of it right here in front of everyone. Fill that smart mouth with lashings of cum.'

Her eyes widened further. She looked terrified, which only made me want her all the more.

Thrusting a hand into her soft hair, I knelt in front of her and twisted her face to mine. The urge to taste her clouded my brain and left me rattled. It had been years since I'd wanted to kiss anyone. Fuck? Sure. Whip? Yes. Kiss? Fuck, no.

'What's different about you, Ruby? Why do I want to spread your thighs and make you moan my name? Why do I want to untie each one of these goddamned ribbons and rid you of any barrier to my touch? Why am I holding back from doing so because they are watching us?'

'I don't know,' she answered, her voice catching.

Even that made me harder.

Pulling her back to her feet, I lashed her arse with the crop, harder than before.

'Tell me to stop.'

'No,' she sobbed while holding her stance firm.

Another lash brought a prick of tears to her eyes. Her thighs ground together, and I closed my eyes.

When I opened them, she had turned to see why I'd stopped. I grabbed her collar in one hand and dropped my crop, pulling her toward me as she looked up at me wet-eyed and panting.

Sliding a hand between her thighs, I was met with soaked panties. She wasn't acting at all. Some things you couldn't fake. I pulled my hand away and took a step back. I needed air. How the fuck had she done a one-eighty, and why was I tumbling into a dark temptation to have her?

'Go get changed,' I told her, pulling her offstage to a smattering of applause from the crowd.

'Why did you stop?' Disappointment laced her words.

'Why didn't you?'

I left her there and made my way out of the fire escape, taking deep gulps of the cold night air.

Why didn't she?

I didn't know, but I intended to find out.



I fumed as I stormed to my office, ignoring Adam as he tried to get my attention. I didn't know what had gotten into Ruby, but I intended to find out. Flicking through the staff files, I found her address, and decided it was time to go for a drive.

Ruby Henderson.

204A Commerce Street.

Glancing up at the street sign affixed to a building on the corner, I reassured myself that I was in the right place. I'd driven ahead of the club closing and awaited Ruby's arrival. Not that I had a plan in mind. But something was going on, and I wasn't going to sleep until I figured out what she was up to.

Was it a bit insane? Maybe. But she'd been confusing me the entire week and learning that her reactions weren't fake had thrown me off kilter. I needed an answer.

Warm yellow light flicked on, illuminating a window above the cafe at number 204. Ruby came into view. How had she gotten in without me seeing her? I had a clear line of sight to her front door and left the club first. A man appeared, and I gripped the steering wheel as he embraced her. There must be a back entrance.

Unwarranted rage seeped into my veins at the sight of her in his arms. Less than two hours earlier, she'd been gasping at the kiss of my crop and soaking her panties for me, only to come home and waste it all on another man's dick.

Dark thoughts clouded my mind as I watched them practically feast on one another in plain view of the street. I could break in, shove my knife into his throat, and fuck her across his dying body. I could snatch her and tuck her away in my mansion to keep her as my little pet. No-one would know. I shook my head and tried to ground myself. *What the fuck had gotten into me?* She's just a woman. There were plenty more.

When he turned Ruby toward the window and pressed himself into her from behind, the memory of her sweet whimpers had my grip on the wheel so tight that my fingers ached. His hand slid between her thighs, and her hot, wet panties flashed in my mind.

I'd kill him.

*Fuck*, *no*. No, I wouldn't. She can fuck who she likes. I'd seen her sleep with dozens of guys at work and never cared. I had to be sick. The electrical wiring in my brain had gone faulty.

A movement down at street level dragged my eyes away from the exhibition, only to have me double-taking. There, approaching the door, was Ruby. Her hair was thrown into a loose bun, and the makeup was gone, but without a doubt, it was her.

Looking between the window and the woman on the street, I tried to piece together the information. The woman in the window was also, very clearly, Ruby as well.

Then the man lifted one of her legs high, spreading her open and giving the neighbourhood a full view of him slamming into her. On the end of her leg was a cast.

Realisation hit as the Ruby who had whimpered beneath my fingers reached the street-level entrance. Ruby hadn't been Ruby at all. It explained the total attitude change and the wide-eyed wonder of the woman in my club.

So who was the delightful little morsel who'd stolen my mind right out of my head?

I switched on the ignition as the door closed behind imposter Ruby, smiling to myself.

I'd sure as hell find out.

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## **TEN**

**CORA** 

The moans coming from the living room had me going straight into my room and shutting the door behind me. The last thing I needed was to be accused of spying on my sister and her latest beau.

It was the middle of the night. What were they even doing up? Well, I knew what they were doing, but they could at least have the decency to do it in her room.

Pulling off my clothes, I dumped them in the washing basket and pulled on an oversized band t-shirt. It was all I'd kept from my previous boyfriend. He'd loaned it to me when I spilled on my shirt at his house and then dumped me when I wouldn't put out. I should have ditched it, but it made for perfect pyjamas. One good thing to come out of the months I'd wasted with him.

I flopped down on my bed and yawned, setting my alarm for eight and hoping that I'd be able to drag my ass to a lecture in the morning. Rhythmic moaning still wafted through the house, but they couldn't keep going forever.

I hoped.

Reaching under my mattress, I grabbed my journal and opened it to the date. Not every day had something notable happen, but I was in the habit of filling out my day, regardless. For once, I had a lot to write.

Ewen had made me feel completely knotted up inside. Like I was made entirely out of writhing, coiling snakes, desperate to burst their way out of me. Every touch made me want more. I'd never had that happen before. I wrote down every moment so I couldn't forget a single one. Rolling on the bed, I pulled up my t-shirt and stared at my ass in the mirror by my bed, hoping to see his marks. Nothing. Hours had passed, and my skin had calmed too much. With a sigh, I laid back down and wrote about that disappointment, too.

What did I even want from Ewen? It was merely a performance to him, something he engaged in regularly with other people. Perhaps he was at home, possibly in the company of someone else—someone skilled and experienced, someone who'd know how to please him.

I frowned at the idea.

Closing my journal and slipping it between my mattress and the bedframe, I turned out my light and closed my eyes. Ewen's face kept dancing in my mind. The confusion, the arousal. I'd wanted so badly to reach out and feel his need for me. I'd dug my nails into my thighs instead.

My fingers grazed over the small, moon-shaped scabs that still studded my skin. I closed my eyes, slipping my fingers higher in an attempt to exhaust the torment he'd instilled in me. But my fingers failed to bring any of the tension and desire his touch had ignited.

Eventually, I rolled over with an annoyed groan, punched my pillow, and gave up.

My days had been filled with exhaustion, and my nights with growing frustration. Being surrounded by sex was one thing, but being surrounded by it when I was horny and mooning over my temporary boss was killing me.



A guest was on the stage, having been given permission from the club. He had a rope attached to the ceiling, stringing his partner's wrists above her as she stood on tiptoes. Her skin shone in the chandelier light as a sheen of sweat stole over her. The whoosh of the whip mingled with her soft cries, and I couldn't focus on anything but them.

Lash marks criss-crossed over her, thin and red, and they filled me with envy. Surely, I wouldn't want that? There was no doubt about it, though; I

would have traded places with her in a heartbeat.

Warmth flooded my back, and I turned my head to find Ewen standing behind me. Whipping my head back to the front, I swallowed hard. I'd tried to avoid him as much as I could since our display.

'Can you imagine it? The sharp sting as the whip strikes, the fiery eruption from its bite, and the following warmth flooding your entire system?' His words were soft and measured, but still wrapped around me like silk.

'I'm not into that,' I said, trying to remind myself I was supposed to be Ruby.

'Funny, you haven't looked away since they started.'

'Something can be interesting to watch without wanting to do it.' Who was I trying to convince? Him or me?

'Mmm. So you're telling me that if I slid my fingers beneath your dress, you'd be dry as the Sahara?'

I turned to face him and pulled on my best Ruby face. 'If you did, I'd have you hauled to court for sexual harassment.'

The reaction I got hadn't been one I expected. He laughed. 'Would you now?'

Except that I wanted his touch. I wanted him to force his hands into my underpants without asking. To take what he desired. Wanting that was terrifying, and it's why I'd never gone further with anyone. No-one had been right or got me feeling so hot that I wanted them to pin me down and take what they wanted.

I still didn't know if Ewen was that guy.

'Because I think you'd grind that pussy against my fingers until you creamed all over my fucking hand.' His voice rasped as his eyes narrowed, focusing on my burning cheeks.

My lips parted as I searched for a retort, the air seeming to have turned to fire in my chest.

'I wouldn't. I can't.'

'Can't what?'

'Come.'

His brow creased as he took in my words before I turned and fled for the ladies' room, locking myself in the stall and catching my breath.

Fuck. Why the hell had I told him that?

He'd know I was broken. If I couldn't make myself come, what hope did I have with anyone else? I cursed. He would have seen Ruby with others. Would know that she... I... could come. What a mess. All I had to do was keep my head down for a few weeks. Instead, I was screwing up left, right, and centre.

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### **ELEVEN**

**EWEN** 

Ruby, the real one, had hobbled down the street on her crutches, chatting about dinner with the man who I presumed was her lover. The faux Ruby was at work and would be for hours. I had enough time to find the answers I needed.

I'd scoped out the apartment building the previous evening after my brush with not-Ruby. A stairwell led right to a back door, which I was certain was theirs. Countless locks had given way under the steady knack of my picking tools, but their door was the first that sent my pulse fluttering in my throat.

Hell, I was excited. It had been a long time since that sort of illicit adrenaline had flooded me. Her secrets and lies were mine for the taking.

Requiring some force to open because of disuse, the door finally unlocked with a satisfying click. I slipped into the darkened hallway, turned right, and moved away from the main living area toward the room I knew belonged to not-Ruby—the one where the light had come on moments after she got home while her sister was being railed in the other window.

Darkness enveloped the room, and I used my phone torch to throw a beam of light over the neat space. The bed was made, and her dirty washing was tossed in a hamper in the corner. A tidy desk sat near the window, a stack of boxes to the side. Opening one curiously, I found dozens of photographs. A green bag beside the desk revealed a mid-price digital camera and the paraphernalia that accompanied it.

*Hmm*, so my little liar is a photographer?

I continued my perusal through her things, stopping to eye different belongings. Nothing of interest was under the bed, but one corner of the sheet was untucked, standing out amongst the neat sheets, and I lifted the mattress at the disturbed spot.

A diary.

With a grin, I sat at her desk and flicked it open.

Most pages were a mix of rambling about her sister, or her course at university, or daily niggles, but a page covered with heated scribbles stood out. My dirty girl had watched her sister being fucked, and imagined what it would have been like to be beneath the rutting male.

She didn't know.

The little liar was a virgin.

I'd never particularly coveted virginity, but the thought of her being untouched and yet so receptive to my touch made me rock hard. A virgin in my sex club. Damn.

Flipping through the pages, I found an entry on the date I'd performed with her. She'd obsessed over the brief touch of her wet panties and how she'd come home and tried to make herself come to the faint marks I'd left on her skin, but even that hadn't been enough to do it.

She was frustrated. Desperate. So why hadn't she gone out and found someone to sleep with? It's not like she wouldn't have a queue as long as Hadrian's wall. Plenty of guys—or girls—would gladly do whatever she asked. Hell, she could have asked any of the guys at the club if she wanted to lose her virginity. Yet she'd shied away from any of those performances.

Was she waiting for flowers and candles, soft words and sentiment? Or something else?

I slid the diary back in place. All I needed was a name. I rifled through the drawers on her desk until I grasped the edge of her passport. I pulled it out, holding my phone torch to it.

Cora Henderson. Twenty-nine.

Mine.

The thought whispered through my senses—dangerous, demented, and yet, utterly delicious.

Pushing the passport back into the drawer, I took a last look around her room. My eyes landed on a pair of cotton panties that hung on the edge of her washing hamper. I picked them up and shoved them in my pocket,

wanting to steal a little piece of her to take home with me—the urge to keep part of her close was irresistible.

A voice came from the hallway, and I quickly shut my phone torch off, moving into her built-in closet. I tucked myself back into the hanging clothes with a curse, pulling the doors closed. They stayed open a tiny sliver, just enough for me to see Cora's bed.

The room light flicked on as she came in, chatting on the phone.

'Yeah, Adam let me off early as it was so quiet tonight,' Cora said, still out of view. 'Where are you?'

I couldn't hear the responses on the other end. Cora came into view and sat down on the edge of the bed, slipping off her shoes.

'No, it's okay, I'm not hungry. I'm going to take advantage of being home before midnight and have an early night. I'm exhausted.'

She hung up the phone shortly after and threw it on her bed. Pulling her sweater over her head, she slung it into the basket near the closet in which I hid. Next came her sweatpants, followed by the vest top she wore underneath.

My little liar stood there in nothing but a pair of cotton panties identical to the ones I'd stuffed in my pocket, and a simple white bra. A chain hung around her neck with a ring on it. I wanted nothing more than to burst out of the closet and pin her to the bed, forcing my way into her as I claimed her first time as mine. I yearned to make her moan and cry beneath me, to help her find that elusive orgasm and make her experience it over and over again.

But I didn't. I stayed perfectly still as she turned on her bedside lamp, turned off the main light, and left the room. A few moments later, I heard a toilet flush and a tap running. I should have taken the moment to get out of her home, but my legs were leaden at the thought of leaving her so soon.

Her feet padded on the floor as she returned and collapsed back on the bed, scrolling on her phone for what felt like hours. I'd have happily stayed and watched her do that if it meant getting to ogle her legs and ass.

She turned so that the screen of her phone came into view. My dirty girl was watching porn. Eventually, she slipped her hand into her panties and touched herself.

Pulling out the stolen panties from my pocket, I quietly opened my trousers, using the cotton to stroke my dick. I imagined I was pressed up against the panties she wore, and my cock was bringing her flushed cheeks.

The material grazed the tip of my cock as I quickened my pace, every little pant of hers driving me wild. My jaw tensed as she writhed on the bed, clearly getting close, but not tipping over the edge. A light sheen of sweat gathered across her reddened chest, and to my delight, she removed her hand and slapped her inner thighs hard. The mewl she gave made my balls twitch.

Pink hand prints formed, and she turned to look at them in the mirror near her bed while she continued to touch herself beneath her panties.

'Please, no,' she moaned softly as she picked up speed. 'Don't touch me there.'

Her pleading voice had me right on edge while her pink thighs urged me to burst out and make her feel pain at my hands until she came all over my fingers.

'No, Ewen, don't...' Her eyes closed as she gave into the dirty fantasy in her head. My name on her lips was the final straw as I angled her panties to fill the gusset with streams of cum. Holding in my groan was almost painful as I emptied my balls for my pretty liar.

She kept trying to reach her own summit but eventually gave up. Tears pricked her eyes as she fell back against the bed in defeat.

I wanted to go to her and finish the job. But appearing from her closet was more likely to end with her hating me than wanting me. So I waited.

And waited.

Finally, her chest rose softly as she fell into sleep. Creeping out of the closet, I went to pocket the panties when a filthy thought entered my head.

Moving to the bed, I ran a finger over her exposed stomach, the heat of her skin drawing me in. Leaning down, I grazed my lips over the pink finger marks on her thighs.

'I'll make them real, pretty girl. I promise.'

I reached up, gently sliding her wet panties down her thighs until I held them in my hand. Inhaling deeply, I took in her heady scent and pocketed the underwear. Next, I lined up the cum-filled panties over her feet, slowly working them up her legs. When she shifted, I froze, my heart hammering in my chest. On she slept.

At last, I pulled them up over her hips, my hot, fresh cum seated right against her cunt. Pressing my fingers there, I tucked the crotch right into her little virgin pussy's cleft.

'Goodnight, Cora,' I whispered.

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# **TWELVE**

**CORA** 

I'd felt off since waking up. Like something was different. But bar feeling extra sticky and gross when I woke up, nothing seemed off.

By the time I'd showered, attended my morning lecture, and returned home for lunch, I'd brushed off the odd feeling.

The bell on Maggie's Coffee Shop door tinkled as I pushed it open. The small eatery below our apartment had lino flooring, likely installed in the eighties, with the black checkerboard pattern nearly worn down to the floor beneath in high-traffic spots. It had practical wooden tables and seats that were more comfortable than sanitary. It was cosy, and I adored it even in its run-down state.

Taking my favourite seat near the window, I pressed myself against the squishy old fabric and placed my laptop on the table. It was the perfect spot to work on my essay on Richard Avedon and his celebrity portraits. The written coursework was my least favourite part of university; I much preferred the practical work.

It wasn't long before my favourite reason for visiting the coffee shop joined me, leaning her hip against the table with a wrinkled smile. Maggie. She must have been nearly eighty years old and still ran the place almost single-handedly. If I ended up being half as wickedly awesome at her age, I'd be ecstatic.

'Cora, how are you doing, Hen?' The pet name always made me smile.

'Good. Just popped in to do a spot of essay writing. Pretty quiet today?' The room was almost empty, with only an old guy sitting near the door, flipping through a newspaper and eating a gargantuan slice of pie.

'Oh, I'm not long done with the breakfast rush. You're a little earlier than the lunchtime regulars. You've not been around so much lately.' Her fingers trembled lightly where she held her tiny notepad, age not entirely letting her escape its grasp.

'I've had to do a bit of work in the evenings. Ruby broke her foot.'

'So I saw. I could have given you a few hours here. You look plenty strong enough for sweeping up, and my arms get tired quicker these days.'

I smiled, tucking a stray piece of hair behind my ear. Telling her that I wouldn't make enough there would offend her, but I didn't want her to ask where I was working. I needed to deflect.

'Thanks, Maggie. I'll keep that in mind. The job I'm doing is only temporary, so I might need to take you up on that later.'

'Terrible,' the old man said, his voice making us both look over. 'Just terrible.'

'What's terrible, Bill?' Maggie asked.

'A body washed up in the canal. Says it looks like he was tortured. That's the third one this month.'

Maggie tutted. 'Well, he was probably up to no good.'

'You can't blame the dead man,' I said.

'Can and will. He probably rubbed someone up the wrong way. Anyway, love, what can I get you?' Maggie didn't look fazed in the slightest by the spate of dead bodies that had been found locally.

'Um. Coffee, please. And a brownie. I think I could use the sugar.'

Thirty minutes later, Maggie topped up my coffee and took away my crumb-dusted plate. I jumped in my seat as a loud knock sounded outside the window. Ruby waved at me.

'Hey, Mags,' she said as she hobbled in on her crutches, failing to avoid catching chairs as she passed through the cramped space. 'A tea, please!'

'Do you want something to eat?' Maggie asked from behind the counter.

'No, thanks.' Ruby sat down, her face a touch paler than usual.

'Hey, are you okay?' I asked.

She gave me a crooked little smile and nodded. 'Yeah. Course I am. You've got your nose in your work again.'

'Trying to catch up. Thank god I only have to cover a few more weeks for you. I don't know how you do so many late nights.'

'Sleeping until noon helps.' Ruby took her steaming teacup from Maggie, a slight tremor in her hands. I watched with concern as she took a sip. 'Seth's meeting me here. Thought I'd join you while I wait for him to pick me up.'

'Seth?' I asked.

'The guy you watched ploughing me.'

I shushed her as the newspaper-holding man glanced up at us.

'The guy who ditched you when you were hurt, you mean? So is he like a regular thing now?'

'Something like that.' Ruby looked out of the window, fidgeting with the handle of her mug. Her lips were dry and chewed near the corners; her clothes crumpled with a stain at the sleeve of her top. Her hair had been scraped back into a bun but was visibly greasy at the roots. My sister was always the glamorous one out of the two of us.

'Are you sure you're okay? Do you need help with anything?' Maybe she couldn't shower right with the cast on? Shit, I'd left her to mostly get on with things while I was dashing from uni to the club before collapsing into bed. 'I can wash your hair if you are struggling?'

Ruby's mouth turned down in a pout. 'God, I skip one shower, and suddenly you think I'm some scab. I'm fine. How are you getting on at the club?'

I wanted to press her, to see what was going on, but knowing Ruby, it would only anger her further.

'Okay. Molly is sweet. Adam's nice.'

'Got laid yet?'

'Ruby.'

'Well, it is a sex club. Even you could get it there.' Her grin loosened the tension between us and I rolled my eyes.

'No. I haven't. I'm just doing the bare minimum.'

'Have you met Ewen yet? He's such an ass.' I tried to ignore the way Ruby shifted in her seat, only half paying attention to the conversation.

'Yeah. I had to perform with him.'

That grabbed her. 'Shut the front door! You didn't?'

'Only once.'

'What did he do?' Ruby took a drink from her tea as Maggie came over and placed a large slice of apple pie in front of her. 'Oh, I didn't ask for this...'

'Eat up. You're looking like a wind might blow you over.' Maggie didn't accept another word.

With a sigh, Ruby popped a piece into her mouth, her body visibly relaxing as she chewed.

'So... What did he do?' she insisted. 'He's a fucking weirdo. He likes inflicting pain. Nuts.'

'He thought I was you, so he just did what you guys normally do, I guess. Slapped me with a crop a little.' I didn't mention how wet I got, it was my dirty little secret. Ours. Even if Ewen didn't know it.

'Did he mark you up? He better not. He knows I don't like that. I hope he paid you well for his BDSM shit.'

'Yeah, he paid extra.' How could I tell her that I'd have done it for the usual rate? Hell, I'd have done it for free. When he touched me, it made me feel more than I did after going at myself for an hour. One touch, and I hadn't been able to kick him from my head ever since. I'd been waiting for him to make me perform again, but he hadn't. Not since I'd told him how broken I was.

Seth opened the café door and signalled to Ruby with a sharp jerk of his head.

Ruby's eyes widened, and she stood up so quickly that she spilled her tea all over the tabletop, spreading like a murky little puddle toward my laptop. I snatched it up and looked up, but she was already hobbling toward the door on her crutches. Without even saying goodbye.

Maggie came over with some paper towels and helped mop up the mess.

'I don't like her new one,' she said as they passed the window in the direction of our flat.

'Me either.'

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## **THIRTEEN**

#### **EWEN**

The rhythmic clipping of my shoes against the wooden floor melds with the soft jazz music filtering through the club as I pace in front of the bar.

'You'll wear a hole in the bottom of those shoes if you keep that up,' Alfie said, leaning against the bar and watching me with an amused smirk.

'I'm not doing anything.'

'My arse. You've gone back and forth enough times that someone might mistake you for a bloody yo-yo. Sit down and have a drink. What's got you all worked up?'

'Nothing.' I forced myself to stop and centre my angst with a slow breath before I joined him at the bar.

'Have you forgotten that I've been living with you on and off for months? I know that something is up when you're acting like a bee caught under a glass,' Alfie said, pushing his glass forward so the barman could top it up.

I couldn't tell him that my whole body itched with the need to get close to Cora again. I'd broken into her home. I'd come in her panties while watching her touch herself. I'd pressed my cum against her while she slept... and I wanted to do it again.

I wanted more. Watching her at work, knowing that she had no idea what I'd done, was driving me crazy. Knowing she had a day off and might be in her room sleeping—unknowingly waiting for me—made me want to

abandon everything and go live in her fucking closet. Just hole up in there until she sleeps, then sneak out and taste every inch of her.

What had gotten into me?

'Oh shit,' Alfie said, snapping me out of my obsessive thoughts.

'What?'

Following his gaze, I saw him watching an older guy stroking his fingers over Molly's thigh. She didn't look upset by it.

'Don't you know who that is?'

The guy looked vaguely familiar, but I didn't recognise him. 'Don't think so.'

'Edwards. The guy who tried to force himself on Valentina at Rosenhall.'

Cold swept through my veins. Edwards had tried to assault my sister-inlaw. Logan had beaten him to a pulp. He'd been banned from Alfie's highland playground and lain low ever since. What the fuck was he doing in my club?

I approached the two of them, and Molly looked up at me with surprise.

'Take a break,' I ordered, barely keeping the rising anger from my voice.

'But we are just—'

'Go. Now.'

Molly's brow crinkled as she looked from Edwards' face to my own before standing. With a sigh, she smoothed her hands down her dress and walked past me, making her way toward the staff break room.

'Ewen McGowan,' Edwards said, standing up and holding out a hand.

'Keep your pleasantries. It's time to go.'

He was with a handful of other men who sat around a round table, each watching the interaction with what I could only describe as hunger.

'You're throwing me out?' A smirk crossed Edwards' face as one of his men stood up and flexed his knuckles.

'We can do it quietly, or we can do it the hard way. If you go the hard way, remember that you were all checked for weapons coming in. I have to go through no such rigmarole. I'd rather keep the atmosphere as it is in my club, but I'm not going to have a rapist in it.'

'And you think you McGowan's are any better? I saw Logan fuck your whore of a sister-in-law on the fucking lawn, moaning like a little she-cat while taking his dick. She didn't deserve respect. If you go around offering

your cunt to whoever is desperate enough to take it, then you can't be salty when someone does. She sat her ass in my lap and took my fingers quite happily befo—'

I cut him off before he could finish his dressing down of Valentina. My fist connected with his jaw, a resounding thwack crackling through the soft music. Within seconds, his men were on their feet, standing around Edwards, who had crumpled back into his seat. My fingers ached, but it was worth it.

I felt my bouncers behind me before I saw them, their muscled frames looming. 'See these men to their vehicles, please.'

Both were adequately armed and towered over Edwards and his men. Despite the anger radiating from them, they knew they were out-armed. The men followed after one of my security guys while the other trailed behind them.

Edwards turned a few paces from me and spat at my shoes. I neither flinched nor made to move away. 'I'm going to make you fuckers pay. Every single one of you. Someone should have finished you off when you were all fucking newly whelped out of your bitch mother.'

I envisioned walking over to him and thrusting my knife right into one of his watery eyes. The satisfaction it would bring to hear him scream out for his own mother while I slowly skinned him from his limbs inwards until he bled out.

Not in my club.

Too many witnesses.

Too messy.

I'd deal with him later.



Amped up after my interaction with Edwards, I found myself on the street across from Cora's window within the hour. Ruby had gotten into her boyfriend's car thirty minutes previously, and despite my body numbing at the edges, I waited.

Cora moved about the flat, a dark shape against the yellow lighting beyond. Just seeing her set my head straight, sending a calming balm to my insides.

The living room lights went out. The bathroom light came on but later dimmed. Then, a softer light filled the bedroom window. Thin curtains blocked her from my view—a shape, a blur, a shadow.

Thrusting my hand into my pocket, I felt the edges of the balaclava I'd stuffed in there. Pulling it on and invading her home, for a second time, was crazy. Such a stupid, wild idea that I feared I was losing my grip on reality.

The only small glimmer of hope was that I truly believed Cora wanted it. Deep down, amongst her scribbled diary and her reactions to my few touches, she wanted it—to be touched without being asked. Whether she wanted it while asleep, I couldn't say. I intended to approach her at the club the very next evening, but I couldn't wait that long to be near her. Just a touch. One touch.

My breath fogged as I waited in the chilly night for thirty more minutes after her light went out. Pulling up my phone, I checked the tracker I'd placed beneath Ruby's boyfriend's car. I'd stuck it up beneath the bumper before they'd come downstairs. My phone would alert me if the car came within a mile of their flat.

It was across the city, at the other end of Glasgow—not a nice end, either. Plenty far enough away that I could pay my little liar a visit.

Within ten minutes, I stood on the threshold of her bedroom, my mask forcing my hot breath back against my face.

There she was, hair spilling over her pillow and a worn, baggy t-shirt covering her to the mid-thighs. The sharp edge of the doorway dug into my fingers as I took a long, ragged breath. The room smelled like her. Wisps of vanilla filled my head. I'd have to raid her bathroom and find out what she used so I could spread it on my cock and imagine it was her hands.

Quiet as I could, I made my way into the room. I perched on the edge of her bed and watched as her chest rose rhythmically. Leaning down, I breathed her in. Up close, the vanilla notes lingered, but I could smell her—the light scent of her body beneath the products she used. Lifting my mask for a moment, I dragged my lips over her thigh, tasting her. She twitched, and I froze. If she woke up, she could either scream or beg me to fuck her. And I wasn't ready to fuck her yet. No, when I did that, she'd know exactly who was shredding her innocence. She'd scream my name and know that her tears belonged to me.

Until then, I had to tread carefully.

When she settled, I pulled my mask down and slid the t-shirt up over her stomach. Her tits remained tantalisingly just beneath the material, but her stomach was bared in its entirety, as well as her white panties. They nestled close to her, the shape of her cunt visible beneath the thin material. I didn't care that they were far more practical than sexy, because, on her, anything was perfect. My thumb grazed over her, my eyes never leaving her face as she sighed in her sleep, her legs opening further..

It wasn't long before my gentle strokes had her panties wet, her excitement perfectly visible even in the dark room. The soft glow from the streetlights outside showed enough to know her dreams were likely dirty.

Pulling her panties to the side, it took every ounce of willpower not to drop my mouth on her and lick up every little morsel of her desire. Instead, I slid my fingers along her slit, gathering the slickness with one hand while unsheathing my dick with the other. I wetted the head of my swollen cock with her desire, imagining her tight pussy sliding over it while I stroked myself.

Fuck, I couldn't hold out much longer.

I needed to claim her.

I continued to stroke her glistening cunt, shushing lightly as she stirred. Biting my lip to stifle any sound, I quickened the pace on my throbbing cock, all the while watching her lovely face. My balls tightened and my stomach coiled. I pulled my fingers from her slit and into my mouth, coming hard with the taste of her on my lips, hot white ropes of cum spreading over her stomach.

I wanted to gather it all up on my fingers and stuff it inside her, to feed her hungry cunt with my spilled cum. She'd look so pretty, leaking me out all over her panties.

But it was too risky.

I'd taken enough chances by being there at all, by touching her sleeping form. If she woke up with my fingers deep inside her, she'd definitely freak out.

Taking my balaclava off, I wiped the cum from her stomach with it before setting her top back in place.

Was it just lust? A carnal urge? I didn't know. What I did know was that she was an obsession that was taking over my every waking moment. I needed to fuck her and get her out of my system so I could focus on my business again.

But my head was too damn full of Cora.

'Good night, my little liar,' I whispered.

After making my way outside, I took one last look at my obsession through the window.

I'd barely made it down the fire escape when my phone buzzed, alerting me to Ruby's impending return.

Having come twice already and giving her nothing in return, I was determined to rectify that. I wasn't going to stop until her body gave into me, and she came around my fingers.

Tomorrow.

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# **FOURTEEN**

**CORA** 

Where on earth is everyone?

Aside from the doorman and the receptionist downstairs, the club was pretty much empty when I arrived. Soft music played in the deserted main area, and even though the stage was lit up, there was no-one behind the bar.

Pulling out my phone, I checked my messages. I'd had nothing from Ruby about The Loft being closed for the night.

'Good evening, Ruby,' Ewen's low voice startled me, and I spun to see him in the doorway next to the bar.

'Oh, hey. Where is everyone?'

'I gave them the night off.'

My stomach flipped as nerves wrapped around me like vines encasing my body from the feet up. He watched me with an intense stare, his eyes flicking over me with interest.

'Should I go?' I asked.

'No, Ruby. You and I are going to do a little practice training.'

Swallowing hard, I placed my bag on a chair and wrapped my arms around my waist. Practice? What on earth kind of practice did he mean? As far as I was aware, Ruby had never had any sort of one-on-one practice.

'What do you mean?'

Ewen moved forward, walking slowly toward me. My breath hitched. The impulse to run and hide surged through me, igniting a palpable rush of desire between my thighs.

What is wrong with me?

Why was the idea of being cornered by him exciting? Terrifying, but thrilling?

He stopped a few inches from me, looking down into my face with an unreadable expression. 'Go get changed.'

'What into?'

'Something that isn't precious to you.'

My pulse thundered as I practically ran to the changing room, slamming the door behind me while my head buzzed. I could call Molly or Ruby to ask for advice. One-on-one training with my boss in a sex club couldn't be wholly legal; he couldn't make me.

I pulled up Molly's details, and my thumb hesitated over the call symbol. However, I couldn't bring myself to proceed, even though it seemed like the sensible thing to do. The memory of how he had made me feel the last time we performed together, and the way I had craved more, flooded my mind. With just a few weeks left before I finished covering for Ruby, I realised I might never see him again. What if I regretted missing the chance to explore what could have been between us? What if I ended up settling down with a nice guy after my degree and spent the rest of my life imagining Ewen's face while my husband fucked me the way I should have wanted?

With trembling hands, I stripped off my clothing and selected a short, bodycon dress in baby pink—simple, cheap, and easily replaceable. I completed the look with matching mid-height pink heels and a light layer of make-up. My fingers grazed the ring that hung from the chain I wore around my neck—(the symbol of) my promise to my father to be a good girl. I tucked it into my cleavage below the dress and took a shaky breath.

What would Ewen do with me? Would he touch me and help me break through the wall I'd never been able to breach on my own? Would he pin me down and break me open? Would he take what I'd long wanted rid of but had never been ready to give?

Indulging in him whatsoever was a reckless decision, not to mention absolutely wrong. Still, I walked towards the stage where he waited for me.

'Ruby, come join me,' Ewen said, my sister's name sounding harsh. He took my hand and led me up the stairs. He positioned me in the centre of the stage, where the ominous darkness of the empty room surrounded me..

'Your dress is very sweet, not at all like something you'd usually choose.'

Shit. In my agitation, I hadn't given a moment's thought to emulating Ruby. I'd been so wrapped up in my own desires that I forgot he wasn't looking to train with me; it was my sister he had in mind, and they couldn't stand one another. Maybe he simply wanted to go over rules and performance tips.

I hated the way my heart sank.

'It was just what was at hand,' I said, my voice sounding smaller than I'd meant it to. Weak.

'So you didn't put it on to please me?' Ewen walked behind me, and I shivered.

'No.'

Liar.

'Have you ever been restrained?'

I almost said no before catching myself. Ruby rarely spoke about work with me, so I had no idea. Taking a breath to calm myself, I tried to filter my responses.

'Do you pay so little attention to your own club that you don't know the answer to that?'

The closeness of his low chuckle in my ear made me jump.

Ewen came around to my front, and I dropped my eyes to the set of leather cuffs in his hands.

'Wrists.'

A moment's hesitation stunted me. Giving him my wrists meant what? Giving him control?

'Wrists,' he repeated, his voice taking on a sharp edge that made me stretch out my hands immediately—a tone that made me want to comply with anything he demanded.

Soft against my skin, the cuffs tightened as he pulled the straps through the silver buckles. His thumb traced the edge of the leather, the touch surprisingly tender. Raising my eyes, I encountered his indecipherable gaze before he moved behind me, lifting my hands up above my head with a swiftness that made me flinch. Two little clicks drew my attention upward, revealing a chain now linked from the ceiling to my leather cuffs. Pulling downward, I soon discovered that I had no give—he had fixed me tight.

'How do you feel, Ruby?' he asked from behind me, his words whispering over my shoulder and making my skin goose-pimple.

Frightened. Horny. Stupid.

Instead, I channelled Ruby and simply shrugged.

This time, he didn't chuckle. He wrapped a hand in my hair and tugged it firmly, making me yelp as he pulled my back flush against his chest. 'I asked you a question. I expect an answer.'

'Confused,' I whispered. My brain urged me to ask him to let me go, yet my body yearned to lean into him and beg him to take whatever he wanted.

'Mmm.'

Ewen dragged his other hand up to my throat, wrapping his fingers around the sides of my neck and holding me firmly pinned. 'I've been feeling confused, too. For weeks now. Confused as to why you react to my touches so desperately when I've seen you fuck dozens of people while you've worked for me.'

I bit my lip to keep from blurting out the truth.

Tugging my hair to tip my face toward him, he grazed his lips over my ear. 'I think you've been trying to play me.'

My throat tightened as I shook my head.

'No?" His breath fanned against my skin, and I held back a shiver. "I'm sure I can change your mind.' He hummed and added, 'Let's see how you dance to my whip.'

When he stepped back, releasing my hair and neck, creating space between us, I let out a whimper. A whip?

'Your safe word is escape. Use it, and I'll stop. Any other words will not be a no. Do you understand?'

Ewen circled around to face me and I nodded as I followed him with my gaze. He held a pair of safety shears and knelt to make a small cut at the bottom of my dress. Sliding the shears along the stage and out of the way, he gripped the cut edges and pulled. An almighty rip sounded as he tore the dress apart, revealing my body in nothing but the pink g-string I wore.

'That's better,' he said, standing up and tipping my face to his. 'This is going to hurt, but if I've read you right, you'll enjoy it more than you'll hate it.'

From behind him, he pulled a short-handled whip from his pocket. The tip consisted mainly of thin strands, with a small red section at the end adorned with intricate knots. At first glance, it didn't look particularly

vicious, and a sense of ease washed over me as I leaned back and relaxed against my restraints.

'Looks can be deceiving, Ruby. Sometimes the most innocent things can be utterly devious.'

His words were loaded, was he talking about the whip? Or me?

When he moved behind me again, my thighs quaked with a heady mixture of fear and anticipation. Could I really let him do this? Whip me?

A light hum filled the air seconds before a surge of pain exploded against my ass. Letting out a cry, I twisted against my chains.

'Breathe. Feel the burn, see what it turns into,' Ewen instructed in a firm voice, running the whip up my stomach.

The initial pain had been more of a shock than terrible in itself, sending a wave of euphoria cascading through me shortly after.

'There it is,' Ewen said, while lifting the whip again.

The small, knotted end scored against my stomach as I breathed hard through my nose. Looking down, I noticed a pronounced red line that angrily stood out against my skin. I'd long dreamed about a man leaving his mark on me—not necessarily with a whip, but it made me swoon.

'Look at the way your pupils dilate. I hear the desperate little gasps as I touch you. I know who you are.'

Another bite of the whip on my thigh, closely followed by one wrapping around my ass. I bit down on my lip to stifle my cries.

'You're a little fucking liar,' he said, tilting my face to meet his intense gaze. 'You thought I wouldn't be able to tell that you were an entirely different person?'

'I'm sorry,' I sobbed, trying to avoid his eyes. 'Ruby made me do it.'

Wrapping his hand around my throat, he applied enough pressure to steal my breath away. His lips lightly grazed mine—not in a kiss, but a brief initial contact that made me quiver.

'I should fire you on the spot for impersonating one of my employees.'

'Please, no. We need the money. Ruby broke her foot and can't work,' I pleaded, my voice small and broken. When he finally released my throat, I took a stuttering breath.

Repositioning himself, Ewen gripped my hair and turned me around until I faced an ornate full-length mirror. He stood behind me, body towering over my shoulder.

'Look at yourself. Covered in my marks, standing here in nothing but that tiny scrap of fabric. There's nothing left to hide behind.'

Dropping the whip, he reached around me and slid his fingers beneath my panties. As they drew steady circles over my clit, my entire body swayed in response, pressed against his.

'Give me your name,' he rasped against my ear, eyes never leaving mine in the reflection.

I didn't. Whether it was me trying to push him further or avoiding letting him see the real me, I was unsure.

Ewen roughly tugged my panties down my thighs and pushed a finger inside me. The view in the mirror only compounded how deliciously filthy it felt to have him there.

I moaned and tipped my head back, grinding myself against him as I felt the stretch of his finger. Tenderness wasn't in play as he fucked me against his hand. His other one still sank tightly into my hair.

'Name,' he growled. Pleasure coiled deep in my stomach at his rough touch—a sensation I had never experienced on my own. The marks and pain blended into one, driving me wild.

My thighs trembled until I was at a precipice, so close to tumbling. Would he finally make me come? Give me the sensation I'd only ever dreamt of?

When his fingers withdrew, I cried out, sagging against the suspended cuffs. 'No! Why did you stop? I was so close.'

The whip met my thighs and ass again in a flurry of strokes, each building on the tension infusing my body.

'Please?' I begged.

'You want my fingers? Look at you, you little slut. Begging for more.' Ewen's voice thickened, and he shoved his fingers deep into my mouth, making me gag. 'You never said where you wanted them.'

My stomach heaved at the invasion of my throat, his fingers wiping my juices all over my tongue. A smirk crossed his lips when fresh tears washed over my cheeks. My pussy clenched over nothing, needing him back there so badly.

Strings of saliva hit my chest as he withdrew his fingers before shoving them roughly back inside me. The pain made me cry out at the burning stretch until he grabbed my face in his other hand. Ewen leaned so close to me that I could feel each of his breaths on my wet cheeks. 'Ride my fingers. Show me how fucking desperate you are to be turned into my personal cum dumpster.'

His words were degrading. Vile. But they sent electricity right to my pussy. With shame heating my cheeks, I rocked my hips, eyes rolling as pleasure built again.

'Such a good girl,' he crooned, his eyes never leaving my face as he held me pinned. 'Made to dance on my fingers. It feels good, doesn't it?'

'Yes,' I breathed, losing myself to the sensations. The urge to kiss him stole over me, but I daren't. When he curled his fingers and grinned as I buckled, I about lost my mind.

'Give me your name,' he demanded, his eyes glittering. God damn, he was enjoying torturing me.

'No.' But the last spark of defiance I felt was crumbling with every stroke of his fingers.

I closed my eyes and panted, so close to what must have been an orgasm. Pleasure vibrated on every nerve ending, like music swelling to the crescendo. I was going to come. Holy shit.

'Oh my god,' I whispered, arching my hips violently to crash my clit against his hand.

He pulled it away.

I let out a screech of rage, kicking out and twisting in my bonds. Tears fell as I cursed and sobbed, the torturous pleasure ebbing away before ever hitting the high.

Defeat gripped me as Ewen tipped my face to his, his eyes delighting in my discomfort.

'Your name,' he commanded.

'Cora,' I gasped. 'My name is Cora.'

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### **FIFTEEN**

#### **EWEN**

'Good girl,' I whispered against the side of her neck as she gave in and told me her name. 'That wasn't so hard now, was it?'

She whimpered as my hand slipped back to her wet cunt, picking up where I'd left off. Holding back had been absolute torture because I craved her moans as much as I wanted her tears.

'Are you on birth control?' I asked her, grinning when she flinched at the words. Of course, I'd already seen that she was while rifling through her room, but she didn't know that.

'Yes, but I'm a virgin.' The words were small, filled with shame. *Only mine* flew into my head, making me shiver with need. Mine to open. *Mine to possess*.

'I'm not about to fuck you. Not yet. Well, not unless I get carried away. Maybe if you beg sweetly enough, I'll lose control and turn you into my little cock whore.'

Cora shuddered as I drove two fingers back into her sopping cunt, her hips arching to take more.

'Did my whip get you all excited?' I crooned, my dick jutting painfully against my zip as she squirmed.

'Yes,' she said in a choked sob.

'You like being marked. Owned. I should put a pretty collar around your neck and keep you tethered to the end of my bed.' If she knew about the

dark images involving her that ran wild in my mind, I'd undoubtedly scare her off.

'Please,' she moaned, her words stilted as I toyed with her pussy. 'Please, help me come.'

Breathing hard through my nostrils at her desperate pleas, I stood back, warmth effusing me as she sobbed in earnest at the loss of my fingers.

I needed her frenzied, right at the edge between pleasure and pain. Lashes of my whip struck her skin while she bucked and panted, the fat tears rolling down her cheeks matching the glistening wetness dripping down her thighs.

Cora was beautiful. Perfect. Mine.

'Do you need more?' I asked, moving to stand in front of her.

'Yes,' she whispered. Using the handle of the whip, I grazed it up her thigh and pressed it to her wetness. She whimpered as she rolled her hips against the leather, sweet little pants rising with every arch of her back.

Grasping her cheeks in one hand, I pulled her face up to mine, studying the rivulets of tears that tracked down her flushed cheeks.

'Can I come yet?' she asked.

'But darling, you suffer so beautifully for me. Just a little longer so I can feast on your tears. I want you to wear my marks for days to come. To see them every time you undress and stick your fingers into your wet pussy. To come back asking for more.'

She pushed herself up on her toes and pressed her lips to mine, sending shock waves through me. While I'd enjoyed playing with partners in the past, I usually kept a barrier that prevented any kind of genuine intimacy. Kissing playmates wasn't an indulgence I allowed myself.

But her lips, silky soft and covered in a layer of salty tears, were simply too irresistible. Before I could think clearly, I succumbed, allowing her to steal from me with that lying fucking mouth of hers.

The way she moaned against my tongue had me wrapping an arm about her waist to pull her flush against me, her body hot from the whip's stings.

All around me, the room spun as I lost myself entirely in her sweet desperation. When she broke the kiss, I pressed the flat of my tongue against her face, licking up the spilled tears with a hum of delight.

It was salacious. Decadent. *Addictive*.

Holding back was no longer an option. With a low groan, I unzipped my pants to free my throbbing cock and kicked her legs closed, crossing one over the other, securing them tightly at the thighs.

'Grip me tight, or I'll be forced to split your little cunt right here on the stage,' I warned, slipping my dick into the warm crevice her pressed thighs created.

With one hand tightly woven into her hair and the other using her hip for leverage, I fucked the tight space, the tip of my cock rubbing back and forth against her swollen clit with every thrust.

Her hot breath caressed my face in tandem with my ragged, jerking movements as I sought my release, wondering if my dick could bring hers.

'You're going to be my dirty little toy, Cora. My fuck doll. A pain slut who enjoys being made to cry enough that I could use your tears as lube to fuck your virgin cunt. One slip, and I'd steal your innocence. One tiny tilt of my pelvis, and I'd steal it from you in the space of one breath.'

Her entire body shuddered at my words, her teeth grazing my throat as she chased her elusive orgasm.

I wasn't going to let up until she had one.

Even if it took all fucking night.

My balls hitched up when a delightful little whine escaped her, and I came messily all over her wet cunt, thrusting against her clit until I'd spilled every drop for her.

Pulling one of her thighs up high, I gathered up my cum and pushed my fingers into her, feeding her molten cunt with it.

'You're going to give your orgasm to me while I fuck you with my cum-coated fingers. You'll crave it by the time I pin you down and fuck you.' A hoarse growl clawed at my words, and I worked my fingers into her with slow, deep strokes against her dripping walls.

A light sweat coated her body as she bucked and writhed against me, pulling hard at the bonds above her. The moment I traced my thumb over her clit in time with my thrusting fingers, a low moan left her open lips.

The flutters began around my fingers, her mouth creating a slack O shape. Enraptured by her, I couldn't look away, needing to know every inch of her face as she gave in to pleasure. While I may have had control, every single movement and noise she made held me in an obsessed trance.

Pleasure ripped through her as her body quaked, both legs picking up off of the floor as she wildly humped at my hand. Her tight cunt practically strangled my fingers.

'Yes, that's it Cora. Show me what you need.'

She whimpered as she pressed her face into the side of my neck. I gripped her by the hair and forced her to look at me while I continued to fuck her pretty cunt with my other hand.

'Eyes on me,' I ordered.

Her eyes flashed with delirious ecstasy as her orgasm peaked, rolling her hips until she came down from her high. My fingers only stopped when she collapsed against me, her body languid.

My fingers, coated in a sticky sheen, bore the evidence of our shared pleasure. Raising them to her mouth, I tipped her head back and pressed my fingers against her tongue.

Repulsion flashed over her face for a moment until her pupils dilated and she sucked them into her mouth.

'Clean up the mess I made. I'm going to corrupt every inch of you. Next time, I'm starting with your lying fucking mouth.' My voice was soft and even so, she knew there was no anger behind my words.

*Just promise.* 

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# SIXTEEN

**CORA** 

The tears wouldn't stop.

Not when Ewen unhooked me from the cuffs and rubbed the feeling back into my arms.

Not when he carried me to the restroom attached to his plush office and put me in the shower.

Not when he climbed in, still fully clothed, and washed me gently.

'You did so good, Cora. I'm proud of you.' Fresh tears welled up, blurring my vision and stealing my voice. 'It's okay,' he crooned in a soothing tone. 'It can happen when the pressure is finally released. It's like coming down from a high.'

I tried to speak, but words refused to come out while my body trembled as though I'd been out in the cold for hours.

After throwing on a clean tee and some grey sweatpants, he wrapped me in an oversized fluffy towel and lifted me into his lap. We sank into the patinated red leather couch as it gave an aged sigh.

'Shh, just take your time. There's no rush.' Ewen's long fingers stroked over my shoulder and neck like I was a pet to be soothed.

Admittedly, it felt nice.

I came.

I finally came after years of intermittent attempts and failures. How did he even manage to pull it from me?

My internal organs felt like someone had come along and jellified them. A sort of detachment to myself.

Eventually, my breathing settled, and my nerves calmed enough for me to pull myself from his grasp and slide onto the cushion beside him. His eyebrows creased as I wrapped the towel more firmly around me while creating space between us.

'You shouldn't have done that. You're my boss,' I said, my fingers tracing a red stripe on my thigh.

'No. I'm Ruby's boss.'

Fair point.

'How did you know?' I asked, as my stomach churned.

'You're nothing like her. Sure, you look like her, and you can even dress like her, but you two are poles apart. She's harder than you. Not in a bad way, but not in a way that calls to me.'

Toying with the edge of my towel, I glanced up as he spoke. 'I call to you?'

'Yes. You may not be aware of it, but your body and your reactions are like a big flashing neon sign to someone like me.'

'And what signal do I give?'

'One that says, 'Take me. Use me. Defile me.'

Discomfort swarmed within me at hearing those words—words I'd often wanted to say but always suppressed.

'What if you're wrong?'

'Did it feel wrong when you were coming on my fingers while wearing my marks, Cora? Did you tell me to stop or beg me to continue?' His voice thickened with a renewed lust as his eyes roved over the marks on my thighs.

'What if I don't want to do it again?'

The muscle in his jaw twitched at my question and sent a flutter of desire straight between my thighs. 'If I believed you, I'd stop.'

'You don't believe me?'

'I know that people can suppress their needs. Squish them away, down into a hidden compartment deep inside. But that doesn't get rid of them or silence them. If anything, it makes them scream louder and harder until you finally unleash them.'

'How do you know?' I asked, swallowing hard.

'Because I've been hiding my needs for years. Keeping encounters light and surface level. Fulfilling other people while never feeding the beast that lives inside me.' Ewen ran a hand through his drying hair, his bicep thickening as he did.

'Why?'

'Because I hadn't met you.'

Before that moment, I hadn't realised it was possible to be both incredibly turned on and creeped out by the same person.

Standing up and holding my towel tight, I chewed at my lower lip before speaking. 'I need to go. Ruby will be waiting for me.'

'I can give you a lift home.'

'No,' I said, shaking my head. 'I'll grab an Uber. I need a bit of time.'

Ewen looked torn before standing up as I shrunk back a step, unsure of what he was doing. The way his eyes burned when looking at me discomforted me and made my thighs slicken anew at the same time. Would he try to keep me here? Pin me down and take my virginity? Did I hope that he would?

Scenarios pounded at my head while he watched me like I was prey.

'Take tomorrow off if you need it. I'll see you the day after for your next shift.'

The plummeting in my chest at his dismissal warred with the relief of it.

'You're going to let me keep filling in for Ruby?'

'Yes, my little liar. If only to have you nearby.'

When I left his office, I checked over my shoulder a number of times, convinced he would follow me and touch me again.

Leaving the club twenty minutes later, alone, I slouched into my Uber seat with a sigh. My boss has broken all the rules and literally whipped me. But he'd also driven me to levels of desire I'd never felt before.

He saw me for what I was and glorified it.

I'd never felt so conflicted in all my life.

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# **SEVENTEEN**

#### **EWEN**

The clock ticked loud enough that every second was a taunt.

She's late.

*She's not coming.* 

You scared her off.

Cora hadn't turned up for her shift, and it left me feeling antsy. I'd been counting down the minutes until I saw her again.

Craving her.

And she hadn't shown up.

I had to find out where she was.

'Alright, boss?' Adam asked as he finished up serving a client.

'Yeah. I need to head out for a bit. You're in charge.'

With a nod, Adam went back to serving.

By the time I'd driven to her home, I'd made up a thousand reasons why she was avoiding me, trying to assuage myself that it wasn't her rejecting me. Not really.

Her flat was shrouded in darkness, no glow from TVs or phones, never mind room lights. Where was she?

A little voice inside me told me to leave it. No good would come from stalking her. If she didn't want what I had to offer, I needed to suck it up and let her be. It was the right thing to do.

The sanest thing.

And absolutely not happening.

But how did I track her?

Tapping my fingers against the steering wheel, I scoured for an answer, eventually settling on checking her social media. Ruby followed The Loft and had a public Instagram account. Although she hadn't posted anything to her stories, I found a picture where Cora was tagged, buried far down her page.

Her account was private.

With a groan, I threw my phone onto the passenger seat. I'd just have to wait in the car until she showed up.

Within minutes, my phone began to thrum on the leather, the screen lighting up. Mac's name flashed, and I sighed, taking my brother's call.

'What's up?'

'Caught one of the little punks who works for us trying to give information about our next drop to your pal Edwards.'

Narrowing my eyes, I tried to make the pieces of the puzzle fit. Edwards was behind the attacks on our shipments? Sure, Logan had handed his ass to him, but it hardly seemed motivation enough to start a fucking war.

'Where are you holding him?'

'The warehouse on Old Brick Lane. You want me to wait for you?'

Glancing back at the empty-looking apartment, I tipped my head back against the seat. 'Yeah, give me twenty.'



'We caught him filming the shipments. He was sending their destination and route to a number that traced to one of Edwards' men,' Mac explained, as we walked through the cold warehouse, our footsteps echoing in the cavernous space.

'Has anyone tracked down Edwards?' I asked.

'No, but we're on it. Looks like he's gone to ground. What could his end game be?'

'I don't know,' I replied, cracking my knuckles. 'But I guess it's time to find out.'

A smattering of men hung around the bound, bleeding man on the floor.

Most were faces I knew well enough, but there were two younger guys who weren't a usual part of my team.

'Who're they?' I asked Mac.

'New intake. Testing them out.'

My eyes narrowed as I recognised one of them, and yet, I struggled to place him out of context. While I turned the bound man over and analysed the deep gash on his head, it suddenly clicked—that recruit was the man who'd been with Ruby.

He stood cock-sure, leaning against a tall pallet of boxes, watching nonchalantly as I gripped the bound man by the chin.

'Thought you could double-cross us, did you?' I said. I expected fear or anger, but I didn't expect him to spit in my face. Wiping the gelatinous glob off my cheek, I laughed.

'You've picked the wrong side, kid.'

'Fuck you. Edwards is going to string you and your pathetic brothers up by their bollocks.'

'Mate, I was going to kill you nice and clean for being a stupid fuck, but running your mouth is just going to draw it out. You don't get it, do you? Edwards doesn't give a flying fuck what happens to you. When they tell him you're dead, he probably won't even remember which one of his minions you were.' The man swallowed hard as I spoke. 'There's a hundred more who will happily take your place in a heartbeat. You know why? Because he'd know you have no loyalty. A man who can be so easily swayed from my side to his is useful for a job or two. No-one likes a man who can be bought by the highest bidder.'

The man squirmed as I let go of his chin.

'I take it you'll not be giving me Edwards' location?'

'Fuck off, McGowan scum.'

'You don't care that in an hour you'll be dead? Don't you want to plead for clemency? Beg me to spare you?'

The man spat again, and I sighed. So be it.

I fetched the nozzled can from the workstation in the corner, hunting through the different options before selecting my weapon.

The man tried to move backwards on the floor when I moved to him and undid his belt.

'The fuck are you doing? You going to fuck me?'

I couldn't help but laugh again.

'You'll wish it was my dick by the time I'm through with you,' I said, yanking down his underpants and trousers to his knees.

His breath left his chest in an exaggerated oomph as I straddled his back and pressed the nozzle against his asshole with a grimace.

'Ready to beg?'

'Fuck you,' he said, and I shook my head as my men averted their gazes.

Pressing the button on the can, it let out a whoosh as the liquid shot up into his ass. I held it down as he cursed and writhed, emptying a good third of the can into him.

Standing up, I let him roll back over and continue his cursing as I waited.

Sweat beaded on his forehead as he started to scream. His cries were truly blood-curdling as the expanding foam stretched his bowels. His bound hands moved to his stomach as he began crying in earnest.

'Help me,' he begged as blood seeped from him, pooling around his thighs.

Another scream tore through the warehouse as most of the men turned a sickly shade of white at the gruesome sight.

'It's not reversible. The foam is expanding and hardening as it ruptures your bowels. If the pain doesn't kill you, the sepsis will. The only way out is death. I'll give it to you if you tell me what you know.'

The man's words were almost unintelligible as his cries turned to tortured whimpers. Kneeling close to him, I swept the tears from his cheeks. 'What did he offer you?'

'Money. I needed it for my family. He gave me twenty thousand.' Great gasps punctuated his words.

'Where is he?'

'I don't know. It was all via text. Encrypted.'

'What's the plan?'

'Revenge. Ruin Logan. Ruin the McGowan empire. Kill you all. Please,' he let out an agonising cry. 'Make it stop.'

Edwards doesn't have the manpower to take us head to head, not since our family joined with the Thompsons. Was his plan to erode our business piece by piece? Take the wearing-down approach?

Pressing the nozzle against the man's tongue, I shrug. 'Should have stuck with us. We'd have looked after you. Are you ready?'

The man nodded while fresh tears coated his cheeks, his sobs making my stomach churn. No-one was ever truly ready. He just wanted the pain ripping through his insides to end.

'Make better choices next time,' I said as I pressed the button flush to the can.



The clean-up crew worked in the background as Mac opened some beers and passed them around to the few men who remained at the grisly scene.

I turned down the beer, my stomach unsettled after killing the traitor. Word would get around and hopefully make any other rats think twice before shitting on my family.

Ruby's lover stood, still pale-faced, chatting shit about the big rager that was going on back at his house. I mostly ignored his boasting to the man next to him until he started talking about Ruby.

'Yeah, my bitch will do anything for a line. She was a casual user until she got on some strong pain meds a few weeks ago. Now, she'll snort or swallow just about anything, and she'll do fucking anything to get it. The other day I made her bark like a dog while my mates took turns on her ass, then I dumped her line in a dog bowl. Fucking hilarious.'

The other man laughed, and the urge to plug his mouth with the expanding foam coiled around my gut. Ruby and I may not have seen eye to eye with her being a self-centred little prick, but she didn't deserve this absolute bottom-feeder either. Fighting the urge to level his smug face, I listened in, ignoring what Mac was saying to the other recruit..

'You should come. I'm headed there now. Even better, I convinced her to bring her twin. She's an uppity virgin, and I'm going to bust her open tonight. You can fuck the other one while you watch if you like.'

'Nah, man. That sort of shit isn't my bag, Seth,' the other underling said. Right choice. He'd live to see another day.

Seth, less so.

I'd crossed the line with Cora, breaking into her home, but not like that. Not to ruin her. No, I wanted to give her everything she craved. Being fucked by her sister's asshole boyfriend wasn't it.

Plus, she was mine.

When Seth left the warehouse twenty minutes later, I tailed his car. Killing again wasn't something I'd been hoping for as my night ended, but for Cora and her sister? Well, I'd stab every fucker in the city if she needed me to.

Hell, even if she just wanted me to.

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# **EIGHTEEN**

**CORA** 

My head ached from the blare of the music throughout the small house.

'Fuck off, you cunt,' the man beside me shouted at his character on the TV screen in front of us. I inched as far from him as I could, trying to get away from the sweaty forearm that kept grazing my thigh with every movement.

I should have gone to work.

Ewen had left me confused and conflicted after our night at the club. Two days on, and I was still wet at the mere thought of what he'd done to me—how he'd seen me stripped of both my clothing and my walls.

It terrified me.

When Ruby begged me to go to Seth's party, I'd said no. The wheedling and whining had won out eventually, though—if only to distract me from thoughts of Ewen and the way in which his cock was pressed against me, so close to taking what I'd never freely given. Would I have regretted it if he'd slipped and entered me?

No.

The thought whispered against me as Ruby sat heavily on the arm of the sofa, propping up her crutch and wrapping an arm around my neck.

'Come dance with me!' she squealed in my ear, making me flinch, adding to the din. She reeked of cheap beer, and her pupils were unnaturally dilated. Around us, people laughed and drank, getting louder and wilder by the minute. Discomfort swept through me as I realised just how out of place

I was. I'd always followed Ruby around, but this new circle of friends weren't ones I wanted to be around. Not ones I thought she should be around either. It was one thing exhausting myself with late nights to pay our rent, but to party in some dingy hell-hole? Not worth it.

'I don't want to. I want to go home.'

'No, you can't. Seth messaged, and he's on his way. You don't want to go before he gets here.' Ruby put on the same pouty face that always made me cave. One day, I'd hopefully grow a backbone and be able to stand up to her. She'd always been a bit self-centred and selfish, but since meeting Seth, it had intensified. Her late nights should have been on a break, but even with me getting home late, she would come in after me. With Seth. She would wake me up in the middle of the night by breaking plates and giggling while trying to cook, putting the TV on to deafening levels, or simply by loudly enjoying herself with Seth without a care for my presence in the house.

I had reached my limit. She was my twin, and I excused so much of her selfish behaviour because of it.

I couldn't take it. With each day, I wanted to break out from her shadow and start being my own person. Fulfilling my own wants rather than caving to Ruby's.

But even through it all, I still hated to see her frown.

'Fine, but I'm going in half an hour, max. I'm supposed to be at work.'

'Lighten up,' Ruby slurred. 'Get that stick out of your arse, and you might actually enjoy yourself. Have a drink, kiss a guy, let your hair down for once.'

The door opened, and Seth let himself in, grinning as Ruby launched herself up from the sofa and hobbled over to him.

'You're here!' she said, going in for a kiss, which he deflected.

'Hey, babe. In a minute, okay? Need to go put the beers in the kitchen.' He extracted himself from her grip and grinned at me while she followed behind him. 'Good to see you here, Cora.'

'Thanks,' I mumbled, focusing on the screen again. Pulling my phone from my bag, I scrolled through my socials, losing myself for a while. Nothing entertaining going on there.

Putting my phone away, I closed my eyes. My head was thumping with the insane noise level of the room. I went looking for Ruby to let her know I was leaving. Where was she? 'Have you seen Ruby?' I asked a man leaning against the wall, sipping a drink.

'Aren't you Ruby?' he said, frowning at me.

Picking my way through the bodies, I looked in the kitchen and began to work my way through the home.

After getting directions to the bathroom, I knocked on the door.

'Ruby? Are you in there?'

Nothing.

'Cora,' Seth said, his voice far too close to my ear.

With a start, I turned around and asked, 'Have you seen my sister?'

'Yeah, she's lying down. Had a bit too much as usual.' Sliding myself along the wall, I stepped out of his way. 'Which room? I'm going to take her home with me.'

'The one at the end there. I can help you get her into a cab.'

He gave me a friendly smile that made me relax a little. 'Thanks, that would be great.'

The bedroom was dark as he opened the door, and I ran my hand against the wall, looking for the light switch. A loud bang made me jump in the blackness.

'What was that?'

'Just the door.' Seth hit the light, making me squint.

The bed was empty.

'Where is she?' I asked.

'Busy entertaining some of my friends.'

'She would never,' I said, shocked at his accusation.

'You don't know your sister half as well as you think you do.' Seth advanced toward me, and I glanced around, spotting a baseball bat and lunging for it.

I hit the floor in a sea of pain before I could get to it.

'Get off me,' I demanded, thrashing at his torso. Seth flipped me to my stomach and gripped my cheeks hard enough to make them burn, forcing my mouth open. He slid a pill over my tongue before holding my nose and my mouth closed, cutting off my air supply.

'Swallow it, and I'll let you breathe. It's just a little something to take the edge off before I fuck you. Something that will distort your perception of the night. It'll make you feel good. Once it kicks in, you'll likely go out there and fuck half the rest of the party. It'll make you want it, Cora. But I'm first.'

My lungs burned as I fought to push him away, desperately attempting to avoid swallowing the pill. But I simply couldn't. When Seth saw my throat bob, he grinned, finally releasing my nose so I could draw in a deep breath.

I squeezed my thighs as he pressed a knee up between them, forcing my legs apart. His sour breath filled my face, making me gag. Panic rose, making me struggle even harder.

Despite my fantasies, and my experience with Ewen, this wasn't the way I wanted it. Not with him. Not truly by force.

Tears welled up in my eyes as he struggled at both holding me down and trying to undo his zipper. Briefly, he let go of me to unzip, and I threw my knee up, connecting with his groin. The cry he gave fuelled me to shove him off of me right as the door burst open.

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# **NINETEEN**

**EWEN** 

Losing Seth's car in the packed housing estate had cost me precious time. Eventually, I followed the noise to a small house with the windows by the door boarded up, a drunken man throwing up in the overgrown bushes. Seth's car was parked at an angle up on the pavement outside.

No-one blinked as I walked in, nodding at a few guys and saying, hey. The first rule of walking into somewhere like that is to pretend like you belong there.

Minutes had passed as I searched the house for Cora, hoping to god she'd gotten out before Seth had returned. But being that I couldn't see the slime ball either, I wasn't counting on it.

The wooden door at the end of the corridor was locked. Inside, I could hear muffled noises before a male voice cried out.

One harsh kick splintered the wood around the door lock, letting it swing wide.

Cora was pushing Seth off of her while he cradled his bollocks and let out a stream of expletives.

'You stupid fucking bitch. I'm going to make you scream for that.'

Anger rushed me, forcing me into the room and sweeping Cora up and away from Seth.

'Are you okay?' I asked.

She nodded as tears streamed down her face.

'Did he hurt you?'

'He was going to.'

Turning toward Seth, I kicked him square in the face, his head jerking to the side with an audible crack.

Bloodlust surged as I burned with the urge to keep kicking and stomping until he turned into a red pile of mush beneath my boots.

I just couldn't do that with Cora there.

She didn't know who I was other than a sex club owner with a fetish for inflicting pain.

Killing him would only frighten her. If only that first kick had snapped his scrawny fucking neck. His chest rose evenly, much to my disgust.

'Let's get out of here,' I said, holding Cora to my chest and lifting her back through the house.

'What about Ruby?'

I groaned as we entered the living room. 'Where is she?'

'Gone off with a couple of guys. They left a few minutes ago,' said a man on the couch playing video games.

'Where?' I demanded.

'I don't fucking know, mate. They'll likely bring her back to Seth in a few hours. They usually do.'

'We need to find her,' Cora said against my neck. 'What if Seth hurts her?'

'I'll send some guys to watch the house. They'll let me know if she comes back and get her out of here if she does. We can't hang out and wait. When they find Seth with a boot print on his face, all hell will break loose. I'll get you home and come back for her. I promise.'

Cora bit her lip and nodded, concern flashing in her eyes. Mascara smudged beneath her eyes and her clothes were in disarray. I needed to get her somewhere safe.

Dealing with Seth and Ruby would have to wait.



'How did you know where I live?' Cora said as we pulled up outside her flat.

Fuck.

Running through excuses left me empty. I couldn't say because I like to break in and cum on your pussy while you sleep, could I?

'I feel really weird,' she said, giving me a much-needed reprieve. 'Like colourful.'

'What do you mean?' I asked as I got out of the car and opened her door.

'Seth made me take a pill,' she replied, blinking up at me with a goofy grin crossing her face.

My muscles tightened. I should have killed the little fucker, anyway. Even the extra couple of hours he'd have on earth were more than he deserved. My men were stationed in the housing estate. I should just send them in guns blazing. Except I wanted to see the fucker take his last breath myself.

'He said it would make me feel good. Make me want to fuck everyone so I'd forget what he did. Was going to do...'

She stumbled against me as she stood, giggling.

Taking her to Accident and Emergency would only cause more questions.

'God, I feel great. Come on, let's go inside. I want to dance.'

'You want to dance?'

'Yeah! Why not?' Cora's smile was infectious. I suspected that rather than roofie-ing her, Seth had given her Ecstasy. While I'd need to keep an eye on her, she should be okay.

It felt alien to be in her home with the lights on and her chatting at me at ten million miles an hour. Walking behind her, I tried to contain the carnage she wrought as she went through the kitchen hunting for snacks, threw on some loud music, and swayed in the middle of the room while stuffing Monster Munch into her mouth.

Sitting on a chair that was far too soft to be comfortable, I watched her. It had to be Ecstasy he'd given her. Cora moved enthusiastically while giving me come-to-bed eyes. This was a side of her that was unlike anything I'd seen up to that point.

A light sheen of sweat formed on her skin as she stripped off layers of clothing, throwing them at me with a devilish smile until she wore nothing but a lacy bralette and French knickers. I couldn't take my eyes off her.

'Don't you want to dance with me? Always so sour-faced. Lighten up, Ewen.'

My whip marks delicately adorned her flesh, and my dick was rock hard in my pants.

'I'm not a dancer,' I said, content to observe. I'd always enjoyed watching.

Cora stalked toward me, her eyes wild. Her body swayed to the music, her knees skimming mine with every writhing twist. The urge to lean forward and lick the sweat from her stomach was so strong that I had to dig my nails into the chair's puckered fabric.

Never in my life had I wanted anyone as much as I wanted her. The lust was overwhelming. Intense.

She bent at the waist and pressed her forehead to mine, her breath coming in little pants that tickled over my lips.

'Don't you want me, Ewen?'

'So fucking badly,' I whispered.

'Then take me. Please?'

It was tempting. My nerves thrummed inside me, urging me to give her what she wanted—what we both wanted. But not like this. She wasn't in her right mind, and one night wouldn't be enough for me.

No, I intended to have her on my terms—free from distractions, with no escape from the intensity I planned to thrust upon her. She'd tried to avoid me after our last session, but that wouldn't be an option when I finally took her virginity.

'Not tonight. I'll stay and make sure you're okay until the high wears off. But I'm not fucking you tonight. When I do, I need you to be fully focused and present. I need to know that every little gasp you give is because of me, and not drugs in your system.'

Cora pouted and moved away from me. 'What if I make it really hard for you to say no?'

She sat back on the coffee table and ran her hands over her body, stopping to dip her fingers beneath her panties with a groan.

Fucking hell.

She pressed her fingers into her cunt with a whimper that made my entire body turn rigid. If I kept digging my nails into the sofa, I would rip holes in it.

'Do you know that when I came home the other day, I tried to see if there was any of you left inside of me? It was so dirty to have you push your cum into me. I wanted more. I'm fed up of never having what I want.' Her voice was distant and breathy as she ran her fingers up over her clit beneath the panties.

'So why didn't you come to work tonight?'

'I don't know. I chickened out. I'd pictured being used for so many years, and when it happened, it was so much.'

'Too much?' I asked, practically salivating at the sight of her spread on the table, fingers working her pretty little pussy until I could hear how wet she was.

'Not enough. I want more. And that scares me.'

'Come here,' I said through gritted teeth.

She settled across my lap, her panty-covered cunt pressed against my throbbing erection.

'Grind,' I said, determined to uphold my intention not to fuck her, but wanting to reward her for her vulnerability.

With a deep moan, Cora skillfully rocked her hips at a perfect angle to rub her clit against the head of my cock.

'When I fuck you, and don't doubt I will, it won't be a quickie in your living room.' My breath hitched as her sensual movements sent waves of pleasure through me. 'I'm going to tear you wide open in more places than just your cunt, Cora. I want to see everything you have to give. I want to take my time to explore your mind as well as your body.' Pressing my lips to her neck, I whispered, 'Tell me you want that.'

'It's what I want. I want you.'

She didn't come. Neither did I. We both needed more. But it satiated her desires for a time until she needed to get some water. And eat more. And dance more. And grind more.

Four hours later, I left her asleep, ensuring she'd drank enough water, but not too much. Ruby had returned to the house at last, and my men had scooped her up and taken her to safety. It was time to go back and deal with Seth.

'Goodnight, Cora,' I whispered into her sticky hair, leaving with blue balls.

Blue balls, and a plan.

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### **TWENTY**

**CORA** 

Anxiety had me pacing the flat again.

I remembered the previous night with a clarity that being drunk had never granted me. Seth. Ruby. The pill. Grinding against Ewen and begging him to fuck me.

Another cold sweat rushed through me as the images bounced through my head. I'd spent the day battling a dry mouth and a persistent feeling of tension and paranoia.

Ruby wasn't answering my calls or texts. I was worried about her. It became clear she'd gotten herself into some dodgy shit with Seth, and her toxicity had grown exponentially in the weeks since she'd been with him. Unfortunately, I had been so distracted with work, my photography classes, and Ewen that I hadn't paid enough attention to what was happening. In hindsight, I realised I'd been an idiot to miss what was going on.

Pulling my phone out, I saw that it was eight o'clock at night. Where the hell was she? Hitting her name in my call list, I listened as it rang out. Again.

I didn't have Seth's number, and I didn't want to go back to his place after him trying to attack me and forcing me to take drugs. Could I call the police? Should I? Would they laugh it off as just another party girl on a bender? It hadn't even been twenty-four hours.

With trembling fingers, I made myself a cup of tea. It did little to soothe my nerves.

Hours later, I drifted in and out of sleep on the sofa while gripping my phone as I waited to hear from Ruby. I sat up with a start when a figure entered the room and rubbed my eyes. Was I hallucinating?

I wasn't.

Ewen was in my living room.

'How did you get in here?' I said, shifting back against the sofa as my chest tightened.

'You didn't lock the door,' he said, and I let my shoulders relax a little. 'How are you feeling?'

'Worried. Ruby never came home. Knowing what Seth tried to do to me... What if he's hurt her?'

Ewen sat down across from me and rested his forearms against his knees. 'You don't need to worry about Seth. He can't hurt anyone ever again.'

Fear blossomed in my stomach as his words sunk in. 'What did you do?'

'Did you think I'd let him touch you against your will and live to see another day?'

A wave of dizziness washed through me as I shrank back into the sofa, realising I'd been begging him to fuck me the night prior. It dawned on me how little I truly knew about Ewen McGowan.

'You killed him?'

Ewen nodded without any emotion passing through his face. 'I did. The world's a better place without him in it.'

'You're crazy,' I breathed, dread wrapping around me like a rope.

'No. I'm perfectly sane. I just don't need men like that working for me, and I'd discovered he was recently in my family's employ. A rotten apple can spread through the entire bunch. I cleaned house.'

A tiny, tiny part of me revelled in the fact he'd hurt a man who hurt me —that he'd protected me. No-one had ever protected me.

'Did you find Ruby?'

'I did.'

'Did you hurt her?' I whispered, closing my eyes and praying that he hadn't.

'Never. She's important to you, and she wasn't hurting anyone. Seth had her addicted to whatever he was giving her and was abusing her. She's not a perpetrator.' His voice remained calm and level as he watched my reactions.

I let out a sigh of relief and rubbed at my eyes. 'So where is she?' 'Safe.'

Narrowing my eyes at him, I tried to fathom what he meant. Safe?

'Where?' I asked.

'You'll find out in due course.'

'You've taken her?' Heat flooded my cheeks as anger welled.

'I have. She is safe and will remain so.'

'Take me to her.'

'No.'

When I sprung to my feet, I had to stabilise myself against the arm of the sofa, cursing my wobbly legs. 'What the fuck, Ewen? You come in here telling me you've killed a man and taken my sister? I ought to phone the fucking police.'

'It wouldn't do you much good. I likely know them much better than you.' Ewen's fingers on his left hand thrummed lightly on his knee as he watched me.

'Get out,' I said, my face burning.

'I will. But you'll be coming with me.'

'No, I won't!'

'I've already got you excused from your classes for a week. I want one week with you. To get all of these fantasies out of our heads and into the real world. One week to get my mind freed from you. One week for you to live out every depraved little dream you've ever had. Then I'll take you to your sister and let you go.'

Ewen stood and walked toward me, his intense gaze keeping me rooted to the spot. He was freshly shaven, his aftershave filling the air with spiced notes as he stepped toward me.

Despite myself, I wanted him to take me—I wanted everything he offered. One week away from being Cora and belonging to him. To a man who would kill for me.

I'd lost my fucking mind.

'And if I say no?' I asked as he reached out and dragged a finger up my throat, pausing at my wildly beating pulse.

'You won't.'

My breath trembled as he slid his hand around both sides of my neck, squeezing lightly and pulling my mouth to his. His kiss tore any fight from

me, filling my body with pure lust. Knowing he was a dangerous man only seemed to fuel my desire further.

I hated myself for melting beneath his touch.

But I did.

My resistance fled with every stroke of his insistent tongue against mine.

'Give me a week, my pretty little liar. I need you.' His voice cracked with need, the first touch of emotion he'd given since he arrived.

'You're a monster,' I whispered against his lips.

'I am. And you're going to be my prey.'

A shiver ran up my spine as he released my neck from his grip and made space between us.

'Go pack. We're leaving in fifteen.'

'Where are we going?'

'Home.'



My eyes had about bugged out of my head when we approached his home.

Ewen lived in a whole-ass fucking mansion. The building seemed to go on forever in both directions while towering over us as he pulled his car up outside the entrance.

'Holy shit,' I muttered as he came round to open my door. 'What have I gotten myself into?'

As the owner of The Loft, I'd presumed he'd had some money, but nothing like an income that could afford a place like that.

And he'd seen my shitty little flat.

Fuck.

Instead of taking the hand he offered me, I gripped my travel bag tightly and stood, looking up at his gargantuan home.

'You really live here?' I asked.

'I do. Grew up here,' he replied, beckoning his head and starting towards the house.

Curious, I followed after him and continued, 'Alone?'

'I am now. But I grew up here with my father, mother, and siblings.'

Walking faster to keep up with him, my shoes crunched on the gravel. 'Where are they now?'

'My parents are dead. So is my oldest brother. The others moved out with their partners.' Ewen didn't even need to open the door. It swung inward as we took the steps, with a man dipping his head at Ewen as we walked in.

'Do they live nearby?' I needed as much information as I could gather while he was open to giving it.

'Maeve and Cam live in Edinburgh with their adopted teens. Logan and Valentina are in the highlands living their rustic dream. Esther and Alec are in Spain with their two kids. Katie and Mac are still in Glasgow.'

'Wow, so many of them.' For so long, it had only been Ruby and I. The thought of so much family made a kernel of jealousy flare. 'Good job. You've got this big ass house, I guess.'

My nerves were making me talk too much.

I followed Ewen through the vast, marble-floored hall with the sweeping staircase and passed a number of elaborately decorated rooms.

We walked through an open library, books towering in every direction, which seemed to provide a key feature in the centre of the house. Off to one side, a bar sat in a large alcove.

Recognition filtered into me the moment I spotted a man sitting there nursing a whisky. He'd been in the club a few times and spoken to me.

'Ewen,' he said, 'Have we got a new house guest?'

'Alfie, you'll remember Cora? Cora, Alfie.'

'Hi,' I said, my cheeks flushing at the thought of someone else knowing about my deal with Ewen. I hoped he didn't.

'Pleasure to see you again,' Alfie said, a crooked smile curving his lips. 'About time there was someone to talk to other than grumpy balls over there.'

Ewen cleared his throat and threw Alfie a withering glance.

Alfie winked with a grin. 'You know I'm messing with you. Your company is ever a delight.'

'We'll see you later,' Ewen said as his shoes clicked on the tiled flooring.

I rushed to keep up. 'Are you guys related, too?'

'No. He's a family friend. Tends to hang about for a few months at a time.'

My brow creased. 'If you don't like him, then why do you let him stay?'

'Who said I don't like him?'

'I mean, your face? Your tone?'

'Not everyone wears their hearts on their sleeves. It doesn't mean they feel any less.' Ewen stopped in front of a door and pressed down the handle, swinging it open.

'This is your room.'

The room was massive, beautifully decorated with a large wooden fourposter bed and matching antique-looking furniture. One door led to a little terraced area, while another to a bathroom that was the size of my living room. The bath sank into the floor and was easily big enough to fit four people.

'We aren't sharing?' I asked, skimming my fingers over the furnishings, marvelling at how thick and heavy everything felt.

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# TWENTY-ONE

### **EWEN**

Alfie and I waited at the dinner table.

'Not great at timekeeping, huh?' Alfie said.

Large silver cloches covered the food, hopefully holding its heat in.

'She might have gotten lost,' I said, glancing at Alfie.

'I'm surprised you haven't got her on a leash.' Alfie poured red wine into our glasses, the rich floral tones filling my nostrils.

'There's time,' I grumbled.

The door opened, and Cora walked into the room, her eyes widening as she took in the large, polished wood table and gilt decor that surrounded it.

'Sorry I took so long. I didn't really know what to wear.'

Alfie and I wore shirts and slacks, sleeves rolled up, and buttons open. Smart but relaxed. Cora wore a short sweater dress with tights and kneehigh brown boots. Perhaps a little casual, but who cared.

'You look lovely,' I complimented with a smile, rising to pull out the chair next to mine for her to sit.

'I feel like a little gremlin that's invaded a palace,' she said, her cheeks pinking.

'Invade away.'

Lifting the cloches from the platter, my smile broadened at Cora's intake of breath. The chefs had outdone themselves. Beef parcels stuffed with herbs and spices, intensely flavoured pasta bundles topped with exotic mushrooms and garlic, and glazed vegetables tossed in butter—all accompanied by a variety of delightful treats.

After everyone served themselves, I watched Cora eat. I couldn't drag my eyes from her mouth. Every time she took a bite of something new, she would make a contented little noise. I wanted to watch her eat forever.

To keep her.

And I had a week to make her want to stay.

Cora and Alfie struck up a conversation, her voice growing more bubbly with every sip of wine.

Jealousy burned inside me. Not because I thought either of them was doing anything wrong but because I wanted her attention on me. Every sweet smile and laugh I wanted to capture.

Why did she have such a hold on me? I barely knew her.

It had been years since I'd wanted to get to know someone beyond just enjoying their body. I'd never felt such intensity before. I had to discover if it was just loneliness driving me to her.

By the end of dinner, the two seemed fast friends, and I looked far more like the third wheel. When Alfie suggested drinks in the library bar, Cora accepted in a heartbeat.

Taking a stool, I listened as Cora chatted about her photography course. The way sparkles danced in her eyes as she spoke made her impossible to ignore. Despite not knowing the first thing about cameras other than the one on my phone, I was gripped by her every word.

Alfie excused himself after an hour, having an arrangement for the evening, leaving just Cora and me.

'I should hate you,' she said, her words beginning to slur as she poured herself another glass of wine.

'Probably,' I answered.

'You've barely spoken to me all night. Just glared at me. Why?'

'I enjoy listening to you.'

'Why me? Why take me here? We barely know each other. Can't you get a woman who wants you without needing to force them into a week-long stay?'

'Something got your knickers in a twist? No one is forcing you to stay.' Amusement quirked my lip as she let the drink rouse her fire.

'You are. You have my fucking sister.'

'Mhm. Is that the sole reason you are here? To find the sister who doesn't seem to give two fucks about what you want?'

Reaching over the bar, she slammed a bottle of tequila down before putting a large measure in her glass. 'You wouldn't fuck me last night when I was under the influence. So if I stay drunk, then you won't touch me, right?'

She grimaced as she downed the measure and followed it with another.

I got it. She was attracted to a murderer. It was a lot to take in.

'I never said I wouldn't touch you, Cora. I said I wanted you sober when I took your virginity. Play stupid games, and you'll win stupid prizes.'

'Aren't you mad? Didn't you want to fuck me tonight?' She wobbled as she stood.

'I'm a man of great patience. I'll come tonight regardless of your state of inebriation. You won't.'

Her nostrils flared as she started off down the hall toward her room, bumping into the walls as she went. I followed behind her as she let out a string of curses.

She didn't close the door when she found the room, leaving it for me to enter behind her.

'Did you really kill Seth?' she asked, turning toward me and sitting on the bed to pull off her boots.

I could lie to her to provide her the comfort she sought, but if I was going to make her mine then she had to know the real me. Relationships built on lies could never last.

'I did.'

'How?'

'Is that something you really need to know?'

She nodded.

'I made him swallow a whole bag of Ecstasy with holes pricked in it. Then, I watched as he overdosed. It took a long time. He went through everything he put you through. Sweating and being thirsty until his kidneys failed. Eventually, a heart attack finished him off.'

Her face blanched.

'I'd do it again if someone else tried to hurt you.'

'How many people have you killed?' her voice was meek.

I clenched my jaw as I looked for the best answer to that. How many over the twenty years since my first? Dozens.

'None who didn't truly deserve it.'

I didn't know whether she believed me. The bed shifted as I sat on the edge beside her. Reaching out, I drew my fingers over her thigh, the rough material of her tights hiding the silk beneath. 'Never be afraid of me, Cora. I promise you I could never hurt you.'

'What if I did something to deserve it?'

'I'd find alternative methods of punishment.'

My lips grazed her jaw below her ear as she trembled.

'Like what?'

'You'll find out if you keep fucking with me. Now be a good girl and drink some water and get your drunk ass to bed before I'm tempted to fuck it.'

'You wouldn't,' she said, letting her fingers brush against mine.

'I will. By the time the week's through, I'll have fucked every single part of you, leaving not a hair untouched. I want to claim every inch of you.'

Once she had drunk the water and taken some paracetamol, I tucked her into bed and waited for her to nod off.

Grabbing her bag from a nearby chair, I opened it and retrieved her phone. A swift swipe activated the screen, and I pointed it towards her serene, sleeping face to unlock the device. As I pressed the record button, I pulled out my cock and stroked myself mere inches away from her lips, groaning her name, while making sure everything was visible on the screen. I wasn't lying when I told her I'd come, and she wouldn't.

With her so close, it didn't take long for me to spill my cum into my fist, opening it to show the camera. I leaned forward and ran my hand down her top, spreading my cum over her tits. I glided my hand around her neck, marking it as I squeezed until she opened her mouth and shoved my fingers between her lips. She groaned and shifted while I recorded her glistening face.

'Goodnight, Cora,' I said into the phone. 'Know that there won't be a day you spend in my home that I won't mark you in some way. With my cum, my whip, or my dick. Sleeping or awake. I'd much rather see you swallow my cum than wipe it over you.'

Clicking off the video, I placed her phone on the dresser beside her with a note scrawled on a gum wrapper I found in my pocket.

# TWENTY-TWO

### **CORA**

The sunlight hit my face, and I pulled the plush covers over my head, groaning. If it weren't for my banging head, I'd have been convinced I was sleeping in a cloud.

Burrowing under the duvet, I squeezed my eyes closed, willing myself to fall back asleep.

No such luck.

My mouth tasted like a sewer and I winced as I remembered the tequila I'd knocked back. Shifting onto my back, I stretched out my legs, realising that I was still wearing my tights and sweater dress.

Shit. I'd made an ass of myself.

Half-expecting to find Ewen in my bed, I spread an arm out, sighing in relief to find the bed empty.

Relief and disappointment.

Dragging myself upright, I pushed my matted hair from my face. I needed a shower badly after sleeping in wool all night.

Squinting against the invading light, I looked for my phone, finding it on the dresser beside the bed next to a wrapper.

Had I eaten gum before going to bed?

Fuck, I hoped I didn't have it in my hair.

Picking it up, I turned the wrapper over to discover a scrawled message.

Alcohol made you miss out on an orgasm. I didn't deny myself one. I want you sober tonight so I can even the tally. Check your videos. See you in the afternoon. E.

My stomach clenched as I read the words before snatching up my phone and going to the gallery with shaking hands. Did he take my virginity without me even knowing? Would he?

I didn't think so. There was no ache between my thighs. He'd told me that he wanted me present for that. So what had he done?

With a swallow, I clicked on the new video.

I lay sleeping on the bed as Ewen gripped his cock in his hand, stroking firmly. The head of his cock was large and fat, glistening in the soft room light. It should have felt like a violation, but my pulse picked up at the filthy image. What would it feel like to have him that breathy at my touch? Unable to look away, I watched as his jerks became faster, his hand almost blurring as I slept behind, unaware.

When he came with a grunt, he captured his cum in his hand and showed it to the camera.

My thighs clenched as he walked toward me, sliding his hand down my top to spread his cum across my breasts and up to my neck before sticking his wet fingers into my mouth.

Lust laced his voice as he spoke. 'Goodnight, Cora. Know that there won't be a day you spend in my home that I won't mark you in some way. With my cum, my whip, or my dick. Sleeping or awake. I'd much rather see you swallow my cum than wipe it over you.'

Touching my neck, I felt a flaky film covering it, up over my chin and down onto my chest. Concern flooded me. What sort of man did that? And more worryingly, why did it make me feel so hot?

Biting my lower lip, I replayed the video, watching it again. And again.



When I called and asked for a hangover cure, the chef brought me bacon sandwiches—crispy on the edges and soft in the middle—along with tea and fizzy coke.

After a hot shower, which I took despite wanting to keep Ewen's cum on my skin, and a good feed, I felt much better.

The size of the house astounded me. Every clip of my shoes echoed around me as I walked through the corridors, admiring art that hung on the walls and stopping to look at this or that. It was like he lived in a museum.

A door led to a cute little courtyard surrounded by the mansion's walls and filled with exotic plants. I sat on a bench near a trickling fountain and messaged Molly, who'd messaged six times already asking where I'd been.

What do you say? Whisked away to our boss's mansion because he's holding my sister hostage? By the way, he killed a dude who hurt me and came on me while I slept.

No.

The whole thing was preposterous.

But having a man who wanted me that badly and was willing to do anything to protect me gave me a heady rush. I put my phone back down on the bench and lifted my face to the light coming in from the gap above.

'Room for one more?'

Looking to my left, I gave Alfie a smile as he slid onto the bench beside me.

'It's lush out here, isn't it?' I said.

'One of my favourite spots in the house.'

'Where do you actually live?' I asked, curious as to why he spent so much time at Ewen's place.

'Up in the highlands. I have a club there.'

'A club like Ewen's?

He grinned and shrugged. 'A bit like if Ewen's club was inside a castle and on steroids. It's more of a retreat for the hedonistically inclined.'

'Sounds fun,' I said, reaching out to toy with the fronds of a giant fern.

'Maybe Ewen will take you some time,' Alfie said. 'Always fun to have newbies on board.'

'We're not dating or anything. It's just...' Well, what was it? 'We're scratching an itch.'

His eyes crinkled at the corners as he shook his head softly. 'Ewen's never taken an itch home before.'

'Never?' I asked, incredulous

'Never.'

The sound of the fountain filled the air as I mulled over the information. Ewen had never brought another woman home? Why me?

'It's only for a week. I'm still not sure how to feel about it. He did something really awful for me and took someone I loved.' Thoughts jumbled in my head.

'Listen, Cora. Do you want to be here?'

'I think so.'

'Then enjoy it. Sink into whatever he can give you that you can't get elsewhere. What's one week in a lifetime? Better to have tried it and leave disappointed than never having tried and always wondering what could have been. He's a good guy. All the McGowans are. Sure, they are involved in some dodgy shit, but they never harm where they can do good instead.'

'So he won't hurt my sister?'

Alfie ground his teeth as he considered it. 'Has she been doing anything that would hurt his family?'

'No.'

'She'll be fine. I can prod him a bit and check it out.'

'Thank you,' I said, feeling calm for the first time in days.

'Plus,' Alfie said with a smirk, 'If he fucks anything like his brother, you're in for a treat.'

My eyes were like saucers as he stood up.

'You've...'

'A story for another time. Ewen's due home soon, and he sent a few things up to your room for you.'

I made it to my room in a few breathless minutes, wondering what on earth I'd find there. At the foot of the bed sat bag after bag. All from different stores. I'd never seen so many at once. Designer names I recognised, and many I didn't, emblazoned in a myriad of fonts. Peeking into them, I saw dresses, shoes, lingerie, trousers and blouses, coats and accessories. It must have cost him a fortune.

A little card sat on the bed, and I ripped open the thick envelope to read the inscription.

Cora, I'd drool over you in a paper bag.
But I never want you to feel you don't belong.
I guessed your sizes from how you felt in
my arms that night. Wear them. Burn them.
Wear nothing. I don't mind.

Sitting heavily on the edge of the bed, I smiled.

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## TWENTY-THREE

#### **EWEN**

'What's up with you?' Maeve asked as I checked my watch for the millionth time.

'Nothing,' I responded as she handed me another pile of documents. My sister wasn't going to let it go that easily, though. She'd always been like a scrappy little terrier if she felt someone was holding back. It's what made her so great as the head of the McGowan organisation. By Cam's side, she'd matured into the role she was never meant to have.

Cocking her head, she narrowed her eyes. 'Oh really? Nothing has you checking the time every five seconds?'

'Checking through a million documents to see if there's any erroneous names is hardly thrilling work. Excuse me if I'm looking forward to getting home and kicking off my shoes.'

And feasting on Cora.

'You know you're the most analytical of us. You won't miss things in the way the others will.'

'Flattery won't make the work any more fun,' I said. Flipping through page after page to try to follow who was being paid sums of money they couldn't possibly explain amongst our employees. Should we have been able to access their full bank details? No. But there was always someone who could be persuaded to hand over information with a shove in the right direction. Weeding out any more traitors was vital if we were going to haul Edwards out from whatever little rat hole he'd crawled into.

The easiest way to find an idiot was to follow the money.

'So...' Maeve said, sitting across from me and mirroring my page flipping with her own. 'Who is she?'

Arching a brow, I looked up at her. 'Who?'

'The woman you have holed up in the private hospital?'

Clenching my jaw, I shook my head. Nothing was ever sacred. 'Just one of my club workers.'

'She's been screaming bloody murder at the nurses for days. Why is she there against her will?'

'Drugs will do that. I admitted Ruby to get her clean.' I went back to reading, hoping she'd drop it.

No such luck.

'Why don't you just fire her? It'll cost thousands to have her in there for weeks.'

'I'm fronting the cost personally. It won't affect the business.' I kept my voice even, trying to keep it impersonal.

'One of our lower ranks turned up dead this morning. Happens to be the boyfriend to your hospitalised friend. Just a coincidence?' Maeve tapped her nails on the desk, her agitation with having to dance around the subject clearly infuriating her.

'How'd he die?' I asked.

'Massive overdose would have been likely, had every bone in his body not been broken. One by one.'

'Shame. He must have really pissed someone off.'

Maeve stood and slapped her hands down on the table. 'So help me god, Ewen, tell me what the fuck is going on. I can't be covering up dead body after dead body while we're trying to find Edwards.'

Pain tinged as I drew in a breath.

'Fine. I like her sister. Ruby's sister, Cora. The guy was an asshole who tried to assault her. He was also pimping Ruby out to his friends while filling her full of drugs. He deserved to die. It's not been so many years since you went after Cam's dad for the same thing.'

She straightened her shoulders and neatened her blouse. 'Well, that was different. Just be aware the heat is on. Take it easy with the torture. If someone has to die, at least make it look accidental.'

'Yes, Ma'am,' I said.

'Ew, don't call me that. Now, more importantly, you said you *liked* her sister?' Maeve sat back down and rested her chin on one palm.

'Did I?'

'Ewen, don't make me come over there and pry it out of you. I thought you were more into observing than interacting with women?'

Swallowing, I shut the file and sighed. She wasn't going to let it go. 'Fine. But don't go getting weird about it. It's not serious.'

'I swear,' she said, holding three fingers up in a scout's honour.

'There's something about her. She makes me need to be near her. I'm just trying to get her out of my system to see if it's some sort of glitch.'

Maeve rolled her eyes. 'Falling for someone isn't a glitch, you ass.'

'I'm not falling for her. I barely know her.'

'Does she make your heart beat faster when you think about her?'

'Yes.'

'Do you want to make her smile?'

'Yes.' And make her cry, and moan, and sigh.

'Would you go to insane lengths to spend a moment with her? You know, like killing her sister's dickhead boyfriend?'

'Yes.'

'Sounds like it's more than a glitch. I'd say you've got it real bad.' Maeve grinned and I pursed my lips.

'We haven't even slept together.'

Her laughter rose in the room, bouncing off the panelling and surrounding me. 'Oh boy. If she'd got you this hooked without sex, well, fuck, make sure I'm on the wedding guest list.'

'It's not like that,' I said. A picture of her in a wedding dress and moaning beneath me flashed through my head, and I shook it loose. I didn't want that. Didn't need that.

I'd never needed that.

I wanted rough and hard. Pain and tears. Not love. Not *romance*.

'We'll see,' Maeve said as I stood to leave, done with her nonsense for the day.

It was time to push Cora. Show her it's nothing but lust. An itch to scratch.

To show her the depths of my depravity.

To show myself.



The heady scent of peaches hit me as I opened her bedroom door. Cora sat by the window, peach juice dripping down her chin as she scrolled through her phone. My voice rang out through the space, and I realised she was rewatching the video I left for her.

She hadn't run.

The dozens of bags I'd delivered had been pushed to one side of the room, with various outfits laid on the bed—presumably where she'd been trying them on.

'Ewen!" she squeaked, startled when I walked in unannounced. Quickly shutting off the video, she got to her feet and dropped her phone on the table as if it was on fire.

'Knees,' I ordered, my voice strained at the sight of her in nothing but an oversized sweater with a sliver of delicious laced black panties peeking from beneath.

She froze for a moment, her eyes going from my face to my clenched fists and back. Tension lengthened between us, both waiting to see what she would do.

One. Two. Three steps toward me. She sank to her knees and blinked up at me, her eyes filled with heat. And fear. The perfect combination.

'You watched the video,' I said.

Her eyes darted to the abandoned phone, strands of hair falling over her face. 'So many times.'

'You weren't mad? Disgusted? Think I'm a creep?'

'Yes. But more than anything, I've been counting the minutes until you came back.'

Reaching out, I cradled her chin in my hand, tipping her face up to me.

'It's not the first time I've done it.'

Her brows creased, and her throat bobbed beneath my fingers, her pupils blown.

'When?' she breathed.

'In your flat. I broke in. I watched you fuck your little cunt until you gave up. I waited until you fell asleep, and then I filled your panties with my cum. I put them on you before I left.'

You're a freak,' her voice strained, and I braced myself for the expected reaction—waiting for her to either reach for her phone and call the police, or run away from me as fast as she could.

Maybe both.

'I am,' I admitted.

'It's wrong.' Her tongue darted across her lips.

'Don't you think I know that? I know what I've been doing is wrong, and I don't care. I need you. You've got me in this grip, this obsession. You've wormed into my brain and all my sanity flees when I'm near you. Or not near you.'

Her chest lifted with a sharp inhale at my words.

'I'm not sorry,' I added, running a finger across her lower lip, following the glistening patch her tongue had left behind.

'Show me.' Her words were barely audible, tinged with a terrified tremble.

'All of me? You sure?'

She nodded hesitantly, and I dropped to my knees beside her to capture her lips with mine, letting my need burn through us. Her sweater caught on her hair when I yanked it over her head, and she moaned. Electricity pulsed through me while I pressed her against me, feasting on her tongue. I let out a low sound of appreciation as her sweet, peachy taste filled my mouth, and she melted under my touch. Reaching down between us, I pulled my belt from its loops, and the way her body flinched made me hard.

'Hands on the end of the bed,' I demanded against her ear.

Using my foot, I spread her ankles after she complied, her hands gripping the dark wooden post that spanned the foot of the bed frame.

'Your marks have faded,' I said, dragging my fingers down her spine as she squirmed. 'I'm going to fix that for you.'

'Please?' she mumbled, her words unsure.

'Speak up, Cora. You know what you want from me. Ask for it.'

'Please mark me.' Her words were clearer and I grinned.

'Please mark me, *Sir*.' I corrected her, drawing the belt back between my hands before releasing it with a sharp crack against her ass.

'Sir,' she gasped, her knees buckling before straightening again.

Red and angry, a perfectly defined belt imprint emerged on her skin. 'Ask for another.'

'Please. May I have another one, Sir?'

The second crack made her whimper loudly, her arse wiggling as she worked to fight the bite of the leather. Kneeling, I traced my tongue over the welt, savouring the mark's heat against it.

'More, please?' she begged when I stood.

'You've taken two. I'm going to give you another eight. Don't release your hands until I do.'

Slipping my hand into her hair, I grasped firmly, revelling in the way she arched her back.

'Count them for me.'

'Three,' her voice cracked as I aimed my next stroke lower and thrashed her upper thighs.

'Such a good little slut.'

'Four.'

'You're doing so well.'

'Five.' A breathy grunt followed, her grip on the wooden post tightening until her knuckles turned white.

'You suffer so beautifully for me.'

Giving her a brief reprieve, I placed my belt on her back and slid the hand that wasn't in her hair down beneath her panties. Seeing her so affected for me made my dick strain in my pants. She was so fucking divine in her distress.

'Fucking soaked.' A shiver ran through her body as I slid a finger into her, staying still, knowing that this would inflict more torture than any movement could.

She rocked her hips to gain some friction, but I held her tight between my hands. My low chuckle made her curse.

'So impatient,' I whispered, leaning down to kiss her shoulder. 'I've waited weeks to have you right here. I will not rush it.'

'Please, fuck me?' her voice was muffled as she pressed her face against her arm.

'No.'

Her following groan elicited a grin from me, and the delightful squeak she emitted when I withdrew my finger made delivering the next four strokes effortless.

Pulling her head up by her silken hair as she gasped *nine*, I saw her cheeks glistening.

'Are you crying from pain or frustration?' I asked.

'Need,' she panted.

'One more to go, my sweet liar.'

The last stroke landed with a crack that made her breath hitch between sobs. I dropped to my knees and pulled her panties to her feet, pressing my tongue to her wet cunt.

'Thank you,' she gasped, and I groaned against her, losing myself in her sweet, salty taste. I teased her clit with a nip, coaxing a mewl from her, and as I pressed my tongue inside her, her thighs shook with pleasure.

'Such a delightful pet,' I said into her pussy, my words vibrating against her clit. 'I'm going to make you come, but not yet.'

When I turned her to face me, a blend of fury and lust adorned her expression/features. Grinning, I lowered her to the floor, securing her wrists with my belt and fastening them to the bedpost. It wasn't perfect, but it should hold her.

Undoing my trousers, I pulled my dick out and stood in front of her, rubbing the tip against her mouth.

'I don't know how to do it,' she said, her tongue wetting her lips.

'You'll learn,' I assured her, smirking.

## TWENTY-FOUR

**CORA** 

My ass dug into the new clothes that had fallen from the bed and lay strewn beneath me. Heat burned where the fabric pressed against the belt marks, and the sensation made me wetter every time I moved.

Ewen stood before me with his frighteningly large dick in his hand, stroking it right next to my face. He'd said I'd learn how to take it, but I wasn't convinced.

'The new clothes,' I said, feeling flustered as he wiped the tip of his cock over my lips. 'I'm crushing them.'

'I'll buy you more,' he growled before gathering saliva in his mouth and bending slightly, letting a long line of spit drip down and over the head of his cock. Glistening, he pressed it to my lips, his saliva coating us both.

It shouldn't have sent a tingle of desire between my legs, but it did. The sheer depravity rocked me to my core. I didn't just want it; *I needed it*. I'd been denying it for years, but with every second, Ewen's darkness opened me up to the light.

'Open up. Time to learn how to take a dick like a good little cock-whore.'

Inhaling, I opened my mouth.

'Tongue out.'

Complying, I squirmed, imagining how I looked to him—covered in marks, in nothing but my bra and attached to the footboard, hair sticking to my tear-stained cheeks.

Using his fist, he spread his spit-soaked dick over my tongue. The way his eyes rolled in his head had me flexing my tongue against the underside of his cock. It was addictive. I'd been so focused on wanting him to make me come again that I'd failed to realise how hot it would be to see and hear him moan.

When he bit his lip, I shifted, trying to suck him into my mouth.

'Tsk, tsk. Patience. I do love how eager you are, though. You know you were made to take it, don't you? Now, keep that tongue out for me.'

The words made my cheeks flush.

Drool puddled in my mouth and dripped down over my tongue as I waited. My eyes fixated on his swollen tip while he taunted me with long, slow strokes of his cock.

My saliva hit my chest, and he reached down to spread it across my breasts. 'Such a dirty girl.'

Ewen let another string of spit drip down over his cock, and then moved forward, shoving it so deep into my mouth that it made me wretch. He pulled out just as quickly, leaving my eyes watering.

'God, the amount of times I've thought about how your pretty mouth would feel.' Another rough invasion of my throat had my chest heaving, and my tears started up again.

There was nothing sweet about his actions—it was raw, primal. I wished I could have touched myself as he did it again and again.

Each thrust into my mouth made me choke and heave, but he pulled back each time, letting me pant.

His moans increased, his cheeks flushing, and the muscles in his forearms cording. 'I'm going to paint your tongue. Swallow it all.'

He shoved his dick back in my mouth, but this time he didn't pull back. He pistoned his hips and rode my face hard, grinding through my wretches as I tried to suck and lick him.

'Such a fucking delight,' he growled as he plugged my nose, making me panic. I fought against the onslaught of his dick, my chest burning while I struggled to breathe.

A rush of salty heat filled my mouth, sliding down my throat as I gagged hard. My cheeks bellowed, and cum burst from my lips, coating both of us.

He let go of my nose, only to slip his hand behind my head and press my face against him as he rode the wave of his orgasm. Cum dribbled down my chin and chest when he withdrew. I swallowed as much as I could, my stomach churning in the process.

'I'm sorry,' I said as I realised how much I'd spilled.

Ewen crouched and tipped my face to his. 'Never be sorry. You were perfect. Nothing's ever looked as beautiful as you do right now.'

When he kissed me, my tears flowed afresh. The cum on my face didn't deter him, neither did the spit nor the tears.

'How do you feel?' he whispered against my lips.

'Like I'm going to explode.'

He pressed his hand down between my thighs and circled my clit. The pressure made me groan and arch my back. 'I'm going to eat your wet little cunt while you ride my fingers. But first, I need to get your bra off.'

I cried out when he removed his fingers from me and licked them with a grin. Slowly, he fastened his trousers while watching squirm.

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a flick knife and released the blade.

Fear coursed through me as he knelt back down between my spread legs.

Ewen dragged the sharp tip of the blade along my collarbone, and he leaned in to kiss me, slipping his tongue over my lips—the mixture of fear and desire leaving delirious.

'I promised I'd never hurt you. Not more than you need.' He murmured, and I met his eyes with a racing heart. 'Do you trust me?'

Did I really trust him? The killer. The stalker. My creep? *My creep*.

'Yes,' I breathed, nodding as he twisted the knife and drew a scratch down over my wet skin. Knowing that he used the implement so delicately when it could cause so much damage was a heady rush. The danger added to the mounting desire inside me, making me feel more reckless and wild than I ever had.

My pulse quickened as he dragged it down my chest, slipping it beneath the centre of my lovely new bra.

'Oh, but it's so nice,' I whimpered.

'I'd buy you a thousand if it means I get to cut them off of you forever.' The knife snickered at the fabric before he used the blade to pull it open, revealing my breasts.

'Every inch of you is fucking perfection,' he said, leaning down and capturing one nipple between his teeth. I squealed when he bit down, arching my back until he soothed the pain with his tongue.

Using the blade to scratch red lines across my tits, he wound me up to the point I thought I'd combust. Heat flooded every single part of me as he slid the knife down further, criss-crossing my stomach before sliding it over my pelvis.

'I think I'm going to die,' I mumbled. A rich laugh slipped past his lips as he reached down and sunk his teeth into my thigh. My cry filled the room as the pain made me buckle.

Before I had time to recover, he slid onto his stomach between my legs and captured my clit in his hot mouth.

I didn't know where the pain ended and the pleasure began. Overload attacked my senses as my entire world seemed too narrow to where his mouth met my flesh.

'So close,' I whimpered, wishing I could reach down, hold his head to me, and ride his face to take what I needed so fucking bad.

When he pulled back again, I released a shriek of anger that was quickly followed by a sob.

'Oh, darling. Don't you feel it? The torture. When you come, it'll be so much more intense for all your suffering.'

'Please, Ewen? Fucking please. I'll do anything. Anything.'

'Begging only makes me harder, Cora.'

He pressed the knife into the flesh just above my pussy, the scratching pain taking my breath away.

Was he... Writing?

Letters formed in the angry red lines, etched by the steady pressure of the blade—firm enough to leave a mark but not enough to pierce the skin.

It was upside down to me, but when he finished, he gazed up at me with a grin stretching across his face.

He scraped his fucking name into my flesh.

'Mine,' he growled before dropping his knife on the carpet and lifting my hips to his mouth. Where he'd held back before, he gave his all now. His tongue thrashed against my clit as I bucked and moaned, the pleasure almost too much to bear after such a long buildup.

Spreading me with his fingers, he slid one into me and curled it forward, pressing against a spot inside me that made my eyes roll back into my head.

Coils of intense pleasure rolled through me as he slid his other arm beneath me and held me up off the floor, gripping me so tightly that I couldn't have escaped had I wanted to.

'Holy fucking shit,' I cried out as my body quaked. 'Don't stop! Please, don't stop!'

He didn't.

Using his tongue and lips, teeth and fingers, he forced me to a height I hadn't thought was possible.

The world dimmed as a dam exploded. My orgasm crashed through me with a force that left no part of me untouched.

Cursing and sobbing, I juddered for minutes on end as he consumed every last wrack of desire.

I barely felt it when he released me and freed my hands. My brain may as well have been severed from my body with the way I floated somewhere a million miles away.

Softness enveloped me while his warmth pressed against my side. His fingers stroked gently over my skin, calming the way I shook beneath his touch.

'Magnificent,' he said against my ear. 'You're fucking amazing.'

My tongue felt like it was made from cotton candy—unwieldy, impossible to control.

His shirt buttons pressed into my spine as he gathered me against his chest and kissed at the back of my neck softly.

I closed my eyes and revelled in everything and nothing, all at once.

### TWENTY-FIVE

**CORA** 

Inky darkness swamped the room when I awoke, entangled in Ewen's limbs. Extracting myself from his heavy arms, I snuck to the bathroom, turning on the light, and going for a wee. After washing my hands and face, I stood in front of the floor-length mirror and looked at my body. Ewen had left his mark almost everywhere. From the fading belt marks to a perfect set of teeth imprinted on my thigh, to his name scratched above my still puffy pussy.

Trailing my fingers over the destruction, I bit my lip. Being at his mercy shouldn't feel so hot. But it did. He made me feel like the single most important thing in the world while I was in his grasp.

Don't forget who he is.

He took Ruby.

Killed Seth.

Broke into your house like a fucking psychopath.

Yet even when dishing out pain and humiliation, he did it with a tenderness that made my heart flip. It was selfish of me to indulge in him, but I wanted to so badly.

I tipped a glug of expensive-looking bubble bath into the tub and turned on the tap, waiting as it took an age to fill. Steam blossomed around me as I looked out some fluffy towels and found a plethora of goodies in a cabinet. Shampoo, conditioner, body wash, lotion, combs, and brushes. Everything was brand new and looked fancy as all hell.

I audibly groaned as I sunk into the giant tub, resting my head against a rounded part that was a million times more comfortable than any bath I'd ever been in. Hot water enveloped me, and the sweet aroma of the bubbles had me relaxing instantly.

After a few minutes, the door swung open, and Ewen walked in without a moment's hesitation, promptly stripping off.

'What are you doing?' I asked, surprised at his forwardness.

'Joining you.' If the bath hadn't already had me flushed from the heat, I would have blushed at seeing him naked.

While he was toned, it was with that slender, knotted mass of muscles that left him still looking refined in a suit. Inked designs adorned his chest and upper arms, a complete jumble of different mandalas that intercepted with his tight core. My eyes followed a dark, happy trail downwards until I blinked away at seeing his dick already halfway to being hard.

'No need to be coy,' he said, flashing me a relaxed smile that instantly took years off of his usually stern face. 'You've seen it up closer than that.'

Ewen settled across from me, his legs grazing mine. He could have sat in the other half of the tub, but chose to still be touching me.

'I'm too tired for any more,' I said, resting my head back against the edge. It was only a half-truth. If he slid his fingers between my thighs, I'd have caved.

'I didn't join you for that. Tell me about yourself.'

'Didn't find enough while creeping about in my flat?'

He snickered before answering. 'Other than Ruby, do you have any family?'

'No. It's been just the two of us for years.'

'Who's ring do you wear? An ex-boyfriend's?'

It was my turn to laugh. 'No. Boyfriends don't tend to give girls who won't have sex jewellery. My dad gave it to me. I promised him I'd wait until I got married to have sex. It's stupid, really. He got involved in some stupid cult and made me do it not long before he died.'

'Is that why you're still a virgin?'

Opening my eyes, I glanced at his face. He wasn't mocking me. Genuine interest lay in his expression.

'It was, at first. Over the years, I saw Ruby fall in and out of relationships. She got hurt. A lot. I think I was scared to give it to someone.

Eventually, the idea of it being sweet and loving didn't hold my interest. I craved it darker.'

'Is that still what you want?' Beneath the water, he captured one of my feet and slid his fingers over the arch in a way that made me melt.

'Yes.'

A groan slipped out as he massaged my foot.

'What about you? You have a load of siblings. That must have been fun growing up. Especially in an actual mansion.' I said.

'My dad was hard on us. And I was pretty young when Mum passed. Being the middle kid, I mostly just trailed around after my siblings. Always felt like a bit of an inconvenience, I suppose.'

'I bet you were a cute kid.' A yawn stole over me as I sunk a little lower in the water.

'I always felt like a shadow. Not as real as my older siblings, but not one of the younger ones, either.'

'That's how I feel with Ruby. She always just shone so bright. Half of my life I've spent dazzled by her, and the other half jealous of her.'

Ewen's fingers stilled, and he sat up, leaning in toward me. 'You're perfect, Cora. You captured my attention from the moment you walked into my club. Before I even knew you'd taken Ruby's place. There was something about you that was impossible to ignore.'

Accepting compliments made me feel uncomfortable, and I squirmed against the backrest.

'You'll have to get used to accepting the compliments. I'm as likely to tell you how wonderful as I am to call you my little cum-rag.'

I bit my lip, and his features spread into a grin.

'Keep that up, and I'll turn you into a cum-rag right now. Tell me what you want out of life,' he said.

'I want to finish my studies, and have my photographs blown up big in a gallery some day. See my name in lights. You know. All that stuff.'

'You'll have to show me your pictures sometime.'

'They're not great at the minute. My camera's pretty shit, but I do my best. You can pose for me, if you like.' I paused, cutting off my words. What was I doing? 'I'm sorry. I'm just struggling with not knowing where Ruby is. I keep relaxing around you, and then this guilt washes over me.'

Ewen nodded. 'I get it. I'd be pretty pissed if someone took one of my siblings. She's in a private hospital rehab. Seth had her hooked on some

nasty shit, and they're working to get her off it.'

Relief washed over me. 'You didn't hurt her?'

'I would never.'

He knelt up and reached over me, my mouth watering at the sight of his dripping abs.

'What are you doing?' I asked, reaching up and dragging a finger down his happy trail.

'Fuck,' he whispered at my touch. 'I'm going to wash your hair. If you can behave for five minutes. Turn around.'

I turned as he pulled the shower head attachment from the slot beside the bath and switched it on. When he'd finished wetting my hair, he lathered the shampoo through it, his fingers kneading my scalp and making me sigh happily. I couldn't remember the last time someone had washed my hair for me. I always opted for washing at home and getting a quick trim at the hairdressers to save money.

Suds washed down over my shoulders as he rinsed my hair and worked the conditioner into the ends. Wrapping my hair around his hand, he pulled me back against his chest and dragged his lips down over my neck.

'What have you done to me?' he whispered.

'Nothing,' I said.

'Lies.' The word was all heat as he pulled my hair firmly, tipping my head backward. His other hand skated up my throat and gripped it tight. 'I have a little something for you.'

When he resumed the hair washing, I could have cried. I craved his touch already.

Wrapped in one of the huge, fluffy towels, he took me into the bedroom and rooted through his jacket pocket, fishing out a medium-sized square box.

The velvet on the outside was buttery soft beneath my fingers as I flicked it open. Inside, nestled was a beautiful, solid, golden choker, and dangling at the front was a small heart with the inscription "Cora".

'It's gorgeous,' I said as he took the choker from the box.

'It locks on. You'll be unable to remove it until next week, when I let you go.'

My throat bobbed as I blinked up at him.

'Hold your hair up,' he said. Behind me, he opened the clasp and placed/secured it around my throat. It sat snugly enough not to be annoying

but was thin enough not to feel like it was suffocating. He shifted me so I could see us in the mirror, making my towel fall to the floor.

'I look like a pet,' I said as the mechanism locked beneath his fingers.

'Is that a bad thing?'

'No,' I whispered. It made me hot between the thighs to see me naked and collared with him behind me.

'Mine,' he growled possessively against my ear as he reached up to stroke the metal at my throat.

'For the week,' I added.

'We'll see.' The way he said it sent shivers up my spine.

# TWENTY-SIX

#### **EWEN**

The mansion was silent, with all the staff sent out for the evening.

Folding my shirt sleeves up, I checked over my appearance one last time. I wanted to look perfect for Cora.

Since our middle of the night bath, I'd not touched her for the entire day. Focusing on work had been brutal when I'd popped into the club to arrange cover for the night and deal with some orders. She clouded my mind every second.

Being able to pull up the app on my phone, which connected to the transmitter in her golden collar, helped. Seeing it blink as she moved about my mansion soothed my soul. After her almost being hurt at Seth's, I was taking no chances.

Was it invasive? A little.

It was worth it to know she was safe.

Skimming a hand through my short, dark hair, I pulled my shoulders back and took a deep breath.

Nerves fluttered in my stomach.

Would I disappoint her?



The clicking of her heels announced her arrival before she entered the library bar. Her curves were bathed in red, the form-fitting dress looked like it was made for her.

My breath stuttered as she smiled at me, pushing a glossy wave of hair over one shoulder as she approached. How did she squeeze my heart within my chest like that?

'Hey,' she said as she sat on the high bar stool beside me. The collar glittering against her throat had me hard.

Mine.

The thought whispered across my mind as I greedily drank her in. I wanted to keep her—not as a possession, but as someone I could hardly imagine being without.

'You look stunning,' I said, reaching out and running a finger up her arm as I stood to kiss her on the cheek.

'Thank you. The clothes are amazing. I could get used to dressing like this.'

'It's not the clothes.'

Pink flushed her cheeks as she looked up at me through her smokeyrimmed eyes. They looked darker than usual. Full of promise.

'Shall we have a drink?' she asked.

Reaching behind the bar, I picked up the glass of iced water and lemon I'd placed there earlier. She took a sip as I sunk to my knees before her, sliding my hands down her calves and unbuckling the sexy as fuck heels she wore.

'This is water,' she said, brow furrowing. 'And why are you taking my shoes off?'

Keeping my voice low and even, I spoke to her.

'I'm going to fuck you tonight, Cora. I know you want it rough. You want me to take your virginity from you. I'm going to steal it. Very soon.'

When I met her eyes, there was a glimmer of fear mixed with lust.

'I'm going to give you one chance to tell me no,' I said, placing her heels neatly beside the chair. 'If you don't tell me no, I'm going to take it as a yes. You can run, you can fight me, you can make me hurt. Mark me, tell me you hate me. But I will fuck you with all the pent-up need within me. Not softly. Not sweetly. I won't make love tonight. I will claim you, and you will thank me by coming all over my cock.'

Her breath quickened when I stood and threaded a hand into her hair, tipping her lips to mine until only a slight distance remained between us.

'Tell me no.'

Her breath was hot against my lips as I waited, both of us on a precipice of no return.

'Good girl,' I whispered as her mouth opened, wanting me. 'Now, run.'

As soon as I let go of her hair, she dropped to the floor and made a run for it. Fast.

I counted to ten out loud, my voice reverberating through the empty corridor before following her fading footsteps at a jog.

The house was eerie in the silence as I went from room to room, throwing open doors and flipping on lights.

'Oh, Cora. Where are you?' My voice echoed in the hall as I made my way toward her bedroom. I almost discounted it as empty until I saw the ruffled duvet at the lower edge of the bed. Excitement thrummed through me as I made my way around it, crouching and flipping up the duvet. Cora shrieked and rolled away from me as I reached under the bed and hooked my fingers around one of her ankles.

She kicked hard, catching me in the chin and making me lose my grip as I swore.

Letting out a peal of laughter, I dragged myself up and went after her, her feet slapping against the marble tiles of the hall.

Never had I felt more alive.

Her ragged breaths filled the air as I gained on her. I caught her by the hair and twisted my fist, pressing her face first against the wall. Pinning her with my knee, I grabbed at the neckline of the pretty red dress and ripped it down the back, exposing her underwear.

Turning her to face me, I trapped her between me and the wall as I tore the dress off of her and tossed it on the floor. Her throat bobbed behind my fingers as I gripped it tightly, my other hand pushing into her pretty red panties.

'Such a slut,' I said as I hooked my fingers roughly inside her, making her gasp. 'My dirty little whore, all wet knowing I'm going to stuff my fat cock inside your wet little cunt.'

'Fuck you,' she spat, her pupils dilating as I pumped my fingers faster.

'You will, sweetheart. Soon enough.'

She stabbed the arm that held her throat with her nails, digging them into my skin. As pain blossomed, I inserted a second finger into her needy cunt.

'Oh, my god,' she moaned, trying to shift her hips to make space.

'I'll be the only one listening to your pleas tonight. No one can save you. Not even God himself.' Her thighs were soaked. I pulled my fingers from her and forced them into her mouth. 'Can you taste how fucking wet you are for me? Your tight little virgin cunt will take me so easily.'

She bit down on my fingers, and I released my other hand from her throat. Her knee came up and caught me in the bollocks, thankfully only a glancing blow, but enough to slow down the chase.

Turning to face me after running a few paces, she let out a laugh.

'Bet you tire out before you catch me.'

I couldn't help but grin as she ran off, leaving me clutching my balls.

## TWENTY-SEVEN

#### **CORA**

My heart hammered in my chest as I dodged from room to room, listening intently for any sign of Ewen. Silence enveloped me, my breath sounding like a freight train with no other noise.

Entering one of the winding halls, a sound behind me startled me, and I screamed. I quickly grabbed a vase from a plinth and hurled it in the direction of the noise.

'Holy shit,' Alfie said, barely dodging the flying ceramic shards that burst out as the vase hit the marble floor. 'Are you okay? Do you need help?'

Standing in nothing but my underwear, heat filled my face.

'No,' I said.

'Are you sure? Ewen's my friend, but if you need out, I'll fight the fucker.'

Ewen appeared further down the hall, over Alfie's shoulder, and I let out a squeak.

'Alfie, if you take one more look at her, I'll gouge your motherfucking eyes out with a rusty spoon.' Ewen's voice sent a chill through me.

'Jesus,' Alfie said, turning away from me. 'Ewen, what the fuck?'

'Make yourself scarce. You're my mate, but if I see you again tonight, I can't guarantee I won't do something stupid.' Ewen didn't take his eyes off of me.

'Promise me that you're okay?' Alfie didn't look at me as he spoke.

'I promise.'

'Right. Well. Not my circus, not my monkeys.' With a shrug, he left the hall through a side door.

Ewen and I stared at one another over the broken vase, blood storming through me at the dark promise in his eyes.

'Any last words?' His smirk made me wetter.

'Bite me.'

I fled.

His footsteps crashed behind me as I flipped off a light switch and sunk the hallway into the dark as we stormed through it. Diving into a room, I waited with bated breath until Ewen ran past it, his steps disappearing up ahead. Catching my breath, I snuck out of the room after a few minutes and tiptoed down the hall. It opened out to the library, only a few dim wall lamps lighting the vast room now.

My eyes darted from a dark alcove to the towering shelves of books that surrounded me. A scuff sounded behind me, and I dashed across the open marble floor. My foot caught on the rug at the room's centre, and I tumbled forward, letting out a cry.

Ewen was on me in a flash, his hot breath hitting my neck as he pulled my hair back, his hard cock digging against my ass through his trousers.

'Got you. And this time, I'm not letting you go.'

'Get off,' I demanded, thrashing beneath him as the carpet scraped against my stomach.

'Oh, I will, darling. Deep inside your pretty little cunt. What you've guarded for twenty-nine years, I'm going to steal in a matter of minutes.'

Excitement coursed through me even as I tried to fight him. His grip tightened in my hair as he reached between us and pulled my panties down around my thighs.

He shifted on top of me until I felt his hot, rigid cock pressing down between my ass cheeks.

'It'll hurt!'

'Good. You're so fucking wet. You can take it.'

Using his knees, he forced my legs apart, my panties stretching and digging into my thighs. With a grunt, he moved and wrestled them down my legs.

Seizing the chance, I struggled to break free, but his other hand tightened its grip on my hair, firmly pressing my face into the rug. Then, I

felt the fat head of his cock nudging against my spread pussy.

My wild attempts to free myself only pushed him further against me. I winced as he drove his hips forward—the tip spreading me wide as he forced his way inside.

It burned, and tears rolled down my cheeks.

When the pressure was gone, I mourned the loss almost as fiercely as I feared being pinned beneath it.

Ewen rolled me to my back and used a hand around my throat to pin me down.

'I need to see your face,' he growled.

Trying to squeeze my thighs shut proved futile, and the moment his dick inched into me again, I gasped and cried.

The intensity stole my breath as he met a brief resistance.

'Mine,' he growled, his eyes darkening as he thrust into me hard.

Pain ripped through me as I arched my back, trying to move back and lessen it.

'You feel so fucking good,' he muttered, watching my reaction to taking him deep. After a few seconds, he lowered his face to my neck and licked his way to my jaw. He pulled back and thrust roughly again, making me shudder.

'Such a good little cock-taker. You'll take it all for me, won't you?'

'Yes,' I whispered, crumbling beneath his words. He kept true to his word, keeping a hard, punishing rhythm as he filled me again and again. The pain was exquisite. With every stroke, an ardent need blossomed from deep within me.

I raked my nails down his back, and he hissed, sharing in my pain. Reaching between us, he circled my clit with his fingers, fire filling my body as pleasure mingled with the delicious ache.

My vision blurred as he quickened his pace, taking what he needed while using his fingers to force me to join him at the edge of the abyss. The ceiling swam far above me, the elaborate chandelier dark as I saw stars.

'My perfect pet,' he said with a tortured grunt as my pussy pulsated. 'Made to take my dick. Now thank me by coming for me like a good girl.'

I couldn't hold back, the scrumptious pain of the stretch pushing me over the precipice.

My orgasm shattered through me, and my pussy clamped down on his huge cock, pain washing me anew with the bizarre feeling.

'Holy fuck,' he moaned into my neck as I shook beneath him. 'So fucking tight.'

Moving his hand from between us, he gripped my face with his fingers as he delivered three punishing strokes with his dick. His pupils widened as he let out a low moan before burying himself deep inside me, spilling his hot cum right where he said he would.

We lay together on the rug, panting in the aftermath.

'That was...' I couldn't find the words. Outstanding? Insane? Breathtaking?

'You are amazing,' Ewen said, his mouth finding mine at last. The kiss was tantalisingly slow, giving us time for our hearts to return to a normal cadence.

When he moved, his cock pulled out of me, and I winced. A hot flood of cum trickled from me as he knelt up. Red tinged his shaft. Heat crept into my cheeks at the evidence of my virginity.

Ewen moved next to my head and pressed his cock against my lips. My eyes widened as he pushed the bloody tip between my lips.

'Clean it. Taste what I did to you.'

The mix of cum and blood was hot and metallic against my tongue as I bathed his cock. My fingers slid between my thighs, gingerly feeling my swollen, sore pussy. Sticky cum leaked from me and onto the rug below.

'Fucking hell, Cora.' Ewen groaned when I sucked him into my mouth. Pulling his cock free,he wrapped me in his arms and took my lips with his own, his tongue searching as I sighed against him.

He lifted me off my feet, and I broke the kiss to look down at the rug. Three bright red droplets stained the centre, while pink-tinged cum puddled nearby.

'I ruined your rug.'

'You improved it. Anything you touch is only made better.'

I laughed as he started walking us back to my room.

'I thought I was supposed to be the one who got all soppy and clingy?'

'You've bewitched me and made me soft.'

'I'm sure, given time, you'll be hard again before we know it.'

His warm laugh sent a tendril of pleasure through me that took me by surprise.

# TWENTY-EIGHT

#### **EWEN**

Water splattered in the bathroom as Cora showered, and I paced the floor in her bedroom while waiting.

I wanted to climb in with her, to keep her close, but I understood that she needed a bit of time to process everything that had happened.

It had been the hottest night of my life, and every moment away from her left me itching.

Had it been what she'd imagined? What she'd dreamt about for all those years? Had I gone too far?

While safety had always been a priority during scenes I'd had with others, I'd never felt so compelled to fulfill their every desire—as long as they had gotten off great. But with Cora? Pleasing her was becoming a compulsion. Being inside her had stolen a part of me I was never getting back.

Her blood still tinged my fingers.

I needed to wash them off, but the thought of her coming out to an empty room was unacceptable. Washing her away felt almost criminal—what I'd taken was monumental, to me.

Resting back against the wall, I closed my eyes and took a juddering breath.

It can't only be one week.

There's not a chance I can let her go.

Call it obsession, or lust, or love. Whatever it was, life without her would be bleak.

The bathroom door opened, and Cora gave me a shy smile. 'Shower's free.'

Crossing the room, I cupped her pretty face in my hands. The contrast between her freshly scrubbed skin and my bloodied hands hit me. She was a tender light in my otherwise dark world. Could I really drag her into it?

'Thank you,' I whispered, before grazing my lips over hers. She opened to me without hesitation. Kissing her was like stealing light from the sun itself. Warmth flooded me as she sighed softly.

Breaking the kiss, she cocked her head as she looked up at me. 'You're being weird.'

'I'm pretty weird at the best of times.'

'Good thing I like you, weirdo,' she said as she twisted the small ring from her finger and placed it in my hand. 'Here. I wanted you to have this,'

'Are you proposing to me?'

Her face broke into a grin. 'No. But I'm not a virgin anymore. I don't feel like I can wear it.'

'Your father gave it to you. Don't you want to keep it?'

She gave a small shake of her head while pressing it deeper against my palm. Closing my fingers around it, I nodded. I'd keep it safe for her. In case she changed her mind.

'Come to dinner with me,' I said, kissing my way from her mouth to her ear.

'It's late,' she shivered.

'I can pull some strings.'

'Like a real date?'

'Not like one. A real date.'

The way she chewed her lip as her eyes sparkled made me weak. When she nodded, excitement flurried in my stomach like a damn teenager going to prom with the girl he's been crushing on.

'Meet me by the front door in an hour.'

'What should I wear?' she asked.

'Anything you feel beautiful in.'

She could have worn the fucking towel, and I'd have still wanted her.

## TWENTY-NINE

#### **CORA**

Lights glittered all around as we exited the elevator and stepped out onto a rooftop restaurant. The city stretched out in all directions as the tuxedo-clad waiter led us to a table surrounded by candles.

'Sir, Madam,' the waiter said, pulling out our chairs for us to sit.

God, the place was super flipping fancy.

'Chef has prepared a midnight menu for you both. Are there any allergies or preferences I should make him aware of?'

I shook my head, and Ewen confirmed the same. 'Just let Eduardo do what he does best.'

'Yes, Sir. Can I bring you the wine list?'

'We'll trust the sommelier's recommendations.'

After the waiter left, I leaned forward and whispered to Ewen. 'What if I use the wrong fork?'

'They couldn't care if you ate it with your fingers. If you're really worried, I could get you to kneel next to me and feed you from my plate?' Dimples showed as I squirmed at his words.

'Why does that sound so hot?'

'Because degradation makes you wet.'

'That's weird, right?'

'No odder than your tears making me hard. People have all sorts of kinks, and as long as everyone involved is on the same page, then it's fine to lean into them.'

A guy in a swish red jacket came to offer us his first chosen wine. I smiled politely as he poured a small amount into both of our glasses while giving a long spiel about what it was. It was white and tasted nice—the rest went right over my head.

'How did you first get into all the, you know, pain stuff?'

Ewen cleared his throat and took a sip of wine. 'As a kid, I always felt kind of overlooked. Like I was there to watch everyone else. I lost my virginity to a woman a few years older who was into being hurt. Choked. Spat on. She liked it rough. When I gave her what she wanted, she looked at me like I was a god. She saw me. That feeling was addictive. As I chased it, I found that I enjoyed inflicting pain, knowing that someone would open themselves to it and still beg me for more. The power is a rush that's hard to find anywhere else.'

A bitter jealousy burned in my stomach at the thought of him with others, and I took a sip of wine.

'Why are you pouting, Cora?'

'I'm jealous.'

'Of?'

'You, being with other women.'

'If I hadn't spent the years learning who I am, I wouldn't have been able to give you what you wanted. They paved the way so that I was ready for you.'

Beneath the grouch, he was such a fucking charmer.

'Did you fuck any of them in your library?'

'No, my jealous little liar, I've never brought anyone else home. I've also never taken any of them on a date before. You're my first.'

'You've never dated?'

'I never understood the compulsion.'

Heat washed through me, and I couldn't help but smile. 'And now you do?'

'I can't imagine not wanting to be around you. Even when we're not fucking. That's very new for me.'

Two hours later, I was feeling giddy from the wine and stuffed with the most delicious food I'd ever tasted.

'Can I take a selfie of us?' I asked. 'I want to remember this. It's the best place I think I've ever been.'

'Not for my sparking company?' Ewen said, leaning back in his chair.

'That too, I guess.'

'Mmm, come get your ass in my lap.'

Sliding onto his lap sent a fresh wave of desire through me. Ewen wrapped a hand around my stomach and pulled me tight to him.

We looked cute on my phone screen as I held it up and got us both in the frame. The candles sparkled behind us as I snapped a photo.

'You're not even looking,' I said as he buried his face in my neck, nipping lightly with his teeth.

'You smell fucking incredible,' he growled. His fingers slid up my thigh and under my dress, stroking against the front of my panties.

Lowering my arm, I stole a glance at the elevator, worried one of the wait staff would appear.

'I didn't tell you to stop taking pictures,' Ewen said as he slipped his fingers beneath my panties and circled my clit. Pain from being so thoroughly fucked gave way, blending with the ripples of pleasure that his gentle touches spread.

I kept taking the photos of us as he licked at my neck, my hips arching against him as he grew hard beneath me. Watching us through the screen was tantalising—dirty.

My breath grew hoarse as he slipped his finger inside me, giving me the pain I so desperately needed despite still being swollen from earlier.

A buzzing from my back made me sit up.

'Ignore it,' he said, pulling me back toward him and sliding his tongue against mine.

After a moment, the vibrating started again.

'Answer it,' I breathed against him.

He kept his fingers inside me as he answered his phone with the other hand.

Biting my lip, I tried to keep quiet even though his fingers were driving me wild.

'What is it, Mac?' he said. He listened for a few minutes before breathing out a "fuck".

'Now?'

Ewen withdrew his fingers and pinched my clit until I yelped, before idly fucking me with his fingers again.

I was a mess in his lap.

'Fine. I'll be there as soon as I can.'

He hung up before taking his fingers from me and pressing them into my mouth. 'Lick them clean, my little slut. I'm going to have to finish this later.'

The way he moaned when I sucked myself from his fingers made me flick my eyes to him.

'Damn, Cora. I'm going to put that filthy little mouth to work as soon as I get back.'

'Where are you going?'

'Duty calls. There's been a situation. I'll drop you home before heading out.'

'Take me with you.'

'Absolutely not.'

I held his hand, toying with his wet fingers. 'I want to see you.'

'Not this way.'

Grazing my fingers against his jaw, I looked into his eyes.

'If you don't let me see all of you, you can't expect me to stay. You need to show me everything. The good, the bad, the criminal. It's the only way I can make an informed decision.'

'What's seen can't be unseen,' he said, leaning into my touch.

'And what's unseen can't be trusted.'

His throat bobbed when he swallowed hard, his eyes searching mine as though trying to find an answer there.

'You might hate me.'

'I might love you if you let me.'

### THIRTY

#### **EWEN**

The metallic scent of blood hit me as soon as I walked into the takeaway shop. Usually, at such a late hour, the smell of fryers and garlic would fill the air, but the shop hadn't opened that day.

The metal counter stood open, and I stopped before going through. Turning to Cora, I took a breath.

'There are dead bodies back there. What you'll see can't be unseen,' I repeated. By walking through that door, you'll be an accessory to whatever happens. This will go unreported to the police.'

White blanched her face as her eyes flicked to the door beyond the counter.

'This is part of you,' she said after a few moments. 'A big part of your life.'

'Yes.'

'It's not just going to be one week, right?'

'A lifetime, I hope.' Admitting it made my stomach clench. If Cora had any sense, she'd run for the hills rather than stay with me.

'I can't promise that. Not yet.' Her voice quivered as she reached out to take my hand.

'I can wait.'

'Then show me this side of you.'

Every step through the building filled me with fear—fear that she wouldn't be able to handle it, but also amazement that she wanted to try.

The smell of death grew stronger the further we entered the back rooms, heading for the walk-in freezer. Mac waited on a stool, his face grim as we approached.

'Who the fuck is she?' he asked.

'She's with me.'

'Nah, man, she shouldn't be here. Fewer witnesses, the better.'

'I trust her.' I said, setting Mac with a glare.

'Fine. But if she pukes, you're the one scrubbing it up.'

He very well knew the clean-up crew would scrub the scene of any evidence. They could hide evidence better than the bloody government.

'Mac, this is Cora. Cora, my brother, Mac.'

'An unfortunate meeting place,' Mac said as he tipped his head toward Cora.

'Indeed,' she breathed.

'Show me.' I shrugged off my suit jacket and hung it on the stool, trying to avoid the layer of grease that permeated everything in the room.

Cora gripped back onto my fingers, her nails digging into my hand.

Mac opened the door to the deep freeze.

Three of our younger recruits were cuffed to the built-in shelving inside. Red stained the floor in great arcs where they must have flailed and thrashed before their deaths—that they were dead wasn't in question. Their blood had frozen to dark ice and crystals clung to their hair and eyebrows. Even their clothing looked stiff as a board.

All three had their feet amputated. A neat pile of limbs lay stacked in the corner. The pain and fear as they sat chained and witnessed each other being mutilated must have been horrific.

'They're so young,' Cora said next to me, her voice sounding far off. 'Who are they?'

'Recruits. Newer members of the organisation.'

'Barely even adults.' Her voice broke, and I wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her in tight against me.

A lump formed in my throat as I saw the scene through her eyes, instead of with the years' worth of hardening the job had caused inside me.

She was right. They were likely no more than twenty years old. Probably kids who'd come from bad upbringings and turned to crime to make ends meet. *Fuck*.

'Edwards?' I said to Mac.

'Yeah.'

'We need to find him.'

'He was here. He didn't swing the cleaver, but he watched every second. Listened to the boys scream and beg. Shut them in to bleed out or freeze, whatever came first. I've got him on the CCTV.'

Cora let out a sob that broke me.

'Get someone scouring every fucking camera in this part of the city. Find him.'

Mac nodded. His security firm had enough hackers that he'd have them on the footage within the hour.

'Did he even take anything?' I asked.

Mac shook his head. 'It was a taunt.'

Cora shivered next to me while she stared at the grisly scene, wideeyed. 'If you don't call the police, what will happen to them?'

'They'll be incinerated. We have access to a crematorium if it's a death that has to be hidden.'

'So why didn't you do that with Seth?'

'He was a message.'

'What about their families? They can't just disappear without a trace.'

Mac gave me a look that said, I told you so.

'They likely don't have strong family connections.'

Cora's nostrils flared as she looked up at me. 'Someone will be waiting for them. Like I was waiting for Ruby. You can't let them just disappear. What if they have siblings? Partners? Children? Make it right, Ewen. I can deal with death, but I won't stick around if you'll treat them like they don't matter. What if one of them was your brother?'

Mac had the decency to look kowtowed, and I followed suit.

'I'll find a way to inform them.'

'And pay them an insurance fee, which helps care for who they left behind? Like the military. I've seen your house. I know you can afford it.' Cora's fists clenched at the side of her pretty evening dress.

'You're right. I'll make amends.' How she reached inside me and twisted me to want to be a better person with barely a look was unfathomable to me.

'I like her,' Mac said. 'She's got a bite.'

# THIRTY-ONE

#### **CORA**

Waking up alone in my bed, I started up at the ceiling.

I'd tried not to let the scene at the takeaway affect me, but how could it not? Not only had I seen dead bodies, but they'd been slaughtered.

How could I become involved with someone who barely flinched at such horror? Who killed others like them?

It was midday by the time Ewen knocked on my door.

'Hey, I thought I'd bring you some toast and coffee,' he said hesitantly, nudging the door open as he balanced a plate on top of the mug.

Sitting up, I tugged the duvet up around my chest and beneath my arms.

'I shouldn't have let you come yesterday.' Ewen placed the plate of buttered toast on my lap and put the coffee on the bedside table. 'I didn't realise how bad it would be.'

'Do you enjoy it?' I asked.

'What?'

'Killing people.'

'No,' he said without a pause. 'Never.'

'What about torturing them? Hurting me gives you a hard-on. Does hurting them do the same?'

'No. It's not the same.'

'The tears are the same. The bruises. The cries.'

Ewen ran a hand through his hair and sighed. 'Taking a life, and torturing someone, takes something from me. It leaves wounds that are

impossible to fill. What we do is different. It's mutual. Consensual. Fun. We both give and take. Submitting willingly is what makes it hot. The fact you allow me to take from you and give to you is what turns me on. There is balance.'

He looked like he'd not slept. Like the night had affected him, too.

'I wouldn't get turned on if you were truly sad. It's not seeing you cry or suffer that I enjoy. It's when you are suffering for me, when you let me hurt you the way you need to get off. I'm not a monster.'

'I think I get it,' I said. His shoulders dipped as he released the tension he must have been holding.

'Thank god,' he whispered, inching closer to me and capturing my hand, pulling my fingers to his lips.

'Can we go see Ruby today?' I asked. 'I need to see she's okay.'

'I'm not sure if they are at the point where she's ready for visitors,' he said between kisses against my fingers.

'I don't have to talk to her. I just need to see her with my own eyes. This is the longest we've ever been apart. We have our problems, but she's the other half of me.'

'Of course. I'll go call the hospital while you dress.'

He stood and smiled. 'But eat your toast first.'

'Yes, Sir.'

The way the muscles in his arms corded made me clench my thighs.

'We won't make it out of the house if you keep that up.'



The hospital looked more like a fancy hotel than any medical centre I'd ever visited. A nurse in a neat, slightly old-fashioned uniform led us through the mahogany-panelled halls and up a flight of polished stairs.

'Your sister is doing a little better today, now that we weaned her,' she said.

'Did you find out what she was taking?'

'It's more a case of what she wasn't. She didn't know what she'd consumed as her boyfriend had been giving her a cocktail of them with no information. She's quite upset that he hasn't reached out to her, but it's for

the best. She's going to need support when she leaves to avoid falling back into the same crowd.'

Wringing my fingers, I nodded.

'She can come stay with us,' Ewen said.

I stared at him.

'What?' He raised a brow.

'We don't live together.'

'We do. You just don't know it yet. I have the space and the staff. I can get a therapist on the books to work with her. Plus, it'll be way harder for her to run into that crowd there.'

The arrogant arsehole.

'I agreed to one week,' I said in a hiss as the nurse walked ahead.

'You did. I've decided that I'm keeping you, though.'

'I'm not a fucking dog.'

Ewen looked at me with a devious smile. 'Bet I could make you bark like one to get my bone.'

I couldn't suppress the snigger that came out.

'Is that a yes?'

'No. But I'll stay until Ruby is better. Although I'm not sure your crowd is any better to fall in with.'

'You'll find out soon enough.'

'What do you mean?' I slowed my pace as the nurse stopped outside a room up ahead.

'My sister has arranged a drinks thing tomorrow at my place. Now that they know I have a woman in the house, they can't resist interfering.'

Meeting his brother the way I did was bad enough. 'I'm not sure I'm ready to meet the family.'

'They'll give us zero choice in the matter. The McGowan clan is an unstoppable force. Plus, you'll be joining me at Logan's party at the club on the weekend, anyway.'

'You're assuming an awful lot about what I'll be doing.'

Ewen stepped toward me and threaded a hand in the hair behind one of my ears, pulling my lips to his. 'If we don't have any distractions, I'll be chaining you to my bed for the next week and filling you with cum again and again until it comes up and leaks out of your fucking nose. And being that you've only just lost your virginity, I'm going to need somewhere to go and something to do before I leave you unable to walk.' If I hadn't been leaning against him, I'd have melted to the floor. Why were the weird things he said so bloody hot?

'Ah, my little slut liked that. Look at you getting all gooey-eyed. Bet your panties are soaked, too.' His tongue darted over his lips, and I tracked its path.

'Jokes on you, Ewen. I'm not wearing any.'

Extracting myself before I tried to fuck him right there in the hospital corridor, I walked toward the nurse, my heart galloping in my chest.

A soft growl followed from behind.

'She's about to go to a group class, so you've only got a few minutes.'

Dark circles lined the bottom of Ruby's eyes, and she looked pale and withdrawn. Her usually glossy hair was lank and piled on top of her head.

'Why is he here?' she said, venom tainting the words.

I hesitated and glanced at Ewen while Ruby let out a feeble laugh. 'Holy shit. You stay a pure little virgin forever, and then fuck that arsehole? What the fuck?'

'I'm sorry,' I started, feeling myself shrivel up in the wake of her ire. The confidence in myself that had been growing flaked away under her hard stare.

'No, she's not,' Ewen said. 'Cora doesn't need to explain herself to you, given your recent life choices. We are here to see how you're doing, but if you are going to hurt her, then we'll be leaving.'

Silence enveloped the room as the tension grew. Ruby narrowed her eyes at Ewen. I'd never stood up to her like that in all of my twenty-nine years.

Her shoulders slumped as she slid her eyes away from us. That wasn't the Ruby I knew.

'How are you doing?' I asked.

'I wish I was dead.'

Her words were like a knife in my chest. Pain rippled through me. 'Don't say that.'

'My skin itches so much I want to rip it off, and I'm sure the nurses are keeping Seth from me. They keep talking to each other in whispers, and they must be plotting something. Get me out. Please?'

Swallowing, I shook my head. 'I can't. They are helping you.'

'They are torturing me. Cora, please? You're my twin. You can't leave me here. I just need a little of something to take the edge off.'

The back of my throat burned. I hated seeing her like this. How had I missed it for so long?'

'You have to stay. It'll feel better soon.'

'Like fuck it will,' Ruby shouted, getting to her feet and sending a jug of water flying off of the dresser next to her. 'Even you're against me.'

'I'm not. I promise.'

Ewen rested a hand on my shoulder and pulled me back toward him as the nurse came in.

'I think it's best if you both go.'

Squeezing my hand, Ewen started toward the door.

'No, Cora! Don't leave me. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.' A sob wracked her words as tears tumbled down my cheeks.

'I'll come back for you,' I said before exiting the room. A guttural scream echoed out into the hall before the door closed.

Ewen's arms engulfed me, pressing my face to his chest as my shoulders quaked.

'She has to go through it. It's the only way. You can't rid yourself of the demons if you dodge them.'

'I know,' I whispered. It didn't mean that seeing her like that hurt any less.

'C'mon, let's get you home.'

## THIRTY-TWO

### **EWEN**

'I've got something for you,' I said as we stepped inside the mansion. The butler took our coats and tidied them away as I led Cora through the mansion.

'What is it?'

She'd been quiet since we left the hospital and during lunch. Seeing her smile was a need I didn't realise could overwhelm me so.

'A gift.'

'You don't have to keep buying me things,' she said, gripping tighter to my fingers as we made our way around the house.

'I can't think of a single thing I enjoy spending money on more.'

'I mean it. I can't afford to lavish you with gifts.'

'Your attention is all I need.'

Cora smiled as a pink flush warmed her cheeks. 'And I'll find a way to pay you back for the fancy hospital, too.'

'Absolutely not going to accept your money.'

'Probably good seeing as I don't have much.'

'You can pay me back with your hot little mouth if you really insist.'

'It would take a lot of blow jobs to cover the hospital stay.'

'I'll never say no,' I said, giving her a wink.

She opened the door to her room, and I followed her inside.

'Is your cock the gift?' she joked.

'If you want it to be.'

A large white gift box sat on her bed, complete with an oversized red ribbon. I'd had the staff arrange it after we left. Hopefully, it was the right one for her.

Cora's eyes glittered, and she bit her lip with excitement.

'Go on, open it.' Joy surged in my chest at her pleasure.

She sat neatly beside it and took her time opening the ribbon before slipping the lid off. Eyes as wide as dinner plates, she looked up at me. 'You didn't!'

'Is it okay? If it's not, I can take you to switch it—'

I didn't manage to finish the sentence before she was on me, mashing her lips to mine between a myriad of mumbled "thank yous".

Sliding my tongue against hers, I revelled in her happiness. It made me giddy and lightheaded as though I'd consumed ten bottles of champagne. She was my all-natural high.

'Can I try it out?' she said when I begrudgingly let her slip from my arms.

'It's yours. You can do whatever you want with it.'

Leaning against the bedpost, I watched as she pulled the state-of-the-art camera from the box and a selection of the very best lenses I could buy on short notice.

'You got a Canon, too. It's my favourite brand.'

'I know,' I said with a smile.

Cora pursed her lips at me before laughing. 'Of course you do. It's a good thing you're so bloody hot, you know.'

'You think I'm hot?' I'd seen how she'd reacted to me, but she'd never told me she found me attractive.

A blush flashed across her face. 'Yeah. From the first moment we met, you made me feel all swoony. And then, when you stopped being so stony-faced, and I saw those dimples of yours? I thought I was going to short circuit.'

Tingles of satisfaction crept up my spine at her words.

'Hurry up and play with your camera so I can be inside you again.'

Pupils dilating, she tucked a strand of hair behind her ear before pushing a memory card into the camera and loading the battery in.

'Maybe...' Her breath hitched. 'Maybe you can be inside me while I test it out.'

Fuck.

'You want to take dirty pictures?' I practically growled.

She nodded.

'Clothes off.'

We both stripped to nothing before she picked up the camera and joined me in the centre of the room.

'You're so fucking beautiful,' I said as I fit her in front of me, facing the mirror. 'And I want to see you dripping with my cum. It's tortured me since the last time I was inside you. I dream of touching you every second I'm not.'

Holding up the camera, she tinkered with the settings as I licked my way up her neck. Our eyes met in the mirror before she held up the camera, and it went off with an audible click.

Reaching around her, I palmed her tits, rolling her dark nipples between my fingers and making her tremble.

Pinching down hard, I dragged a cry from her as the shutter clicked again.

'I fucking love it when you cry.'

'Don't stop,' she panted, arching her back as I soothed her nipples. The way her ass ground against me had my dick nudging her in the back.

I pushed a hand to her neck and gripped the sides, tilting her so I could access her mouth. Clicks accompanied her whimpers. Her sweet mouth drove me mad. I needed more of her. *All of her*.

Moving my hand into her hair, I gripped it roughly and tipped her head back while wrapping my other arm around her waist and pressing my fingers between her thighs.

'My dirty cock whore's soaked already.'

'I love it when you touch me.'

'Are you still sore?'

'A little.'

'I don't think I'm going to be gentle with you.' Every muscle in my body ached as I fought with the need to fill her.

'I don't want gentle. Make me hurt.'

Bending her roughly with the fist in her hair, I lined myself up with her cunt before wrapping my arm back around her waist. With one deep thrust, I entered her as she cried out. The shutter clicked even while she struggled to take me.

'This is home for me,' I grunted. 'Right here inside you. There's no other place for me.'

'Show me,' she panted.

I pulled back until I was only just inside her and watched her face in the mirror as I thrust back into her.

So fucking tight.

My balls leapt at the single thrust, and I moaned.

'I want to see,' she gasped when I pounded into her for a third time. Letting go of her hair, I slid my arms beneath her knees and picked her up while spreading her wide.

Our reflection was fucking delicious.

'Look at your pretty little cunt stretching for me.'

Arching my hips, I thrust deep, watching my cock disappear.

'Fuck,' she whispered before taking more photos. Sweat gathered along her spine as she slid one arm over her shoulder and gripped me behind the neck.

It wasn't enough. I needed more purchase.

Dropping to my knees, I put her on the floor in front of me and thrust into her from behind, my fingers digging into her hips.

'Oh,' she whimpered when I scooped my hips at the end of each thrust, filling her to bursting.

The camera lay to the side, abandoned, her focus purely on the sensation between her legs.

Slapping her hard enough for her ass to instantly pink up brought the tears.

'That's it, baby. Cry for me. Do you want me to fill your pretty cunt with cum?'

'Yes, Sir. I need it.'

'You're lucky you're on birth control because I want to keep you filled with cum. My own little breeder. Waiting in my bed and begging to be filled night after night. You'd let me, wouldn't you?'

'I'd do anything for you.'

'For me, or for more cock, Cora?' My breathing was harsh as I pounded into her, her pussy clenching over me.

'Both. For whatever you give me.'

'I'm going to give you the fucking world.'

Grabbing her around the chest, I pulled her up against me and drove into her at a punishing pace.

The way her body trembled pushed me onward, my balls slapping against her with every harsh thrust.

Reaching down, I pinched her clit roughly between my fingers. The pain made her writhe in my arms.

I slapped my hand against her wet cunt before rubbing at her clit. It tipped her over the edge. I watched in the mirror as her face contorted, and a red flush filled her chest.

'That's it, my little slut. Come all over my dick.'

My mind exploded along with my dick as her pussy clamped down and dragged my orgasm from me. Holding her body tight, I fucked her up and down on my cock, letting out a groan in the process. Sheer ecstasy wrapped around me as I lost all sense of anything but her fevered body pressed against me, and the sweet little yelps she made when she came for me. Kissing her shoulder, I placed her back on the floor, rolling her to her back. Standing on wobbly legs, I picked up her camera.

'Spread for me,' I demanded.

Her thighs opened, and my cum leaked from her pussy. She held them wide while I pressed the trigger button.

The tears, the messy cunt, my finger marks on her hips. Picture perfect.

# THIRTY-THREE

#### CORA

Soft jazz music filled the decadent lounge. Ewen passed me a glass of champagne, and I took a sip, the bubbles dancing against my tongue.

'You look nervous,' he said, trailing his fingers over my bare shoulder.

'I am.'

Leaning down, he pressed his lips to my ear. "Maybe you need a distraction?"

Walking away, he sat in a leather armchair before patting his leg.

'Come, sit.'

I rose, running a hand down over the tiny crinkles in my skater-style dress. It was a deep red with a host of fluted frills, which gave the skirt body. I'd fallen in love with it the moment I'd tried it on. It filled me with the most feminine feel. My heels clipped on the wooden floor as I crossed over to Ewen and sat lightly on the edge of his knee.

'They are going to love you,' he said, tracing a finger up my spine. 'How could they not? You're smart, beautiful, funny, driven, and selfless.'

Pleasure warmed my stomach at his words. Did he really think that?

'There's just so many of them.'

'All the better. They'll just argue with one another and let you be.'

'Is Alfie coming, too?'

'Sure is.'

'Do you think he'll tell them about what we did?' At least the stained rug had disappeared, being replaced with a similar one the day after our

session.

'No, he might be a gobshite, but he can be discreet. He's a pretty good guy.'

Ewen's chin had a shadow on it, and I reached out, dragging my fingers along the dark stubble.

'I like this. Do you think it would burn against my thighs?'

'Dirty girl,' he said with a grin. 'You can find out later if you like.'

Fitting me against him, he kissed me softly. 'The urge to kiss you the way I want to is killing me.'

'Why don't you?' I wanted nothing more.

'You'll end up with lipstick all over your face and mine.'

'Shame,' I whispered while running my fingers down his chest and scraping them over his groin. Stiff as a fucking baseball bat.

Using my nails, I caressed the head of his dick. The way he groaned got me wet.

'My perfect slut. You're going to get yourself in trouble doing that.'

With a grin, I slid his zip down and freed his cock.

'Would it look pretty covered in my lipstick?' I asked, widening my eyes before fluttering my lashes.

'You little devil,' he growled. 'It'll look better covered in your mascaraladen tears and snot when I fuck that dirty mouth of yours.'

I squeaked when he manhandled me onto his lap, with my ass pressed against his stomach. Roughly, he pulled my panties to the side and forced his big dick deep inside.

'Oh, my god,' I whimpered as I adjusted to the sudden invasion.

'This is how you should always sit, with your sweet little pussy keeping me warm. My personal cock-warmer.'

Arching my hips made him breathe out the word "fuck" in my ear—the way he said it sent a shiver of delight through me.

A cacophony of voices crashed into the room, and I looked up, aghast, as multiple people came into the room. Panic washed through me as I went to move.

'If you stand up, they'll all see my wet cock and know what you've been doing. Is that what you want?'

I shook my head as my face burned.

'Then stay still like a good girl and smile sweetly.'

'Ewen! This must be your lovely lady friend. Mac told me all about you. I'm Katie, Mac's wife. It's so nice to meet you.' Katie spoke quickly, her words warm and inviting.

How the fuck do you meet someone's family while he's balls deep inside you?

Ewen relaxed back in the chair and took a sip of his champagne.

'Nice to meet you too,' I said as Mac followed behind Katie.

'Good to see you guys,' Ewen said over my shoulder.

'Where should we pop the food? We all brought different takeouts to save the chef cooking.'

'You two can set it out in the dining room. We'll eat there when the others arrive.'

Ewen shifted slightly, sliding deeper into me, and I let out a yelp.

Mac raised a brow, and I was convinced my face must have been the colour of beetroot. Him not knowing his brother was inside me sent a deliciously awful ripple of pleasure through me.

Two could play that game.

Clenching down hard around his cock, I smiled, hearing a low grunt escape him, his fingers digging into my hips.

Mac and Katie walked out with the bags of food. The moment they left, Ewen gripped the back of my neck and thrust hard inside me.

'I ought to fill you with cum and make you sit through dinner with sodden panties.' His words make me whimper.

'You want that, don't you, my dirty girl?'

'No,' I said, but I clenched again. Hard.

'Don't make a fucking noise,' Ewen said as he pounded into me with a furious pace.

Holy fucking shit.

Wrapping his arms around my waist, he fucked me fast, my nails clawing the couch's arms.

Letting out a whine had him slamming one hand over my mouth while he screwed me in his lap.

'Clench that fucking cunt for me. Show me how badly you need to be filled, baby.'

Pleasure shot through me as I squeezed him. Not enough for me to come. I needed more friction and pain for that.

With a grunt, he froze, hot cum filling me while he panted against my back. Sliding out of me, he lifted my hips and righted my panties.

'You'll keep me in there until I say otherwise. I want to be leaking down your fucking thighs all night. And when they all go, I'm going to clean you up with my tongue until I make you scream my name. Understood?'

'Yes, Sir,' I breathed. As I stood, I could feel the cum pooling in the gusset of my underwear, slipping against me.

Ewen neatened himself up before standing and taking my hand.

'It's going to taunt me all night knowing you're full of fresh cum. Every time I look at you, I'm going to want to slip below the table and taste us in your pussy. Whenever you see me looking, you'll know that that's what I'm thinking about.'

By the time everyone arrived, my cheeks were flushed, trying to keep up with five conversations at once.

Our home had never been busy. Never felt fit to burst. But the McGowan siblings and their partners were a lively bunch.

Logan and Valentina came with a bottle of the most potent tasting rhubarb wine. It was stronger than anything I'd ever tasted, and the small glass I'd stomached left me feeling tipsy. Valentina had excitedly told me all about their homestead in the hills and invited us down for a weekend. Maeve gave off some serious badass vibes. She was elegant and gentle, but there was a steel that underlined everything she said. Whenever Cam spoke to her, she softened. She looked at him like he was the most amazing thing she'd ever seen. When Ewen said they'd been together for a few years, I could hardly believe it. Mac and Katie were fun together, too. She spoke with an effervescence that made it impossible not to love her. Mac kept touching her back absent-mindedly as though checking that she really existed. Lastly, Alec and Esther. Tanned and relaxed, despite having two young children. They had that easy sort of relationship that spoke of having gone through shit together, and it only made them more solid.

I wanted what they all had.

And I wanted it with Ewen.

Butterflies filled my stomach as I glanced to my right. He was looking at me with that intense stare of his. My mind fell straight into my sodden panties, and he grinned. He knew his plan was working.

'The kids stayed with Eva, Jock, and Gladys. We thought about bringing them, but we would have needed to get sitters in while we were at the party, so it just made sense,' Esther was saying to Maeve.

'Elias and Grace would have watched them. Although they're still pissed because I won't let them come. I don't care if they are legally adults now, there's no way they need to be in their uncle's sex club. Not on my watch.' Maeve took a sip of the rhubarb wine and worked very hard not to wince at the taste.

'Yeah, right,' Alfie said as he walked into the room and shucked off his coat, not even pausing as he reached over and grabbed a slice of pizza. 'You two just want to get at it in public, I bet.'

'Alfie,' Cam said with an exasperated sigh.

'Where've you been?' Ewen asked, glancing at his watch.

'Had a date.'

'In that case, I'm surprised you're here at all,' Logan added.

'She was kind of a dick. And not even in the good, mean girl kind of way. She sent her meal back three times. No-one's got time for that.'

I couldn't help but smile at their easy conversation. It felt like stepping in and getting to spy on someone else's family up close. I'd always thought my family was the way all families were. Stilted. Awkward. Battling. Though the McGowans teased and argued, they all seemed genuinely fond of each other, and even the spouses and Alfie.

'You okay?' Ewen asked, wrapping his arm around my waist and dragging my chair closer to his.

'More than okay. They're wonderful.'

His dimples deepened as a grin broke out on his face.

'So what's going on here?' Katie asked, pressing her chin into her hand as she cocked her head at us.

'Oh, um,' I stammered.

'She's swept him off his feet,' Alfie said before swigging the wine. 'Fuck me, what is this shit?'

Everyone laughed as Logan looked sheepish.

'It's the first batch. Lessons were learned.'

Ewen pressed his mouth to my ear while everyone was distracted.

'I can't live without you. That's what's happened. Please, say you'll stay.'

'There's nowhere else I'd rather be,' I whispered.

## THIRTY-FOUR

### **EWEN**

Having Cora there with my family made me feel complete, like some broken part of me I'd always been missing had clicked into place.

Was I in love?

For the longest time, I hadn't thought myself capable.

I'd looked at my siblings losing their minds over their partners and thought lust had blinded them. At first, maybe it had. But there was so much more beneath the surface. Being near Cora made me want to be a better man. I wanted to impress her. To please her. The deep obsession was there, the need to possess her. To consume her. But there was an innate desire to protect and cherish. To bring her to the brink sexually, but be there to catch her and bring her back after.

After we'd said our goodbyes to the others, I walked her slowly back to her room.

'Show me your room,' she said, leaning heavily against my arm, both hands clinging to my left one.

'Only if you'll stay.' My pulse quickened.

'Can I?'

'Baby, if you could fit in my pocket, I'd have you live there. Yes. I want you in my bed.'

'Fair warning, I think I'm too tired to have you eat me. Your family is amazing, but boy, it was exhausting keeping up with all the conversations.'

'I'll allow a reprieve until morning.'

After stopping to grab her toiletries, I led her upstairs. My room overlooked the grand staircase and the entry hall, and she gasped when I opened the door.

The room was sleek, stylish, and massive. I watched as her eyes took in the huge mirrored wall behind the bed and the metallic loops that were fitted about the place. Lastly, they fell to the rug, which was wholly out of place.

'Is that the...' her voice wore off as she blushed.

'The rug where I made you mine. I couldn't leave it there. Jealousy would have driven me mad every time I saw someone looking at it.'

Cora walked over and placed her toiletries on a low table, her fingers grazing over yet more metal fittings.

'Entertain here often?' she asked. Was that a flare of anger in her eyes? Envy?

'No. Never. I stayed up all night fitting them myself the day you moved in.'

'Why?'

'Because I knew I was keeping you.'

'In chains?'

'Only if you're very well-behaved. Now get your perfect little arse in the bathroom and get ready for bed.' If her dress wasn't so flouncy, I'd have taken the opportunity to slap it.

'I don't have any pyjamas,' she said.

'Good. Me either.'

Ten minutes later, I pulled her against me, her hand settling on my chest as she threw a thigh over my leg.

Sliding a hand into her hair, I played with the silken strands. Her sigh of happiness made me smile.

'Are you looking forward to Logan's party?' she asked before yawning.

'I'm dreading it less now that I'll have you there.'

'Brimming with enthusiasm, I see.'

'One of our hackers has found a solid lead that might get us to Edwards. On Sunday, we need to apply pressure to find his hiding place.'

'By "apply pressure", do you mean...?'

'Nothing good. But I can't risk more of my boys. You were right to remind me they might not come from strong families, but they still matter. They died for a feud someone has with my family. I need to end it.' 'Will you be okay?' Her voice was barely a whisper against my chest.

'Yes.'

'Do you promise?'

I couldn't.

'Do you think I'm going to miss out on a single day of being right here with you? Never.'

'Man, I never took you for the soppy type,' Cora said with a giggle.

'You're a terrible influence. But if you prefer, I'm not going to miss out on a single day of plundering that divine little cunt of yours.'

The whimper she gave made me smile.

That's my girl.

\*\*\*

By the middle of the night, my balls were heavy, and I couldn't sleep. Being next to her was exquisite torture and sleep evaded me.

Sliding down the bed, I spread her thighs and inhaled her scent. Fucking delicious. Cora slept on as I licked my way up her slit, wetting her thoroughly. Would my touches invade her sleep?

Pushing my tongue deep inside her, I grinned as she let out a sweet sigh and arched against me. I'd never needed to please a woman as much as I needed to please her. Bringing her to orgasm felt even better than coming myself.

Grinding my dick into the mattress, I continued to lap at her, pausing whenever she'd shift, letting her settle back into sleep before I kept going. I hummed against her, my erection growing painfully with every lick. I'd live and die quite happily between her thighs.

When I couldn't hold back anymore, I moved up the bed, pinning her to my chest and pressing a hand over her mouth. Bliss spread through me as I aligned my dick with her soaked cunt. Her ass nudged against my stomach while I used my other hand to spread her wide over my thigh.

'My sweet cock whore,' I crooned, pushing myself inside her. 'That's it, love. Take it all. Shh, shhh. No need to wake up. I'm going to use you as I need.'

Cora let out a whimper when my balls hit her vulva.

'Don't worry baby. You can sleep. I know you're tired. I'll just fill you full of cum while you dream.'

Thrusting slowly, I lost myself in the sensations of her heat—being inside her made me feel whole. The world felt right when I was that close to

her.

Within minutes, her soft moans had turned to fevered whimpers as she woke fully impaled on my dick.

'Ewen,' she mumbled beneath the hand that covered her mouth.

'I need you right now,' I growled in her ear.

She arched her arse against me as I slammed into her. But my pain slut would need more than a quick fuck to get off.

'Do you trust me?' I whispered in her ear.

She nodded against my hand.

'I'm going to control your breath. I'll push you until it makes your head swim before letting you get any air. Whatever I say or do, you need to trust that I'll keep you safe. Okay?'

Letting go of her mouth while I thrust into her again, I awaited her answer.

'Take what you need, Sir. Even my breath.'

### THIRTY-FIVE

**CORA** 

Waking up impaled by him gave me a heady rush. Knowing that he couldn't wait until morning made me feel wanted in a way that gave me butterflies. Ewen's hot breath tickled my neck as he filled me with deep thrusts, and my nerve endings were on fire.

Letting him control me in bed turned me on, but down to my breath? Could I handle it?

His fingers covered my mouth, the thumb and pointer finger fitting over my nose.

'Deep breath, Cora.'

Obeying him, I took a lungful of air before he snapped his fingers closed and cut off my air supply.

With a growl, he quickened his thrusts. At first, I simply held my breath, enjoying the sensations he wrought within me. Soon enough, an ache formed in my chest, and I instinctively tried to breathe.

But I couldn't.

Ewen held me tight as he continued to fuck me.

'Oh, baby. Do you want me to let you have some air? I might keep you plugged until I come. That's it, fight me. Fight for breath.'

I writhed against him as the ache turned to a burning sensation in my chest. Panic rose before he pulled his hand away and let me take a long breath. His hand slammed back over my face a moment later and started the cycle again.

'You can go longer,' he said before biting my shoulder. The pain mingled with the panic, and I could hear how sopping wet I was as he thrust into me. Pressure built inside of me as I struggled for air.

'Touch your pretty cunt. You're not getting a breath until you come over my cock.'

My hand flew between my legs, drifting down over my entrance as his cock slid past my fingers, claiming me. I'd never come from touching myself. What if I couldn't?

Making quick, desperate circles around my clit, I slammed back against him, meeting his thrusts with force. My lungs were on fire.

'Good girl. Now you've got a choice. Come, or run out of breath.'

My vision fuzzed at the edges. The panic grew, and I touched myself fervently, so close to coming, but equally close to passing out.

'Come or die, baby. It's your choice.' His voice was rough and throaty. He sounded as on edge as I.

The room dimmed. My vision swam before me while my fingers slid across my swollen clit.

*Shit, what if I died?* 

My orgasm ripped through me with a mighty intensity. My pussy clamped down on him, and he dropped his hand from my mouth, letting me take in big gulps of air. After being denied it, the breath only added to the orgasm, leaving me reeling as he flipped me to my stomach and fucked me into the bed with harsh strokes. The fear and panic had pushed me to new heights. It couldn't be normal.

His thick forearms were on either side of my head, corded and veined as he came roaring into my ear. Hot lips met my neck when the thrusts slowed, filling me with hot cum.

'God, you're fucking outstanding,' he panted against my hair.

I couldn't talk—I could barely think.

Ewen rolled us over, gathering me up against his chest while keeping his dick deep inside of me.

We lay there in a communion of panting breaths until our heart rates slowed to a normal beat.

'Are you okay?' he whispered.

'Stunned, I think.'

'Did you enjoy it?'

'Yes,' I said, running my fingers over the arm he had slung around my waist. 'More than is healthy. You told me to come or die, and it made me come so fucking hard. That can't be okay.'

'You trusted me with your life, Cora. And while I can assure you I'll never do anything to hurt you, your body doesn't know that. Why do you think adrenaline junkies jump out of planes or climb buildings without harnesses? The thrill. Humans crave it. This is no different.'

'It did feel amazing.'

'Good girl. I'm proud of you. I've introduced a lot in the past few days, and you've taken it all.'

'So am I good at sex?' I said, grinning.

'You're good at everything. I'm utterly affected by your very existence.'

A warmth spread through me at his words. Despite my initial intentions to leave after the week, I was as enamoured with Ewen as he seemed to feel the same way. I couldn't imagine going back to how everything was before. I had no idea what my future held, but I wanted it to be by his side. He was an enigma. Strong and protective, yet loved to consume my tears. Cold and brooding, yet sweet and generous.

'Now get your lovely arse to the bathroom and have a wee before you get a UTI,' he said, sliding out of me. 'You've got five minutes before I come and find you if you're not right back here where you belong.'

Belong.

The word made me melt.

I'd never belonged anywhere.

# **THIRTY-SIX**

#### **EWEN**

Bodies swayed in the colourful lights as music filled the club. Cora sat next to Katie at the table where most of my family gathered. They chatted enthusiastically while sipping cocktails, their smiles brimming.

Happiness flooded me.

We had all the time in the world. Not only a week. It might get hard when Ruby moved in after her hospital stay, but whatever happened, I'd be there for Cora.

Mac sidled up next to me and followed my gaze to our girls.

'She fits in well,' he said. 'You look happier than I've seen you in forever.'

'I don't think I believed it could be so good. When you all met your partners, I kind of thought you'd all lost your minds.'

'We did,' Mac said with a laugh. 'Love'll do that to you.'

Love.

It had only been a few weeks. I had an obsession. Then, a desire. Could I be in love with her so soon?'

The way my heart leapt inside my chest told me I could.

'We need to take care of Edwards. I don't know what his endgame is, but if he comes after us, they could get hurt.'

'Tomorrow. Tonight, let's focus on the good stuff.'

'Your men are at the doors?'

'I've got thirty guys in the building. All armed. Everyone who comes in is being checked for any weapons or drugs. There's no sign of anything amiss. Our intelligence on Edwards tells us he only has a handful of men in his service now. He'd be an idiot to try to take out thirty armed guards as well as us.'

Letting my shoulders relax, I nodded. 'You're right. C'mon, let's go join everyone.'

'Happy birthday.' I slapped Logan on the back, and he pulled me into a hug.

'Thanks for hosting, Ewen. Everything is perfect.'

Following his sweeping gaze, I smiled.

It was perfect. My family was all under the same roof. Our friends and business partners were laughing and having a great time. Well, everyone except Alfie. Where the fuck was he?

'Glad I could help,' I said. 'Feels pretty great having everyone back together. Shame it can't be more often.'

'There's not a chance in hell Esther's going to move back to Glasgow. Who can blame her? They might not be in a mansion, but they get far more sun than we do.'

'And what about you? Are you still loving life as a country bumpkin? Don't you ever regret handing over the reins to Maeve?'

'I couldn't be happier if I tried. Haven't regretted a thing since Valentina made her way into my arms.' Logan's eyes creased as he grinned.

'Sappy git.'

'Seems to me like I'm not the only one. You're a lot less of a miserable fuck when your girl's around.'

'I can't help it. She does things to me, man.' Makes me want to be better.

'I don't need the details.' Logan winked as I rolled my eyes.

Valentina appeared, holding a cake that looked very much homemade. All the money we could need, and she was baking cakes herself. Logan beamed at her as the music dimmed, and we sang.

Mid happy-birthdays, Cora slipped her arm around my waist and beamed up at me. When Logan blew out the candles, we both cheered.

As the music came back on, I took her hand and steered her toward the dance floor.

'I thought you didn't dance?' she said.

'I don't. But I'll hold you while you do.'

Slipping her hands over my shoulders while I gathered her against me at the waist, we moved to the music. The coloured lights danced in her eyes, and I could have lost myself in them.

The sweet smell of her perfume drew me to her, and I grazed my lips over hers.

I wanted to tell her I loved her, that I couldn't explain how I'd fallen so hard, so fast, but that I wanted to be her person—to watch her grow and succeed.

The words burned in my throat, and when she rested her head against my chest as we swayed, I pushed them back down.

What if it scared her off?

The way I'd gone about our relationship had been wholly unhinged. I didn't regret a single second of it, but what if she wasn't ready?

If she didn't feel the same intensity?

Beside the bar, over Cora's shoulder, I saw Rob pull out what looked like a gas mask. Some kinksters enjoyed them as part of a scene, but it wasn't his usual get-up. He was due to perform his shibari act for the guests at any moment. Creasing my brows, I watched him as he checked his watch.

'Cora, give me a minute. I just need to go see what Rob's up to.'

Cora blinked up at me as if she didn't understand.

'Are you okay?'

'I can't feel my legs.'

Panic hit as she stumbled against me, and I caught her in my arms, lowering her to the floor.

'What's happening?' she asked. All around me, people started to stumble and fall.

Rob.

The mask.

There had to be something affecting everyone.

'Logan, Mac!' I shouted. 'Get everyone out.'

Laying Cora down gently as bile filled my throat, I charged toward Rob. Every step I took felt like I was wading through a treacle, and step by step, my charge slowed to a walk. Then, to a stumble.

My knees hit the floor hard, but there was no pain—just numbness.

Tipping to my side, I fell and couldn't move a muscle. Trying to yell produced a pitiful groan. My arms and legs felt entirely disconnected from my body when I tried to move them.

Cora.

I had to get to Cora.

Try as I might, I couldn't.

Rob kicked open a fire escape moments later, cold air sweeping over me.

A group of men—maybe ten—filtered in, gas masks on.

I recognised Edwards even beneath the mask.

Tinny laughter echoed while he surveyed the scene with glee. His footsteps vibrated along the floor as he walked toward me.

Sweat gathered over my skin as I fought against my body, willing it to move.

'I should kill you and your brothers right now. Run you through as you lay there helpless. Fill your head with bullets.' Edwards' voice dripped with anger.

Pulling out a gun, I felt the cold barrel press against my forehead. 'One slip of the finger, and you'd no longer be a problem.'

My body trembled as I fought against whatever gas he'd doused us with. Nothing worked. My pulse thundered as he primed the gun.

'Look at you. So fucking useless. You see, I know that you McGowan's fucking hate feeling useless. Your father was the same way. Unfortunately, he made enough enemies to last you all several lifetimes. Your brother and his slut of a wife pushed me too far.'

Edwards removed the gun and bent lower so his spit hit me with every word he said.

'I'm going to take your women, and I'm going to brutalise them. You're going to spend the next few days suffering. Not knowing which part of whom will arrive in a box next. I'll torture them until they beg for mercy, and I'm going to stream it all live on the dark web. You won't be able to avoid watching as each of them is fucked, destroyed, and killed. When I've torn everyone you love apart, I'll be back to kill each one of you uppity fucks. And with the McGowans and Thompsons gone in one fell swoop, Scotland will be mine for the taking.'

A man walked past, Cora slung over his shoulder. Her eyes were wide and panicked as she found me on the floor.

My scream lodged silently in my throat. I lay and watched as he took them all. Cora. Katie. Esther. Maeve. Valentina. Molly. *Gone*.

# THIRTY-SEVEN

**CORA** 

Being unable to move was terrifying. I could feel sweat dripping down my spine when a man forced me into position against the wall.

The effects of whatever they'd immobilised me with must have been wearing off, as the handcuffs he used to secure me to the wall bit sharply at my wrists.

'Look at this. Six little ducks sitting in a row.' The man who spoke grinned as his eyes roved over us. 'Not so tough now, are we?'

The henchman had left my legs spread, and I desperately wanted to close them to protect myself from his lecherous view. My skin crawled as the ringleader walked along the line, taking his time to inspect each of us.

Crouching down, he gripped my cheeks between his fingers, pinching until I tasted blood. When I whimpered, he gave a hearty laugh.

'Oh, we're going to have fun with you all.'

A cold sweat prickled over my skin as I squeezed my eyes shut, doing all I could to block him out.

When he moved away, I opened my eyes and moved my head a fraction. Valentina sat next to me, and her voice came in a croaky whisper as he knelt in front of her.

'Logan should have killed you when he had the chance, Edwards.'

My eyes widened as I connected the dots. This was the man who had murdered Ewen's men. Dizziness washed over me as the image of them strung up, just like we were, flashed through my mind. Fuck.

Holy fuck.

They weren't going to be lenient. It wasn't going to be a ransom situation. We were either bait or revenge. Probably both.

Sheer panic rose inside me. I couldn't move; I couldn't fight. That meant Ewen probably couldn't yet, either. Help wasn't coming.

Edwards' face broke into a sadistic grin as he tore Valentina's dress right down the front, revealing the bra beneath. The men behind him leered.

'I should have fucked you when I had the chance at Rosenhall. You and that cunt Logan have been playing happy families while I had to have my fucking face put back together. This is your fault. I've loathed the McGowans and Thomsons for years, but you are the reason I've spent the past year building to this moment. But what to do with you?'

He slid his fingers into the cup of her bra and licked his lips as she tried to move. Barely a twitch of her legs.

'I could kill you. Send you back to him piece by piece. Or I could keep you here, surrounded by your family's rotting corpses, and use you as a little broodmare. We could have a game and take turns stuffing you full of cum until you catch a baby. Imagine Logan's reaction if we sent you back bursting with a child while being driven mad by your decaying friends. It would be fucking glorious.'

Maeve was next. He didn't hold back and went straight in, lathing his tongue against her cheek. 'The chief cunt of Glasgow. Cameron's first mistake was letting you walk all over him. A fucking woman in charge. All your father's hard work squandered. I think I'll enjoy degrading you the most. Starve you until you beg for a mouthful of cum.'

When he tried to lick her again, Maeve lashed out, grabbing his ear between her teeth and biting down. He cried out, red washing over them as he pulled away, the terrible wet sound of ripping flesh filling the space. Pressing his hand against his ear, he kicked her hard in the stomach. The top of his ear splattered against the floor. Pure rage filled him as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a knife. Using his bloody hand, he held her firmly by the hair as he punctured her stomach three times with the blade. My chest felt like it was caving as I struggled to take a breath.

Valentina screamed where we could not. Maeve sobbed as blood trickled down her dress, three gushing scarlet waterfalls.

Sniffles and whimpers came from further down the line, where Molly, Esther, and Katie sat restrained.

'You are all going to die here. Slowly. Painfully. And without a hope in hell of seeing daylight again.'

Edwards seethed before stooping to pick up the detached ear and storming out of the door. His men followed closely behind, and shock hit me as I recognised one of them as Rob, the rigger from the club. The door slammed behind them, and we were alone in the dank basement-like room.

'Maeve,' Valentina whispered. 'They'll come for us. I know they will.'

With them gone, my eyes flitted around the room, looking for anything that could help us. It was stripped bare, with a dirty mattress in one corner, and the door leading out. No windows. No weapons. Nothing.

Small black boxes punctuated the ceiling, and when they started blinking red, coldness swept through me.

We were on camera.

# THIRTY-EIGHT

### **EWEN**

Every single second unable to move was absolute torture. My muscles corded every time I tried, but it was fruitless.

With a groan, Logan moved first. Pulling himself to his feet on wobbly legs, he rested against a table for support.

'I'm going to fucking kill him,' he said, his voice hoarse.

One by one the others came to, until I was one of the few still incapacitated. Time ticked on, and each minute physically hurt.

'We need to get to them fast,' Cam said, his face gashed where he'd hit himself falling.

'How?' Logan paced. 'How the fuck can we get to them?'

One of the large screens on the far wall that we rarely used flickered on. It was like a punch to the gut when Edwards crouched in front of Maeve and licked her.

I sought out Cora, seeing her chained to the wall on the right of the screen. My body burned with the need to get up and get to her.

There was no sound, but Edwards stumbled back, clutching his ear as a black liquid poured down his neck on the black-and-white image. Maeve spat out something fleshy, which must have been a part of his ear.

But the relief I felt at her fighting back was short-lived since Edwards pulled out a knife and stabbed my little sister. Pain bloomed inside me as her face contorted in pain. The noise Cam made haunted me. A deep, animalistic howl of rage.

Edwards meant every word he said. He wanted us to suffer, and he'd found our deepest weakness. The women we adored.

Tears pricked Cam's face as Mac pulled him into his arms, turning him from the screen.

'We'll get them. She'll be okay,' he said, his voice choking up.

Alec was on the phone barking at someone to trace the stream. It would take too long. I had to get up. Had to tell them I could find her.

My phone was in my pocket. Her location would be there. Sweating, I made my hand move a tiny amount.

Logan saw me twitch and made his way to me among the others who were in various stages of stirring.

'Fuck, Ewen. We need you, man.'

It was like an anvil was on top of my tongue as I tried to talk. I managed an illegible mumble despite my neck straining with the effort.

'You're almost there. It only took me a few minutes once I could move a little.'

Logan pulled me up to sit, my vision blurring as the room seemed to shift. Then, it was like invisible chains released.

'Easy,' Logan said as I moved jerkily, not in control of my newly awakened limbs.

'Get... my... phone.' The words slurred, but Logan nodded. He pushed it out of my pocket and held it up to my face to unlock it.

'Find Cora,' I mumbled.

'We will,' he said.

'No. On my phone.'

His brows knitted before he flicked through my apps, finding the one dedicated to her.

'The tracker.'

'You've got her on a fucking tracker?' he said, looking at me, aghast.

'Be fucking thankful.' My voice was strengthening by the second, and I reached out and took the phone. Typing in a code brought her location up. They were barely thirty minutes away.

I glanced back at the TV screen as Edwards walked into the room, followed by Rob and two other men. A dark-tinged bandage wrapped around his head, and he held a baseball bat in his hand.

Terror got me to my feet.

We didn't have a minute to lose.

He walked toward Molly, hefting the bat in his hand. The women were gaining use of their limbs, too. But there was nowhere they could go.

'We need to go,' I said as I hobbled toward the door. 'Adam, make sure everyone here is okay. Alec, Mac, Cam, grab what you can from the security and take who we can.'

'Where?' Mac asked as we made for the door.

'They're in an industrial estate thirty minutes away.'

'How the fuck do you know?' Cam asked, his face a sickly pale still.

'There's a tracker in Cora's collar.'

'Whoa. That's fucked up,' Mac said as he reached down to grab a gun from one of the still paralysed security men. 'And that's coming from me.'

'My fucked up will get our girls back and leave that fucker Edwards dead.'

Hold on, baby. I'm coming.

## THIRTY-NINE

**CORA** 

'What are we going to do?' Katie said. 'We can't just sit here and let them torture us.'

'We hope the guys can find us real fast.' Maeve's voice was soft and tired, her head dipping as her wounds continued to drip blood.

My handcuffs attached around a heavy duty pipe above my head. Pulling hard at it didn't move it even a millimetre. There was no give at all.

Having the use of our limbs back wouldn't save us.

Valentina was busy trying to slide her cuffs against a screw that stood out on the pipe, but the links between them were solid. Her angry grunt when the cuffs bit into her wrist made me close my eyes.a'What are we going to do?' Katie said. 'We can't just sit here and let them torture us.'

'We hope the guys can find us real fast.' Maeve's voice was soft and tired, her head dipping as her wounds continued to drip blood.

My handcuffs were fastened to a heavy-duty pipe above my head, and no matter how hard I pulled, it didn't budge even a millimetre. There was absolutely no give.

Having the use of our limbs back wouldn't save us.

Valentina was busy trying to slide her cuffs against a screw that stood out on the pipe, but the links between them were solid. Her angry grunt when the cuffs bit into her wrist made me close my eyes.

Just breathe.

'We need to try to comply.' I nodded toward the cameras before lowering my voice to barely a whisper. 'They are watching and possibly listening. Time is the only thing that can help us. We survive as long as we can.'

'She's right,' Maeve said, inhaling sharply as she tried to adjust her seating position. 'We need to give the guys time to find us.'

Molly let out a sob as the door opened, and Edwards came back in with a reddened bandage around his head. Carrying a baseball bat.

Coldness gripped my spine as he hefted it in his palm, it thudding against his flesh.

'Now, ladies. We let the fun commence. You're live on the dark web, and cash is flowing in along with suggestions of what we should do to you all. If you thought I was sick, well fuck.'

His footsteps clicked along the cement floor as he walked down the line.

'They want me to smash your pretty little faces in. To fuck the hole I make and fill your skulls with cum. To have two of you fucked, and whoever cums first gets to live. Your men would love to watch that, I'm sure. To see you gasping for our dicks and begging to touch your cunts so you don't die.'

Revulsion made my stomach weak. Edwards swung the bat toward my head and crashed it into the wall. A shower of dust and debris covered me as he laughed at my scream. My wrists ached from trying to yank my arms over my head.

Moving along, he brought the baseball bat down next to Valentina's knees as she scrambled to get out of the way.

The bat made contact with Molly's rib cage with a sickening crunch as her screams broke me. Edwards laughed while Rob's face paled behind him. He knew Molly and had evenperformed with her.

'Help us,' I mouthed when he met my eyes. There was a moment of hesitation before his eyes slipped away. Fucking coward.

Edwards bent down and hauled Molly's dress up while she cried, shoving his fingers roughly between her thighs.

'Dry as a fucking bone. Nothing a little blood won't fix.'

Rage filled me.

'Leave her alone!' I yelled, unable to stomach her pain.

A manic grin covered his face, his head snapping in my direction.

'Someone fill her mouth up and make her regret that.'

When none of the men moved, Edwards barked out, 'Rob!'

My breath came out in furious bursts as he walked toward me, looking anywhere except at my face.

'Just get it over with,' he mumbled as he undid his flies. 'Don't make it any worse for yourself.'

Pulling out his flaccid dick, he tried to shove it in my mouth. Turning my head, I avoided it. 'Fuck off,' I whispered to him through my teeth.

Edwards joined us, his hand yanking my hair back as he used his other one to plug my nose. I fought against him until I had to take a breath. Rob had managed to get his cock to half erect, and he shoved it into my mouth as I gagged.

'You stupid bitches got involved with the wrong fucking family.'

Edwards let go of my nose as I coughed at the invasion of my mouth.

When Rob's eyes rolled back as he thrust into my throat, I saw red. Biting down, his yelp filled me with fire.

'Get her off. Fuck! Get her off!'

The crunch of flesh between my teeth made me gag, and when blood filled my mouth, tears rolled down my cheeks. His fists crashed into my face as he fought me off, but I didn't unclench my jaw until Edwards swung his baseball bat down on my ankle. Pain ruptured through me, and I cried out. Rob staggered back, bleeding badly from the groin as his partially severed dick swung.

'Get him out of here,' Edwards yelled at another one of his men.

'You're going to die first,' Edwards said. 'But your boyfriend's going to watch me fuck your ass for the world to see. First with my dick, then with my bat. I wonder how far I could stuff it in before you bled out?'

My foot hung limp as he released me before pulling my arms behind my back and snapping the cuffs back closed. My attempts to fight were weak. The pain from my ankle took my breath away as he manhandled me toward the dirty mattress.

'Ewen's going to skin you alive,' I spat as he threw me down.

'Give it a few days, and he'll be rotting right alongside you. I'm going to spend the next few days picking them off one by one while they're losing their minds over seeing you all fucking die.'

Throwing me to my knees, he grabbed my golden collar and wrapped his fingers around it. 'Look at this. He even treats you like an animal. Are you going to come while I rape your ass? You disgusting little cunt.' Maeve laughed as he threw me onto the mattress and dropped his bat by my head.

'You think she'll struggle with your dick? From what I heard, she'll barely notice it's in.'

Edwards let out a growl of rage, striding back to Maeve. Fuck. She was going to get herself killed.

She held her expression impassive when he got in her face. 'Think you're such a brave bitch, don't you? You've never experienced true fucking pain. Never struggled for anything in your pampered existence.'

Maeve spat, the saliva dripping down his face. I seized the opportunity to wiggle the baseball bat down between the wall and the mattress.

The noise I heard from Maeve stopped me in my tracks, my head snapping toward them. Edwards had thrust his finger into one of her knife wounds. Her eyes bugged as he tugged at her stomach, a sickening ripping noise making me heave.

A puddle formed around Molly as she watched in horror, and Esther let out a heart-wrenching scream.

Edwards stood, wiping his bloodied hand on his trousers. 'Another peep from you, and I'll tear your guts out of the hole and strangle you with them.'

Never had I thought I could kill someone. But I'd have gladly run Edwards through with a knife until his torso was nothing but ribbons.

He stood panting and glaring from one woman to another.

Then his beady eyes fixed back on me.

Just breathe.

'We need to try to comply.' I nodded toward the cameras before lowering my voice to barely a whisper. 'They are watching and possibly listening. Time is the only thing that can help us. We survive as long as we can.'

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'Now, ladies. We let the fun commence. You're all live on the dark web, and cash is flowing in along with suggestions of what we should do to you all. If you thought I was sick, well fuck.'

His footsteps clicked along the cement floor as he walked down the line.

'They want me to smash your pretty little faces in. To fuck the hole I make and fill your skulls with cum. To have two of you fucked and whoever cums first gets to live. Your men would love to watch that I'm sure. To see you gasping for our dicks and begging to touch your cunts so you don't die.'

Revulsion made my stomach weak. Edwards swung the bat toward my head and crashed it into the wall. A shower of dust and debris covered me as he laughed when I screamed. My wrists ached as I tried to yank my arms over my head.

Moving along, he brought the baseball bat down next to Valentina's knees as she scrambled to get out of the way.

The bat made contact with Molly's rib cage with a sickening crunch as her screams broke me. Edwards laughed while Rob's face paled behind him. He knew Molly. Had performed with her.

'Help us,' I mouthed when he met my eyes. There was a moment of hesitation before his eyes slipped away. Fucking coward.

Edwards bent down and hauled Molly's dress up while she cried, shoving his fingers roughly between her thighs.

'Dry as a fucking bone. Nothing a little blood won't fix.'

Rage filled me.

'Leave her alone,' I yelled, unable to stomach her pain.

A manic grin covered his face as he snapped his head to me.

'Someone fill her mouth up and make her regret that.'

When none of the men moved, Edwards barked out, 'Rob!'

My breath came out in furious bursts as he walked toward me, looking anywhere except at my face.

'Just get it over with,' he mumbled as he undid his flies. 'Don't make it any worse for yourself.'

Pulling out his flaccid dick, he tried to shove it in my mouth. Turning my head, I avoided it. 'Fuck off,' I whispered to him through my teeth.

Edwards joined us, his hand yanking my hair back as he used his other one to plug my nose. I fought against him until I had to take a breath. Rob

had managed to get his cock to half erect, and he shoved it in my mouth as I gagged.

'You stupid bitches got involved with the wrong fucking family.'

Edwards let go of my nose as I coughed at the invasion of my mouth.

When Rob's eyes rolled back as he thrust into my throat, I saw red. Biting down, his yelp filled me with fire.

'Get her off. Fuck! get her off!'

The crunch of flesh between my teeth made me gag, and when blood filled my mouth, tears rolled down my cheeks. His fists crashed into my face as he fought me off, but I didn't unclench my jaw until Edwards swung his baseball bat down on my ankle. Pain ruptured through me as I screamed. Rob staggered back, bleeding badly from the groin as his partially severed dick swung.

'Get him out of here,' Edwards yelled at the other one of his men.

'You're going to die first,' Edwards said. 'But your boyfriend's going to watch me fuck your ass for the world to see first with my dick first and my bat second. I wonder how far I could stuff it in before you bled out?'

My foot hung limp as he released me before pulling my arms behind my back and snapping the cuffs back closed. My attempts to fight were weak. The pain from my ankle took my breath away as he manhandled me toward the dirty mattress.

'Ewen's going to skin you alive,' I spat as he threw me down.

'Give it a few days and he'll be rotting right alongside you. I'm going to spend the next few days picking them off one by one when they are losing their minds over seeing you all fucking die.'

Throwing me to my knees, he grabbed my golden collar and wrapped his fingers around it. 'Look at this, even he treats you like an animal. You going to come while I rape your ass? You disgusting little cunt.'

Maeve let out a laugh as he threw me onto the mattress and dropped his bat by my head.

'You think she'll struggle with your dick? From what I heard, she'll barely notice it's in.'

Edwards let out a growl of rage as he paced back toward Maeve. Fuck. She was going to get herself killed.

She held her expression impassive when he got in her face. 'Think you're such a brave bitch, don't you? You've never experienced true fucking pain. Never struggled for anything in your pampered existence.'

Maeve spat, the saliva dripping down his face. I took the distraction to wiggle the baseball bat down between the wall and the mattress.

The noise I heard from Maeve stopped me in my tracks and look toward them. Edwards had thrust his finger into one of her knife wounds. Her eyes bugged as he tugged at her stomach, a sickening ripping noise making me heave.

A puddle formed around Molly as she watched in horror while Esther let out a heart-wrenching scream.

Edwards stood, wiping his bloodied hand on his trousers. 'Another peep from you and I'll tear your guts out of the hole and strangle you with them.'

Never had I thought I could kill someone. But I'd have gladly run Edwards through with a knife until his torso was nothing but ribbons.

He stood panting and glaring from one woman to another.

Then his beady eyes fixed back on me.

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#### **FORTY**

#### **EWEN**

The industrial estate was dark, quiet, and empty as I followed the tracker on foot, each step leading closer to Cora.

My brothers, Cam and Alec, followed behind me, our other security men flanking us.

Holding up a hand, everyone froze. I saw a figure leaning against a door, rolling a cigarette before lighting it up.

You didn't guard an empty building. I waited until he turned away to sneak up on him and shove my knife into his trachea, his last breath coming out in a smoke-tingled, wet, bloody bubble.

'Help me get him in the dumpster,' I said. Logan grabbed his ankles while Cam held the lid open. He thumped into the bottom, and I winced at the clatter his body made against the metal.

'What's the plan?' Alec asked as we approached the door.

'To kill every last fucker in there as quickly as possible. I'll follow the tracker. You guys stick with me.' I turned to our men. 'I want you guys to go through the building and dispatch anyone in there who belongs to Edwards. If there are any other hostages, take them back to the club and patch them up until we can talk to them.'

'What if it's a trap? He could blow us all up,' Mac said.

'There's no way he knows about the tracker. It would take at least a day to find them through cameras and trying to trace the stream. He'll think he

has more time. I'd rather die trying to save them than let a single one of them suffer.'

Alec paled as he looked at his phone screen, his jaw ticking.

'What is it?' I asked.

'Rob tried to fuck Cora's mouth, and she bit his cock in half.'

My muscles tightened as I grabbed the phone, seeing Edwards smash Cora's ankle with his bat. Every second he had left to breathe was one too many.

Thrusting the phone back to him, I hauled the door open and headed inside. Multiple guns cocked behind me, ready for whatever came our way.

The warehouse was a vast warren of corridors. Cora's tracker showed her location, but not the specific floor she was on. Door after door, we hoped to find them only to be met with another empty room.

'They must be below us,' I whispered.

'We're on the ground floor,' Logan said, grabbing his hair.

'There has to be a basement.'

Alec gagged as he glanced at the screen. 'We need to find it right now.' I didn't want to ask.

'What?' Mac grabbed the phone and watched until his fingers trembled. 'If we don't get there now, Maeve's going to die.'

Cam let out a choked sob and practically tore the door from its hinges as he stormed out. Seconds later, he found a door that had steps behind it—steps going down.

We took them in a single file, following the flashing dot on my phone screen.

In a side room, a pained cry was followed by heavy panting. Rob was accompanied by a handful of men, one of whom was trying to stitch his cock back together, a grimace on his face.

'Kill them,' I said. 'Cam with me.'

We didn't have time to dispatch them all together. I left my brothers and Alec to deal with them as Cam and I made our way to the door at the end of the corridor. We noticed that someone had roughly attached a series of cables to the wall and through a gap near the top of the door. I prayed they were for the cameras as I slid my knife through them. We didn't need murder on camera.

Tearing the door open, my eyes immediately locked on Edwards; he was standing behind Cora, dick in hand, attempting to pin her beneath him as

she resisted. Her terrified cries filled me with a hot red bloodlust. Cam went to Maeve, whose head was drooping against her chest, a dark red pool gathered below her. My eyes stung at the sight of my sister torn apart.

Edwards stumbled away from Cora as I approached, holding my knife in front of me. He ran toward a table, holding his trousers up and grabbing a gun from the drawer.

Fuck.

He held it and pointed at Cora, andI froze.

'Seems you'll get to watch her die in person,' he laughed before cocking the gun.

For a brief moment, panic seized me; then, without hesitation, I charged at him. His eyes widened as he directed the gun at me and pulled the trigger. The pain ripping through my stomach didn't stop me as I barrelled into him and knocked him over. Metal crashed as his gun went flying the second I landed on top of him. Blood squelched as I drove my knife into his face, his eye coming out when I retracted the blade, only to thrust it right back into the other one. Blood-curdling screams echoed through the room, but I didn't stop. My knife punctured his tongue and throat, slicing through his cheek. A jolt of pain lanced up my arm upon striking his skull. The blade sliced along his scalp where it couldn't penetrate flesh.

My attack was frenzied, ceasing only when my arms grew weak, and Edwards lay still beneath me.

My body hit the floor as I slumped off of him sideways, my shirt soaked with blood that was only half mine.

At least he was fucking dead.

My breath rattled as I glanced over at Cam, who cradled Maeve in his arms, tears streaming down his face. Her body was limp against him as Esther wailed beside them.

A shuffling pulled me back to Cora. She was working her way to me on my knees, her arms still fixed behind her. Her body collapsed over me, her lips meeting mine.

'I knew you'd come,' she whispered against my face, her hot tears landing on my cheeks.

'Always,' I muttered, my head swimming as she moved in and out of focus. Commotion filled the room as the others piled in, coated in red.

'Jesus,' Mac said. He made his way to Edwards and patted him down, finding keys and throwing them to Alec. He quickly unlocked the women

while calling the private hospital. 'We need an emergency pick up, fast. No sirens. You know the drill.'

I smiled as he hung up and pulled Esther into his arms. Logan scooped Valentina up and helped Molly limp toward the door, her breath heavy as she gripped her side.

Mouths moved, but I couldn't hear them as a ringing filled my ears.

'Ewen,' Cora said. 'Look at me.'

Her voice was far off despite her being pressed up against my chest.

'You're so beautiful,' I said. 'I should have told you in the club. I wanted to.'

'You can tell me later. Save your energy. Just focus on my face.'

'I love you,' I whispered, every word making sharp pains radiate in my stomach. She had to know. I couldn't die without telling her. 'I love everything about you. I would have spent my life making you happy.'

'You will,' she sobbed, her hair sticking to her wet cheeks. 'You don't get to leave me like this.'

'Next time...' I panted as I battled a rolling darkness. 'I'll tell you sooner.'

'Ewen...' her voice died off as a wash of calm filled me, and I stopped fighting against the shadows.

#### **FORTY-ONE**

**CORA** 

'I need to see him,' I petitioned the nurse as she wheeled me back into my hospital room.

'I know, love, but he's only just out of surgery and he's not out of the woods yet.' Her words were soft, but I had no intention of being a model patient.

'All to more reason for me to be with him. What if he doesn't wake up? What if he dies and I never get to hold his hand again? I don't want to wait until it's cold. Take me to him. Please?'

We'd been whisked out of the warehouse and to the private hospital that housed Ruby. I'd waited through x-rays and cast application and surgery times and I couldn't wait a minute longer. My ankle would heal, but if I lost Ewen, I didn't think my heart would.

The nurse chewed on her lip before giving me a small nod. 'I'll go and make sure the staff are ready to have you with him. You won't be able to stay for long.'

Little did she know I wouldn't leave him without a fight.

Half an hour later, she wheeled me into Ewen's room in the private ICU. Wires and tubes snaked from his body as he lay asleep in his bed. I sagged in my wheelchair at the sight of his steadily raising chest, my eyes welling up.

'He's really alive,' I whispered as she placed me at his bedside.

'He is.' The nurse looked around before whispering near my ear. 'From what I hear, prognosis is very good. Nothing too major was damaged. The doctor will give you an actual run down but I pressed for a little information.'

'Thank you,' I said, reaching out and giving her hand a squeeze. 'What about the others, is Maeve...?'

I couldn't bring myself to say it. The Mac had held her to him as sobs wracked his body seared into my mind.

'She's gravely injured. They are doing everything they can.'

Her words hurt. Ewen would be devastated if he lost his sister.

'Molly will be okay. She has a few broken ribs and is under pain management. The others have already been checked over and released, their injuries little more than cuts and bruises.'

She placed a jug of water and two cups on the little table beside me before giving my shoulder a light squeeze and leaving us alone.

Rhythmic beeping filled the space. Ewen looked peaceful, his face soft as he slept.

'You have to wake up,' I whispered as I slid my hand into his slack fingers. Their warmth permeated my skin as I bit back a sob.

'I never got to tell you I love you, too. You can't turn me into your little freak and then leave me alone.' I sniffled as I smiled. 'I need you.'

Nothing. Not the twitch of a finger or flicker of an eyelid.

I leaned forward in my chair and laid my head against my forearm on the bed. Lightly kissing his fingertips, I closed my eyes. Being near him filled me with warmth, even when worry clouded it.



Darkness had wrapped around the room by the time I stirred. Pushing my sticky hair back from my face, I looked up, disorientated.

'Cora.' The broken word hit me like a tractor.

'Ewen?'

'Thank god you're okay,' he said as I reached to the wall behind him, fumbling for the light switch. The small wall lamp illuminated, throwing us both into the light.

The first thing I saw was that goddamned dimple.

'Oh my god,' I cried, my voice cracking as I hopped onto my one good foot and threw my arms around his neck.

Ewen wrapped his wire strewn arms around my shoulders as relief swept through me. My throat thickened as I fought back the tears.

'I thought I'd lost you,' I said.

'You said you loved me. I wasn't going to miss that.'

'You heard me?' I asked. It must have been hours since I laid my head beside him.

'I did. I love the ever-loving fuck out of you, Cora. I thought I'd lost you.' His eyes glittered despite the dark circles beneath them.

Leaning in close, I kissed him, his hot breath mingling with mine as my chest expanded with gratitude. Threading my fingers into his hair, I sat awkwardly on the edge of the bed, positioning my cast covered ankle away from us.

'Broken?' he asked.

'It'll heal. We both will.'

Ewen's throat bobbed, and his eyes darted to the door. 'My family?'

'Maeve is still in surgery, I think. The others are okay.'

'I'll raise the fucker from the dead and kill him again if Maeve doesn't pull through.' Ewen's words sounded strangled and I let my hands fall to his chest, careful to avoid his injured mid-section.

'Are you sure you want to stay?'

'Yes.'

'I can't guarantee he's the last person we've pissed off.'

'Would you be able to let me go?' I asked.

'No. I'd follow you everywhere and kill any man who touched you.'

'You're a freak,' I said, leaning in and grazing my lips over his. 'My freak.'

'So you want to stay?' I sighed happily as his fingers cupped my jaw.

'Always.'

## **FORTY-TWO**

#### **EWEN**

The door closed behind me as I breathed a sigh of relief. I'd never been so happy to be home.

My mansion was abuzz with activity, and I smiled at Cora as she hobbled along with her crutch beside me.

'They prepped the suite for Maeve, Cam, Elias, and Grace. I also arranged medical cover to be onsite.'

'Thank god she's on the mend.'

Cora and I made our way to the closest sitting room, where light filtered in through open windows.

Maeve sat in a wheelchair near the window, looking thinner and more frail than I'd ever seen her. It made me ache. A smile broke over her face as her adopted daughter, Grace, brushed her hair and pulled it into a ponytail.

'Well, look who the cat dragged in,' she said, wincing a little as she turned.

'Don't go getting yourself in a mess on my account,' I said, sitting heavily on a sofa across from her. Cora wrapped her arm around mine and balanced her crutch against the seat, seemingly not ready to be more than an inch away from my side. Not that I minded.

'Thanks for letting us stay,' Maeve said.

'This will always be all of our home. You don't need to thank me.'

Cam arrived, carrying a ridiculously large teapot and a load of cups.

'Looking good,' he said as he poured me a steaming cup of tea. His face lit up when he handed a cup to Maeve.

'Grace, can you go find your brother? I need you guys to go pick up some bits from the apartment for Maeve, if that's alright?'

'Should I drive your car?' Grace asked. Maeve grinned when Cam's face turned ashen.

'No. I'll get you a driver.'

'You have to let me practise.'

'Not in my car, I don't. I'll get you a run around that won't make me cry every time you prang it.'

Being surrounded by family knitted my soul back together. I hadn't realised how much I'd isolated myself from them as we'd grown up.

'How are you feeling?' I asked Maeve after Grace exited the room.

'Like a psycho tore a hole in my stomach. I'll not be wearing a bikini again anytime soon.'

Cam leaned against her chair and stroked a hand over her shoulder. 'A battle scar will make you even hotter. I should know.'

She laughed as he winked at her.

'Has Alfie shown up yet?' I asked.

Cam shook his head. 'Not a squeak. He's not at Rosenhall, and there are no signs that Edwards took him. Just disappeared like that.' Cam clicked his fingers and shrugged.

'He's probably found himself a new interest. He'll be back when they kick him out, I'm sure.'

Cora's fingers drifted down my arm as she let out a yawn.

'Fancy a nap?' I asked. She rewarded me with a sweet smile.

'I've not slept very well without you.'

'You'll never have to again.'



Cora crawled into the bed in nothing but her collar, her cast, and a pair of panties. My blood rushed between my legs at the sight of her.

Pressing herself against my side, her thigh grazed my stiffening cock.

'You are absolutely not cleared for those activities,' she giggled as her fingers drifted over my boxer shorts.'

'If you keep skimming it, I'll have no choice in the matter.'

Cora's eyes sparkled in the afternoon light as she gazed up at me from where her head lay on my shoulder.

'I need to talk to you about something,' I said.

'What is it?' She frowned.

'Your collar.'

Her fingertips glanced over the golden jewellery. 'What about it?'

'There's a tracker in it. It's how we found you so quickly. I know it's insane, but after losing you at Seth's, I didn't want to ever be in that situation again.'

She swallowed as I reached up and stroked my finger along the warm metal.

I waited for her to talk, my mouth going dry as her eyes searched my face.

'I like it when you take charge. And I like it when you protect me. You make me feel safe. But tell me next time you do something crazy. I'm with you because of all this.' Her fingers settled over mine against her throat and the collar. 'Not despite it.'

'Good girl,' I breathed, pulling her to me and sliding my tongue between her lips. My whole world juddered as she filled my arms. The way she moaned filled all the gaping holes in me. She completed me.

'How long?'

'Until the doctor clears your stomach. Don't want to go bursting your stitches and getting an infection.' The way her breath quickened let me know she wanted to break the rules as badly as I did.

'When I'm cleared for action, you better get ready, Cora. I'm going to tie you down and fuck you until you beg me to stop. I'm going to make you need to come so badly that you cry, and then I'm going to use those tears to fuck that pretty ass of yours.'

I bit my tongue as I waited for her reaction, realising that she'd gone through something not so dissimilar with Edwards.

'I want you to claim every part of me, Sir,' she said, her pupils blown as she arched her body against my hip.

'If you need it softer for a while, after everything that happened, that's okay, too.'

<sup>&#</sup>x27;I want you. The way it was. Don't let him ruin it for us.'

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Still my dirty cock-whore, then?'

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Forever.'

## **FORTY-THREE**

**CORA** 

Nerves crashed in my stomach as I followed the nurse into the plushly decorated sitting room at the end of the corridor.

Ruby stood as I entered, both of us staring at one another while the nurse quietly left and closed the door.

'I'm so sorry,' Ruby said. Her fingers whitened at the ends as she gripped her hands so tightly together. My lip stung where I worried at it with my teeth, unsure of what to say. The spot where I held my crutch grew slippery beneath my palm.

'What happened?' she asked when I failed to answer her. My walls had slammed up on seeing her, barely feeling like I knew my twin anymore.

'Lots,' I replied, hobbling to a seat and lowering myself into it.

Her brows furrowed as she sat down neatly across from me and looked me over. 'Ewen didn't do it? Did he?'

Battening down a surge of anger, I shook my head.

'I need to thank him for helping me,' Ruby said while gazing down at her entwined fingers. 'I was going down a dark path, and if he hadn't forced me into recovery, lord knows where I would have ended up.'

'Why did you do it? The drugs?'

'As a way to feel included, to begin with. I didn't want to be seen as a killjoy. But some of them made me feel so good. When my opiates from the hospital ran out, Seth was only too keen to replace them. But what he asked for in return kept changing. Getting worse. But I needed the high.'

'Seth tried to rape me that night. He forced drugs down my throat that he hoped would mask it.'

'Fuck,' she whispered. 'What happened?'

'Ewen got me out before he could. Then he went back and made sure he'd never hurt anyone again.'

Ruby's eyes widened as she processed what I said before she blinked in quick succession.

'He's dead?' She whispered, glancing at the door.

'It's okay, the staff won't report it. His family owns half of the hospital. Ewen doesn't just own the club. He's part of an organised crime family.'

Ruby's nostrils flared. 'So you're dating one of the guys who puts the drugs on the streets? The ones that almost ruined my life?'

'Yes. And no. Ever since his sister Maeve took over, they largely deal in the illicit trade of medical drugs. Shipping from Europe to people who need access to medical treatment but can't afford the pharmaceutical rates or deadlines.'

'And you believe him?' she asked, looking incredulous.

'I do.'

'Do you love him?'

'Yes,' I said, letting the smallest smile lift my lips.

'Does he treat you well?'

'He does.'

Ruby ran a finger over a whorl on the arm of the chair. 'You'll have to let me know how to do that.'

'What?'

'Love somebody. The only person I've ever loved is you.'

Her words pierced me, and when she moved to squeeze in beside me, I let her.

'I'm so sorry. I've been a shit sister for a long time. I'm going to get a new job and pay the bills so you can finish your degree. I'll take care of things.'

'You don't have to,' I said. 'I packed up everything and moved it to the McGowan home. You're going to stay with Ewen and me for a bit while you find your footing.'

'You moved in with him?'

'We did.'

'Damn. I guess nothing much I say can convince you to make it just you and I again?' Ruby said.

'No, we have a whole new family. You'll have to get used to sharing, but they are excited to meet you.'

Ruby's fingers slid into mine and when she gave me a smile that was almost like the ones I missed, I caved and pulled her into a hug.

'Things will be better for us,' I said against her hair.

'I'm so happy for you.' Ruby sniffed as she pulled back, her eyes watery. 'You're almost done with your degree, and you've landed yourself a guy who will kill to protect you. I've no idea what I'll do with myself. The only thing I've ever been good at was screwing on stage. I've always wished I was more like you.'

My mouth hung open at her statement. She wished she was more like me?

'I've always wanted to be more like you. Fun, wild, attractive. Why would you want to be like me?'

'Are you kidding? You never let anything stop you. Despite our shitty upbringing, you went back to university and almost have your degree. I'm so insanely proud of you. Maybe I can go back to school, too?'

'Of course you can. Although there's no shame in working at the club if you like it.'

'While I loved performing, I can't do it forever. I don't want that either.'

'Ewen and I can help. We've allocated you a suite in our home and can support you as you study. But no drugs. No going backwards.'

Ruby nodded with a grin. 'Deal.'

We sat back against the sofa, and she slid her hand into mine. 'I really am sorry for being such a thunder-cunt to you for the past few years. Thank you for giving me another chance.'

'You're my sister. I just want you to be happy.'

'I love you,' Ruby said.

And just like that, my family was complete.

## **FORTY-FOUR**

#### **EWEN**

After a few weeks of a full house, I very much looked forward to a whole weekend with Cora. Alone.

Ruby had left for a weekend retreat with a women's wellness group having taken up yoga and wild swimming as hobbies, and Maeve had finally been well enough to be discharged from the medical centre's nurses.

Cora had been busy editing the images for her final gallery showing after graduation, and I'd barely seen her for the past few days.

She'd flop into our bed at night and tell me about exposure triangles and apertures until her eyes drooped. Her passion for photography was infinite, and I loved looking through the images she took as she told me where she drew her inspiration from.

I'd excused the staff other than our chef and set the dining table with candles and silverware. I neatened my tux jacket while I waited for her to resurface from her editing room.

When she bundled into the dining room shortly after, her leg finally free of the cast, I sat back on my seat and grinned. Her eyes widened as she took in the warm, romantic lighting and my suit.

'Oh, shoot. I didn't realise we were going fancy. I can go change.'

'Stop,' I said as she turned.

Peeking back over her shoulder, her eyes glittered. Between our full house, and both of us healing, we hadn't played in a while. We'd fucked in

bed, careful of our injuries and exhausted after her studies, but I'd missed the heavier play.

'You won't need to change. In fact, you won't be needing clothes at all. Take them off.'

'Here?' she asked, her voice slipping into a sweet register.

'Take them off, or I'll cut them off.'

I watched her greedily as she slipped her hoodie over her head, followed by her jeans and her mismatched underwear. Her skin glowed as the orange candlelight danced across her.

'Come,' I said, leaning back in my chair, my eyes catching on the golden collar. It made me hard every time I saw her in it.

Her hips wiggled with every step as a flush rose to her cheeks. Dropping to her knees beside my chair, I reached out and ran my fingers over her collarbone until I gripped her jaw.

'I'm going to have your tears tonight, Cora.'

'Yes, Sir,' she breathed, her thighs clenching below us.

'I'm going to hurt you.'

Her tongue dashed out over her lip as she nodded.

'You are going to beg, and it's going to make my dick hard.' I wrapped a hand in her hair and yanked it tight. 'I love you, and it's going to make pushing you to the brink even hotter.'

'Please make me your cum slut.' Her words were like a rag to a bull. Heat flushed through me as I pulled her to my lips, demanding her kiss. Our tongues danced as she moaned, her stomach pressing into my knees while she craned for more. Dropping my hands to her nipples, I pinched them both hard, pulling her toward me and grinning when she squealed.

'Such a pretty pet,' I crooned, letting her nipples go. 'I'm going to feed you on your knees where you belong.'

I uncovered the large dish of luscious finger foods I had the chef prepare for me and picked up one of the delectable morsels.

'Sit nicely,' I said, watching as she blushed a deep red. When she set her hands neatly in her lap and arched her back, I slid the food into her mouth. 'Such a good girl. Taking it for me. It's not what you want in that filthy little mouth of yours, though, is it?'

Cora shook her head as she chewed and swallowed.

'Show me,' I said. Her fingers grazed over me, undoing my zip and pulling my already hard dick free. Pumping her hand over my shaft, I hissed through my teeth.

She leaned forward. Her tongue darted out and circled the head of my dick, glee in her eyes as I swore.

I picked up a canapé and ate it, trying not to pay attention to her as she slid her mouth over me, hollowing her cheeks. Her mouth was fucking divine. Ignoring her while I ate had her working harder, trying to take me deeper while her tongue worked the underside of my cock. When I leaned forward to grab my glass of wine, she made a mad little noise over my dick.

Taking a sip, I leaned over her, letting it dribble from my mouth and splashing over my cock as she moved back.

'You'll eat from my fingers and drink from my cock like a good little whore,' I said, gripping her hair to pull her mouth over my dick, arching as my wine-soaked cock roughly invaded her throat. Her nails dug into my thighs as I used her mouth like a toy, sliding it back and forth over me until I was grunting. Her eyes filled with tears as I held her down on my dick, rocking the tip against the back of her throat.

'Yes, my pet.That's it. Cry for me. Show me that no matter what I do with that body of yours, it only gets you wetter and wetter. You love being a slut for me, don't you?'

A great gasp flew from her when I removed her from my dick, strands of saliva bridging the gap between us.

'I love being your slut,' she moaned when I took another sip of wine and angled myself so my mouth was over hers. I waited until she opened wide and held her gaze as the wine dripped into her mouth.

Placing the glass down, I stood and hauled her to her feet. She trembled as I fitted cuffs over her wrists and ankles before pushing the food out of the way and lifting her onto the table. To one side of it, her wrists were secured above her head with a satisfying snap, while her ankles were clipped to the other side. It splayed her beautifully for me, her dripping cunt on full display between her bent knees. The table's length prevented me from using either end, so I fastened the metal loops to both sides. This setup had her splayed across the wooden surface but positioned right at the end. From this extremity, I had access to her mouth, and from the other, I could reach her pretty pussy. Perfect.

'Look at you, Cora. Stretched out on the dinner table like a perfect little snack. Do you think I should have a taste?'

'Please,' she breathed, the muscles in her thighs tensing. Leaning over her from the side, I nipped my way down her chest, stopping to bite into her nipple as she squealed. Soothing the pain with my tongue, I smirked. I'd been worried that seeing her pain wouldn't have had the same effect on me after I'd softened toward her. But my rock-solid dick confirmed otherwise.

Reaching down between her legs, I raked my nails roughly up her thigh. Her whole body shook.

I took my time biting, soothing, and scratching until her skin glowed red with marks, and she panted and writhed against the table.

'You always act so sweet and innocent, but look at you spread over the table and desperate for cock. All you can think about is how good it's going to feel when I pound into you, slamming you into that table while you cry for more.'

'I need your cock,' she whimpered. Fuck. It was taking everything I had not to slide into her.

Moving to the side of the table, I stood between her thighs and looked down over her glistening cunt.

'Who owns this?' I asked.

'You do.'

Sliding a finger down over her dripping heat had her writhing against the wood. I curled it up into her roughly and held her tight. 'And what if I choose to stroke my dick until I make a mess all over you, but leave you empty?'

'No,' she said, her voice quivering. 'Please, give me your cock.'

Pulling my finger from her made her cry out in frustration until I slid it lower and ran it around her puckered hole. 'I'm going to give you my cock, but you'll take it in the ass before I fill your cunt.'

'I can't.'

'You will. For me.'

Grabbing a condom from my pocket, I slid it over my dick and pressed the head of it against her cunt, sliding up and down and watching her arch and moan every time I slid past her pussy. I needed her to be desperate. She slickened my dick with how fucking wet she was. Taking my time, I used the head of my cock to work her until she was vibrating with need.

'Please, fuck me,' she begged, her wrists tugging at her bonds as she tried to push into me.

My laughter made her cry. Tears of desperation streamed down her cheeks when she gave up any semblance of dignity, falling completely into her role as my possession.

'Good girls take their owner's cock wherever he chooses to put it. Don't they?'

'Yes,' she sobbed.

'You want the pain, don't you?'

She nodded as I reached up and gathered her tears on my fingers before running them over her asshole.

'I'm not going to use lube. I want you to feel every bit of stretch and burn as I take the last little bit of your virginity. If you're very good and cry prettily for me, I'll use more tears to make it easier for you.'

I slid two fingers roughly into her ass as she bit down on her lip. Leaning over the table, I kissed her as I worked her open.

'Do you trust me?' I asked.

'Yes,' she whimpered against my lips.

'I know you'll like it this way. The burn will feed right into your wet cunt and make it flood. And when I let you come, you'll come harder than ever. We need this. You and I.'

Her tongue slipped between my lips as I used my fingers to stretch her ass wider. Her breath caught, and then her tight ring relaxed. Enough.

Reaching between us, I pressed the wet tip of my cock against her asshole, pushing past the tightness as she tensed.

'Fighting it will only make it hurt more. Is that what you want?' I pressed forward as I spoke, feeling her losing the fight against my entrance.

'No,' she cried.

'Liar,' I said as I thrust my hips, sinking into her. Her body protested as she arched up off the table, her teeth finding my neck and biting down.

'That's it, love,' I panted as I saw stars. 'Your ass is so fucking tight. Holy fuck.'

I pulled back, feeling friction as I did so. 'I need more tears.'

Gathering the ones on her face, I rubbed them over my shaft before filling her again.

'Every part of you is mine,' I growled as my balls tightened. It took an enormous amount of willpower not to tear into her and seek my orgasm. But I had a plan to fulfil.

'All yours,' she panted.

I pulled back before jutting fully into her, watching her face contort on the edge between pain and pleasure. Standing upright, I revelled in the sight of her ass stretched wide over my dick. 'Look how wet you are at having me filling your ass.'

I used my other hand to slap her cunt, delighting as her ass tightened over me. She was on the precipice/brink, right where I wanted her.

## **FORTY-FIVE**

**CORA** 

The burn spread with every thrust, pain undulating from him stretching out my ass. My body fought the invasion, but it filled me with a dirty pleasure. Ewen was right. It left me wanting more—craving the pain right along with the filthy words.

All my day-to-day worries had fled as soon as he'd taken control, turning me into his toy for the night.

The sensation as he pulled out made me want to vomit, but when he filled my ass again, my head spun with delight. Knowing he'd take what he wanted from me made my knees weak. Knowing I'd give him whatever he wanted made me giddy.

Another sharp slap on my pussy made me jerk against the cuffs. The sharp bite of it subsided and left nothing but need in its wake.

'My perfect little fuck toy. Nothing left as a barrier between us. All of you, free to use whenever I need.' Ewen's voice was thick with lust as he gripped my hips and ground himself inside me.

'I love it when you use me,' I panted.

'Good girl. I intend to use you whenever I please. Wherever we are. To bend you over and sink my cock into you no matter what you're doing. Whether you're awake or asleep. Busy or available. I'm going to use you whenever I need to.'

'Yes, Sir,' I moaned. The idea of being his to claim whenever he wanted made the blood rush to my pussy.

'Do you know why I used a condom in your ass, pretty girl?' he said as he slid out of me. I whimpered at the sudden loss of him. 'I'd much rather be able to dump your ass full of cum.'

'Why?'

'So I can do this.' He tore off the condom before thrusting deep into my pussy, making my eyes roll into the back of my head.

Then, he was gone. An angry whimper abandoned my lips as I waited for him to fill me back up.

'Look at your cunt clenching around nothing. Do you want my cock, Cora?'

'Yes!'

'What will you do to get it?'

'Anything,' I cried. 'Whatever you want.'

Ewen leaned over me and pressed his dick to the entrance of my pussy, taunting me with it.

'Will you marry me?'

My breath left me in one quick exhale. He bit his lip and watched as I froze.

'Are you serious?' I asked.

'Deadly.'

'You can't propose to me when I'm chained to the dining table.'

'Yes, I can. Because I want you to agree to this for the rest of our lives. To let me love you by day, and abuse you with my cock at night.'

He slid fully inside me as he spoke, so slowly that my whole body shuddered. When he scooped his hips, I almost came. He pulled out again and grazed the head of his dick over my clit.

'I've marked you with my whip and my teeth. You've taken my cum and my dick. I want to give you my name, too.'

My mind felt fuzzy with need. He wanted to marry me? To show the whole world that I belonged to him, and him to me.

He slid down between my thighs while he waited for my answer, his tongue grinding over my clit. I rocked against his mouth to the point of delirium. Pressure built in me as I panted, so close to coming.

Then, he stopped once more.

'You don't come until we're engaged,' he said. 'And when you do, it'll be around my fucking dick.'

'Will you keep me here until I say yes?' I asked, already knowing that I wanted to marry him.

'I will.'

He licked over me again, sliding his fingers into me as I let out a sob. 'Are you trying to torture me by waiting to make me hear your yes?'

His words rumbled over my clit. Sweat made me slide on the table as I tried to find friction against his face.

'I am,' I said.

He stood and pushed into me with a grunt before gripping my hips to the table. I clenched around him but needed more—I needed him to fuck me.

'Say it,' he growled.

'Tell me you need me,' I whispered.

'Cora, I've needed you since the moment you walked into my club. You've possessed my mind and body ever since. I wake up thinking of you and only go to bed satisfied inside of you. I may control you in the bedroom, but you have taken over my every thought. I'm obsessed with every fucking breath you take. Now say yes before I lose my goddamn mind.'

'Yes,' I said with a grin. 'Of course, I'll marry you.'

The dimples deepened as he grinned. 'Really? Not just saying it to get fucked?'

'Really.'

Then, he was on me, his mouth crushing mine as he thrust into me with powerful strokes. Within seconds, I was screaming against his lips, fire searing through me as I came hard beneath him. My nerve endings imploded with the intensity of the orgasm, my breath halting completely as my body quaked.

It took me a minute to realise that he hadn't come with me, and he stood up with a devilish grin crossing his face.

'You didn't think I was going to be so easy on you, did you?'

My chest rose, and I was panting while he slid slowly in and out of me.

'Oh, Cora, you don't get to be a brat and not expect a punishment. I'm going to spend the night making you come over and over until you beg me to fill you with my cum. Until your cunt puffs up and is so sensitive you'll beg me to fill your ass instead. You'll come so often that it will hurt.'

What had I got myself into?

A lifetime of delicious, painful, torture.

## **EPILOGUE**

#### **EWEN**

Wind buffeted at my kilt and sent Cora's dark hair dancing about her shoulders as the humanist spoke.

Cora's hands warmed mine as we were knotted together with the two strips of tartan, our shiny new rings clasped against one another. The handfasting brought an ancient, long-standing feel to our vows. How many thousands of others had stood in the wilds of Scotland vowing their lives to another just as we did?

'I'm delighted to pronounce you husband and wife,' she said. 'You may kiss your bride.'

The humanist removed the tartan knot and stepped back as I gathered Cora in my arms and kissed her. Her face beamed when I pulled back, and she gave a delighted squeal.

'We did it,' she said, wrapping her arms around my neck and kissing me again.

- 'My wife,' I said against her lips.
- 'My husband,' she said, emphasising the *my*.

'Getting possessive, are we?' Taking her hand, I led her to the little table where the humanist busied our marriage papers. It lay strewn with wildflowers and foliage, as messy and perfect as we were together.

'More than you know. I may have gotten a little something extra in your wedding ring.'

The gold banded signet ring gleamed on my finger, still feeling alien with its newness. 'Oh?'

'Now, I'll be able to know where you are every moment of every day, too. Just in case you go pissing off any other bad guys.'

'Now who's the little psycho?' I asked with a grin.

'Takes one to know one.'

After we signed the register and made it official, the humanist left us on the hillside alone, looking out over the mountains of Glencoe and sipping champagne. Gathering her in my lap, I pressed my face into her hair, inhaling deeply and sighing with satisfaction.

'I think I might be the happiest man alive.'

Cora's cheeks were rosy from the wind as she turned herself around in my lap. 'So what now? What do we do for the rest of our lives?'

'You'll be lucky if I let you leave my bed.'

She rolled her eyes at me before running her fingers over the buttons of my shirt. 'What if I want to pursue a career in photography? What if I need to travel and shoot elsewhere?'

'Then, I'll carry your bags for you.'

'You have a whole organisation to run here.' Her nose scrunched a little in the most adorable way. Placing a kiss on the end made her giggle.

'We're disbanding it. We've given up our whole lives to running an empire that we never asked for. We have more than enough money to last a lifetime. The business provided me with enough distraction to ignore how miserable I was before I met you. And I gave the club to Molly, with the prerequisite that we both get lifetime memberships.'

Cora's nostrils flared as she took in my words.

'Will it be safe? Won't disbanding put you at more risk?'

'Maeve and Cam will still be running their side of things. We'll be close enough that people will know messing with us will bring consequences. If I have no genuine power, there is nothing for anyone to take. Money is secondary in the crime sphere. Control and power are the actual goals.'

'And here was me thinking you never relinquished power.' Cora grinned.

'So, I'll be free to tan that arse of yours every single day, no matter where in the world.'

'Promises, promises,' she said.

With a growl, I pulled her over my lap and tugged her wedding dress up over her hips.

'Ewen,' she half-laughed and half-squealed.

Slapping my hand down with relish caused her to wriggle.

Two more spanks echoed through the glen, followed by the grunts as she exhaled. The lacy white thong she wore made my cock graze against my kilt. Slipping my finger beneath the material, I lazily finger fucked her as she whimpered.

'I should pin you down in the grass and fuck the shit out of your perfect ass, Mrs McGowan. Make you go back to the party with grass stains on your wedding dress and cum dripping down your thighs.'

Her voice was muffled by the wind and her position over my lap, but I laughed when she spoke. 'You too chicken?'

Blood pumped through me as I pushed her to the ground face first and hiked up my kilt, filling her cunt.

'My bratty fucking wife,' I groaned as her heat wrapped around me.

'I love hearing you say wife,' she whimpered. I thrust against her, digging her hips into the ground.

'Mine forever.'



#### CORA

Sneaking into the mansion an hour late brought cheers from our family and friends.

'Oh, my god,' Katie said. 'What happened to your dress?'

She pulled me into a hug before standing back and admiring my ring.

'I'm pretty sure ruined clothes are a symptom of being married to a McGowan,' Valentina added with a laugh.

'It was worth it,' Ewen said, passing me a glass of champagne as I blushed.

'Welcome to the family,' Maeve said as she joined our little group.

'The mad house, more like.' Mac looped his arm around Katie, running a hand up over her hip as she smiled.

Ruby ploughed through them all, not at all intimidated, and pounced on me with a cuddle.

'I can't believe you're married!

'Me either.'

'I'm so proud of you. Married with a degree and ready to take on the world. My baby sister is all grown up.'

'I'm like four minutes younger than you,' I said with a roll of my eyes. She'd settled into her new life without missing a beat. The McGowans had accepted her as a part of me, and it was a joy discovering a new side to our relationship. Abandoning the roles we'd long defined ourselves as had given us both so much more freedom. And in that freedom, we found a new, stronger sisterhood.

All around, the room was abuzz. Logan threw an arm around Ewen while Alec balanced one of his daughters on his hip. Elias and Grace entertained the other, making her giggle hysterically. Esther chatted to Molly and Adam while Mac opened another bottle of champagne.

Still no Alfie. Almost three months without a peep from him. Maeve and Cam had sent out word through the crime grapevine, but nobody had heard a single word. No sightings, nothing. I hoped he was okay. I'd only started to get to know him, but he had been kind and charming.

Alec and Esther's surrogate Granny Gladys sat quietly watching the furore. I took a seat next to her, and she reached over and patted my thigh.

'Are you having a good time?' I asked.

Her eyes were watery as she nodded. 'I never thought I'd get to be in the middle of a real family again.'

Looking around the room filled me with warmth.

'Me either,' I said.

'Make sure you cherish it, love. A family can be more fleeting than one would hope. Love comes in many forms, and you need to treat each one as of the utmost importance. Never be miserly with your affection, giving it freely will only ever enhance your life.

Ewen crossed the room and held out his hand. 'Dance with me?'

'You don't dance.' I lifted a brow at him.

'After almost losing you last time, I'll take any chance to be close to you. Even dancing.'

The other couples joined us as we swayed in the sitting room, soft music filtering from someone's phone. Inhaling his aftershave, mingled with the Scottish country air from our afternoon elopement, I tucked my head in the space beneath his chin.

'Do you regret not having a big, fancy wedding with all the bells and whistles?' Ewen asked.

'No. This is perfect. We have everyone we need right here.'

Ewen's hands fit against the small of my back, pulling me tight to him as he buried his face in my hair.

I hadn't realised that I'd spent my life waiting for him. Waiting for him to come into my life like a tornado and blow me off of my feet and right into his lap. In his arms, I was adored. Cherished. Beloved. Protected.

My prince charming may have come with a side of depraved darkness, but it was exactly what I needed to be happy.

Two freaks who made each other whole.

## THE MCGOWAN SERIES



 $\underline{\text{Book 1}}$  - Dark Escapes - Alec and Esther She's on the run, he's bringing her home. She's not going down without a fight

<u>Book 2</u> - Dark Enemies - Cam and Maeve Forced to wed, determined to burn his world down.

Book 3 - Dark Obsessions - Mac and Katie He's going to save her from her awful relationship, even if it means becoming her masked stalker.

Book 4 - Dark Desires - Logan and Valentina He's engaged to her cousin, but she knows he's the man for her. She won't stop until he knows it too.

## Book 5 - Dark Corruption Ewen and Cora



ALSO BY EFFIE

Alfie, Darling

**Heart of Wrath** 

**Corrupting Cupid** 

Theirs for Christmas

# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for reading Ewen and Cora's story, the final book in my Scots mafia series. Getting into Ewen's unhinged head was a lot of fun!

It's bittersweet to say good bye to the McGowans, but the good news it that rascal Alfie will be back soon with his own book. Let's see where he disappeared to, shall we?

A huge thank you to my wonderful family. My husband who doesn't sulk too much when I ignore him for days on end to meet a deadline and my lovely children who support me even though there's no way they'll ever be allowed to read Mummy's books.

Thank you to you, for reading this book, and to all my readers and supporters. It's thanks to all of you that my writing dream is becoming a reality, and I am endlessly grateful.

Love, Effie



If you'd like to keep up with my books and me, you can find me on <u>TikTok</u> and Instagram (@effiecampbellauthor), <u>Facebook</u> (effiecampbellauthor) and <u>Amazon</u>.

If you enjoyed Dark Corruption, I'd love a review on Amazon or Goodreads, or wherever you enjoy reviewing books.

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