

TIME TO PLAY MY GAME NOW, MISCHIEF...

GAME OVER

SELENA WINTERS

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Proofread by: B. Fielder, CCS Editing

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BLURB

In the game of predator and prey, sometimes the greatest trap is discovering you no longer want to escape.

I've always escaped into gaming when reality became too much. As MistressOfMischief, I found freedom behind a screen, building a bond with my online partner, Rogue. Our bond felt more real than most of my '*real*' relationships. For over two years, we shared victories and late-night conversations—I thought I knew him.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

When I wake in Ryker Kent's compound after being drugged at GamerCon, I discover the horrifying truth: Rogue, my trusted gaming companion, and GhostDaddy, the TikTok cosplayer I secretly fantasized about, are the same man—a brilliant, dangerous billionaire who's been watching me for years.

Ryker has designed a twisted game just for me, with levels that push me beyond my limits. From humiliating tasks to being hunted through forests, each challenge strips away another layer of my defenses, forcing me to confront desires I've kept buried. The further I progress, the more I realize a terrifying truth: the darkness within me thrives under his control, making me crave the danger he provides.

Now, as the outside world beckons, I must decide: do I escape the man who kidnapped me or embrace the one who truly sees me—a man whose obsession has become my salvation?

In this dangerous game, there's only one thing I know for certain: no matter who wins, nothing will ever be the same again.

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PLAYLIST

GAME OVER PLAYLIST

“Havoc”— Dré Tamashī
“Heaven”— Julia Michaels
“Good Girl”— Slaz
“Panic Room”— Au/Ra
“Meet You in Hell”— Jade LeMac
“Praise Kink”— Manic Kazzy
“Do It Like That”— Nevv, Hostile Beatz
“Nasty Nasty”— Rumelis
“Soaked”— Shy Smith
“NIGHTCRAWLER”— KIRRA47, Kukielle, Desire4u
“Dirtier Thoughts”— Nation Haven
“Show Me”— Dean Raven
“All Over Me”— KEELIN

You can find the playlist on Spotify [here](#)

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To all the girls who've wondered what would happen if the inked masked man on TikTok stepped through the screen, kidnapped them, and turned their bodies into the ultimate playground. This is for you...

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This story explores dark romance and contains explicit content that may not be suitable for all readers. It includes themes of dominance, psychotic behavior, possessiveness, and explicit mature scenes presented alongside delicate subject matters that may be distressing or triggering for some individuals.

Please refer to the comprehensive [list](#) of warnings on my website for detailed information on this book's triggers.

I advise reader discretion and recommend only proceeding if you're comfortable with the mentioned themes. Rest assured, the story ends in a HEA with no cliffhanger or cheating between the main characters.

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RYKER

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TWENTY-ONE MONTHS AGO...

T

he light from her webcam glows red, revealing a tiny digital eye she thinks is off. That was a rookie mistake, Mischief. Two clicks through the backdoor I installed last week, and I'm in. Her face fills my second monitor—animated, alive, beautiful.

“Nice kill, Rogue! You saved my ass back there.” Her voice bubbles through my headset, music to my ears, while her character on screen reloads.

“Always watching your six.” If only she knew how literal that is.

We've been playing for three hours straight. My character and Mistress of Mischief—Kira Ellis, when she's not dominating leaderboards. I found her three months ago when I was drowning in the pressure of scaling KentSec Systems. The company was expanding faster than anticipated, with government contracts and Fortune 500 clients demanding more time than I could give.

Gaming was my only escape. Late at night, when my executive team had finally gone home, I'd retreat to my private office and lose myself in virtual worlds where I controlled everything. That's when I stumbled across her stream.

Most streamers were predictable—over-animated personalities selling a carefully crafted image. But Kira was different. She played with genuine passion, cursing colorfully when she lost, celebrating victories with an uninhibited joy I hadn't felt in years. No performative bullshit, just raw authenticity in a world of fakery.

I joined her lobby on a whim. We won three matches back-to-back, her strategies complementing mine, like we'd been gaming together for years.

When she sent me a friend request afterward, something shifted inside me. The billionaire CEO who commanded rooms full of tech giants felt a thrill at being noticed by this nobody streamer with barely a thousand followers.

“Same time tomorrow, Rogue?” she’d asked.

I’d agreed without hesitation.

What started as casual gaming sessions evolved into something deeper. Night after night, match after match, I learned more about her. She worked retail during the day and streamed at night, chasing a dream of making content creation her career. She lived alone with a collection of gaming memorabilia that meant more to her than status symbols. She’d rather spend Friday nights raiding with online friends than clubbing like others her age.

The more I learned, the more fascinated I became. Here was someone completely untouched by the cutthroat world I inhabited daily—someone genuine in a way I’d forgotten existed. The stark contrast between her life and mine—her modest apartment versus my penthouse, her struggle to make rent versus my offshore accounts—created an intoxicating dissonance.

I started skipping board meetings to play with her and rescheduling investor calls when they conflicted with her streaming schedule. My COO noticed, of course.

“Whatever’s got you distracted better be worth the company’s valuation dropping three points,” he’d warned.

It was worth far more than that.

One month in, I began testing her security systems—a simple probe, just to see how vulnerable she was. The ease with which I accessed her network should have horrified me professionally. Instead, it thrilled me personally. Her digital life opened before me like a book I couldn’t stop reading. Her emails revealed struggles with student loans. Her search history showed lonely Friday nights looking up “how to make friends as an adult.” Her photo gallery contained selfies she’d taken but never posted—beautiful, unfiltered moments of someone unsure of her worth.

I told myself I was protecting her, that someone with her lack of cybersecurity knowledge needed a guardian, that it was better for me than some actual predator. The lies we tell ourselves are always the most convincing.

Her room comes into focus behind her—posters of games I recognize, a bookshelf crammed with collector’s editions, and an unmade bed with dark

purple sheets. I've memorized every inch of that space. Every detail is another piece of her I possess.

"One more round?" she asks, stretching her arms above her head. The motion lifts her shirt slightly, revealing a strip of bare skin above her sweatpants. My throat tightens.

"Can't. Early meeting tomorrow." The lie comes easily. "Raincheck?"

I have an early meeting about acquiring a smaller security firm to expand KentSec's reach into Europe. But I'd cancel it in a heartbeat if she pushed harder. Years of building my company, and I'd risk it all for another hour in her digital presence. My board would have collective heart attacks if they knew their CEO was obsessed with a retail worker who streams games at night.

"Fine, abandon me." She pouts, her lower lip jutting out. "Catch you tomorrow night?"

"Wouldn't miss it."

"Night, Rogue. Sweet dreams."

If she only knew what I dream about.

Her avatar disappears from the lobby. The game closes on her end, but my connection to her remains unbroken. I minimize the game window, enlarging the webcam feed to full screen.

Kira sighs and rolls her neck, unaware of my presence, as she pulls off her headset. Her dark hair cascades down, falling across her shoulders. She reaches for her phone, scrolling through social media, laughing softly at something. Every expression is a gift she doesn't know she's giving me.

She scrolls through her phone while my fingers dance across my keyboard. Most people have no idea how easy it is to mirror a device when you've already infiltrated their network. Kira's digital footprint is an open book to me—her passwords, browsing history, and private folders are all mine.

The irony isn't lost on me. I've built a billion-dollar empire selling cybersecurity solutions and promising digital privacy to corporations and governments worldwide. Yet here I am, violating every principle my company stands for and every law I claim to protect against.

For her, I'd burn it all down.

TikTok loads on her screen, her view visible on my screen. Her For You Page algorithm knows her better than her friends do, but not better than me. I've been feeding it for weeks, carefully manipulating what she sees.

“Let’s see what you’re in the mood for tonight,” I murmur, as her thumb pauses on my video.

A muscled man, shirtless and covered in tattoos, fills the frame. The Ghost mask from Call of Duty obscures his face as he performs a slow, suggestive dance. Since we met, I’ve been posting these videos under the GhostDaddy account—content made specifically for her, disguised as general thirst traps. The algorithm delivers them perfectly.

She doesn’t scroll past, biting her lip as she taps to see the creator’s page.

“That’s it, baby. Go deeper,” I encourage.

Kira bites her lip as she watches another video featuring the same masked figure running hands over tattooed abs—my tattooed abs. The lighting is low, and the music is pulsing. I filmed it in my private gym last week, knowing she’d see it eventually. Each movement is carefully choreographed to highlight the muscles I’ve built through obsessive workouts, the ink that covers my skin telling stories she can’t yet read.

A small, breathy sound escapes her lips—a moan so quiet she probably doesn’t realize she made it. My body responds instantly. She leans back in her gaming chair, her free hand sliding beneath the waistband of her sweatpants.

“Fuck,” I hiss, adjusting myself. Watching her watch me—even if she doesn’t know it’s me—creates a loop of desire. Her eyes remain fixed on the phone as she touches herself, captivated by the masked stranger who’s actually been playing games with her every night. The same man she’s been gaming with for the past three months now has her writhing in her chair, unaware that both men are the same.

Another video auto-plays. Another performance I crafted specifically for this moment follows trends as I thrust my hips toward the camera while the lights dim in and out. Her breathing changes, growing heavier. I lean closer to my screen, unwilling to miss a second of what I’ve orchestrated.

I unbutton my jeans with one hand, never looking away from the screen. The power of this moment—seeing her touch herself to my videos, completely unaware I’m the man behind the mask—is intoxicating. Every pixel of her face is mine to devour.

“That’s right,” I urge, wrapping my hand around my cock. “Show me how much you want me.”

Kira's eyes flutter closed briefly on-screen before opening again, fixating on another of my videos. The irony is delicious—her gaming partner witnesses her most intimate moment while being the very fantasy she's getting off to. The manipulation makes my dick throb in my palm.

I stroke myself slowly, matching her rhythm. Her breathing grows more erratic, tiny moans escaping those plump lips. I've memorized every sound she makes during our gaming sessions—her frustrated sighs when she loses, her victory squeals, and her hums when she is concentrating. But these sounds? These belong to me alone.

"We're connected in ways you can't even imagine," I groan quietly, increasing my pace. My free hand flies across the keyboard, pulling up another window showing the inside of her phone. I can see exactly which video she's got open—one where I slowly remove my shirt while wearing the Ghost mask, revealing the tattoo of the same mask inked over my heart. A tattoo I got a week after I first found her stream.

My shareholders would be horrified if they knew their CEO had permanently marked his body for a woman who doesn't even know his real name. The Ghost mask tattoo—at odds with the polished image I present in boardrooms—is my private tribute to the only real thing in my life.

Every detail of her bedroom is etched into my memory: her LED lights cast a purple glow across her skin, the stuffed gaming characters lined up on her shelf, and the collection of empty energy drink cans she hasn't bothered to throw away. I know her better than anyone in her life.

Her movements grow more urgent, and mine follow suit. The synchronicity between us and her not knowing sends fire through my veins. She's performing for me without consent, and I'm performing for her under false pretenses.

Her back arches, her movements growing more intense. My breathing matches hers, and we climb toward the same peak, separated by miles and screens. The distance is temporary, a detail she doesn't know yet.

The digital connection between us pulses like a living thing. Every moan, every silent gasp feeding the obsession that's consumed me since I first heard her voice in that lobby three months ago. Most people think hacking is about stealing data or money. They have no idea the intimacy you can steal.

The video on her phone loops—my tattooed torso flexing beneath dim lights, Ghost mask obscuring my identity. I've spent hours on these videos,

studying what makes her linger on certain TikToks. The algorithm learns her desires, but I'm the one teaching it.

"Come for me," I groan, pressure building as I stroke faster. "Let me see what you hide from everyone else."

Her movements become erratic, her phone falling to the side as both hands disappear beneath her waistband. The sight pushes me closer to the edge. Power surges through me, as I witness her most vulnerable moment while she has no idea I'm here or that I engineered this entire scenario.

A strangled sound escapes her lips as she comes, her body tensing and then relaxing in waves. The sight triggers my own release, intense and sharp. For a moment, we're synchronized in our pleasure, connected in a way she can't comprehend.

As she recovers, her chest rising and falling, a lazy smile spreads across her face. She picks up her phone, still open to my GhostDaddy account, and taps the follow button.

"Gotcha!" I wipe my hands on a nearby towel. Another connection was established, and another thread binds her to me.

She stretches and yawns, unaware of my presence as she stands and heads toward her bathroom. I could watch her all night, but patience is part of the game. I've waited this long. I can wait a little more.

I close her webcam feed but leave the connection intact. Tomorrow, we'll play games again—Rogue and MistressOfMischief—and she'll never suspect that her gaming partner and her new TikTok fantasy are identical.

Or that, in the end, fantasy and reality will collide.

KIRA

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ONE YEAR AGO...

“*M*y kill! That sniper was mine, Rogue!” I laugh, because I’m not really mad. Not at him. Never at him.

“Too slow, Mischief.” His voice is deep and smooth, like good whiskey, I imagine. However, I’ve never actually developed a taste for the stuff. “You hesitated.”

“Did not.” I line up another shot, the familiar rush of playing with him flooding my system. It’s been over a year of this—night after night, game after game. Sometimes, I wonder if I keep playing just to hear his voice.

The kill count flashes on the screen. Another victory. Our fortieth this week.

“That’s how it’s done.” I stretch my arms overhead. My back cracks in three places. How long have we been playing? The darkness outside my window suggests hours.

“You’re getting better.” There’s pride in his tone, which makes my stomach flip in that stupid way I hate and crave simultaneously.

“I had a good teacher.” I swallow, gathering courage. “Hey, so... GamerCon is this month.”

His silence tells me everything before he even speaks.

“Mischief—”

“I know, I know. You’re busy. You’re not into crowds. You live too far away.”

“It’s complicated.”

It’s always complicated with Rogue. After a year of late-night conversations about everything from childhood fears to conspiracy theories,

I don't even know what he looks like. There is no social media or video chats, just his voice and his presence in these digital worlds we inhabit.

The red flags are obvious. I'm not stupid—I've seen enough true crime documentaries to fill a semester course. A guy who refuses to video chat? Who dodges personal questions about his job beyond vague mentions of "tech"? Who never shares photos but somehow knows what I wore to my cousin's wedding last month without me telling him?

I should have cut contact months ago. That's what any reasonable person would do.

"We could just grab a coffee," I persist, ignoring the warning bells. "One hour of real life. I promise not to be disappointed when you don't look like Thor."

He laughs, but it's tighter than before. "Trust me, reality is overrated."

"Says the man who knows what I look like." I'd streamed enough for him to know every detail of my face. The imbalance sometimes bothers me, but then he'll say something that makes me feel so seen that I forget why it matters.

"I know what makes you... You," he says quietly. "You rage-quit when you're hungry. I know you hum when you're lining up a difficult shot. I know you better than people who see you every day."

And that's the problem. He does know me. Sometimes, it feels like he knows things about me I haven't even told him. Like last week, when he asked if my headache was better—a headache I'd only mentioned to my mom on a private call. Or how he sent me a message checking if I was okay precisely five minutes after I'd had a meltdown over a work email.

Coincidences, I tell myself. They have to be.

We fall back into our rhythm, picking off enemies and calling out positions. The same hollow feeling I get after every failed attempt to meet him settles in my chest.

"Hostile on your six," he says, voice steady as always.

I take the shot without responding, my enthusiasm deflated like a day-old birthday balloon.

After a few more rounds, I fake a yawn. "Think I'm gonna call it a night."

"You sure? It's only one a.m. Usually, I can't drag you away until the birds start singing."

He knows my patterns too well. It's both comforting and unsettling. He never messages me when I'm in the shower, but always seems to text within minutes of me settling back at my desk. Or that he somehow knows which days I work late shifts without me updating my schedule.

"Yeah, just... tired, I guess."

After we disconnect, I sit in the dim glow of my monitor, twirling a strand of hair around my finger. The quiet of my apartment presses in. My bedroom—with walls covered in gaming posters and action figures lining my shelves—is my sanctuary and sometimes my prison.

I've never felt so connected to someone who's essentially a ghost. Rogue knows what music I listen to when I'm sad. He remembers which foods I'm allergic to. He can tell when I've had a bad day before I say a word.

Yet, I've never seen his face. Never touched his hand. Never confirmed he's even real beyond that voice in my headset.

I glance at my webcam, and a chill runs through me. Is it supposed to have that green light? I could have sworn I turned it off after my last stream. I cover it with a sticky note—something I don't usually do. The paranoia is probably ridiculous, but still.

I pull up GamerCon's website, staring at the countdown clock. Ten days. I've been looking forward to it for months—my first major convention. I bought the outfit for cosplaying as Luna from Stellar Wars. I've saved up. Planned everything.

And stupidly, I'd built up this fantasy of finally meeting Rogue there.

My phone lights up with a notification. It's from GhostDaddy's TikTok—another video posted. I tap it immediately, hungry for the distraction.

I wonder what Rogue would think if he knew I followed Thirst Trap gaming accounts. Would he laugh? Judge me?

The GhostDaddy video plays on my phone. A muscular guy dressed as Ghost from Call of Duty demonstrates combat moves in slow motion. The tight black shirt clings to his abs as he executes each precise movement. My stomach clenches when he turns to the camera and delivers Ghost's signature line in a gravelly voice.

I press my thighs together, suddenly aware of how pathetic this is—getting hot and bothered over some anonymous TikTok cosplayer while lying alone in my bed at one in the morning.

My hand hovers over my waistband, but Rogue's rejection echoes in my head. "Reality is overrated." Easy for him to say. My reality is this—fantasizing about strangers on the internet because the one guy I connect with won't even meet me for coffee.

"Fuck it," I mutter, tossing my phone aside. The mood's gone, anyway.

I grab my phone again and dial Jenna. She answers on the third ring, voice thick with sleep.

"Kira? What's wrong? It's after one."

"He's not coming to GamerCon," I say, not bothering with hello. "Again."

A rustling sound, like she's sitting up in bed. "Rogue? The mystery man strikes again, huh?"

"I don't get it, Jen. We talk every night. He knows everything about me. But he won't even—"

"Meet you in person? Sweetie, we've been over this." Her voice softens. "Have you considered he might not be who he says he is?"

I stare at my ceiling. The glow-in-the-dark stars I put up freshman year faded to dull yellow patches. "You think he's some fifty-year-old creep?"

"Or married. Or just... not ready for whatever this is to be real."

"I've thought about all that," I admit, my voice smaller than I'd like. "Sometimes I get this weird feeling he knows more about me than he should. Like he's stalking me." I laugh nervously. "God, that sounds so paranoid when I say it out loud."

"It's not paranoid," Jenna says firmly. "It's your instincts talking. You should listen to them."

I roll onto my side, curling around my phone like a lifeline. "Why am I so hung up on someone who's basically a voice and a Gamertag?"

"Because you're a romantic who lives half her life in virtual worlds?" Jenna suggests. "Look, GamerCon will be amazing with or without your internet boyfriend. We'll have so much fun you won't even think about him."

"You're right." I sigh, letting Jenna's practical wisdom wash over me. "I'm building this fantasy around someone who won't even turn on his webcam."

"Exactly. For all you know, Rogue could be a fourteen-year-old prodigy or using a voice modulator."

I laugh despite myself. “God, don’t even joke about that. I’ve told him things I’ve never told anyone.”

“You deserve someone who shows up, not just logs in.” Jenna yawns, but I can tell she’s fully awake now. “GamerCon is going to be epic. The cosplay competition alone will be worth the ticket price.”

The knot in my chest loosens a little. “Speaking of cosplay, how’s your Tracer costume coming along?”

“Almost done! Found these yellow leggings that don’t make my butt look weird. The chrono accelerator thing was a nightmare, though. Three failed attempts before I got the glow right.”

“Send pics!” I shift to sit cross-legged on my bed, already feeling better. This is why I love Jenna—she never lets me wallow.

“Tomorrow. It’s sprawled across my living room in pieces. What about your Luna? Still doing the galaxy hair?”

“Yeah, I got this temporary deep blue dye with silver specks. Tested it on a hair extension, and it looks cosmic as hell.” My excitement bubbles back up. “And I found these contacts that make my eyes look like they have stars in them.”

“You’re going all out! Any progress on the light sword?”

“It’s a plasma blade,” I correct automatically. “And yes, I finally got the LED sequence right. It pulses from blue to purple just like in the game.”

Jenna laughs. “Only you would spend three weeks programming LEDs to match a fictional weapon.”

“Says the girl who hand-stitched leather accents onto her goggles.”

“Touché.” She pauses. “Feel better?”

I realize I do. The sting of Rogue’s rejection is still there, but duller now. “Yeah. Thanks for talking me down. Night, Jen. Love you.”

“Love you too. Try to sleep, okay? Real life awaits in the morning.”

I end the call and toss my phone beside me on the bed. She’s right, as usual. Real life. The thing Rogue seems so determined to avoid.

With a sigh, I drag myself up and shuffle to my dresser. My reflection in the mirror looks tired—dark circles under my eyes from too many late-night gaming sessions. I pull out my favorite sleep shirt—oversized, soft, with a faded Stellar Wars logo across the chest—and a pair of shorts.

Before changing, I quickly scan my bedroom, checking corners and shelves. Another paranoid habit I’ve developed lately. Jenna would laugh if

she knew I sometimes check for hidden cameras. Still, after some of Rogue's eerily accurate comments about my apartment, I can't help it.

The cool night air raises goosebumps on my skin as I change. My gaming chair sits empty, the monitor's standby light blinking like a distant star. For a moment, I can almost hear Rogue's voice coming from my headset: "One more round. Just one more."

I brush my teeth, splash water on my face, and return to bed. My sheets are cool against my legs as I slide under the covers. I should be exhausted—it's almost two a.m. now—but my mind refuses to power down.

What does Rogue look like? The question circles in my head like a loading icon. Is he tall? Short? Young? Old? Does he have tattoos like GhostDaddy? Is his laugh as warm in person as it sounds through my headset?

I roll onto my side, punching my pillow. This is ridiculous. He's just a gamer I met online—one of thousands. Yet somehow, he's become this presence in my life, this voice that cuts through everything else.

"Reality is overrated." His words replay in my mind. Is his reality so terrible that he can't share even a glimpse of it with me? Or am I the one building castles in the digital sand, assigning depth to someone who might just see me as a convenient teammate?

Sleep remains just out of reach. In that twilight state between waking and dreaming, I imagine meeting him at GamerCon—turning around to find his eyes on me, knowing me instantly. Would I recognize something in his eyes? Some echo of the connection I feel when we play?

It's a fantasy, and I know it. But as consciousness slips away, I can't help clinging to it.

RYKER

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PRESENT DAY

*T*he knife slices through the air as I test its balance again. Satisfaction ripples through me. Everything must be perfect for Kira. I place it back in the specialized case alongside five identical blades, each sharpened to surgical precision. Not that I plan to hurt Kira—far from it. But tools are essential, regardless of their purpose.

My phone chimes—a notification from our gaming platform. Kira's online but hasn't invited me to play—the third time this week.

I slide into my custom gaming chair, which matches hers down to the manufacturer's serial number. The multiple screens in my command center light up my face with their blue glow. One monitor displays her apartment's interior through the cameras I installed during a "maintenance visit" to her building ten months ago. She's sitting cross-legged on her bed, controller in hand, headset on, laughing with someone else.

My fingers close around the stress ball on my desk, squeezing until my knuckles turn white.

"Just a phase," I tell myself. "My girl is getting restless before I bring her home."

Twenty-four months of planning, at least two years of my life devoted to this moment. When I first found Kira, KentSec Systems was still in its early stages—a promising cybersecurity startup with innovative protocols that caught government attention. Now, with a net worth of \$1.2 billion and contracts with three-letter agencies I can't name publicly, I have resources that would make most intelligence operations envious.

Money was never the issue. Even before KentSec's IPO made me obscenely wealthy, I'd amassed enough from my earlier "gray hat" days to

fund this project. The skills came naturally—a childhood spent dissecting electronics while hiding from my father’s rage, followed by years bouncing between foster homes where I learned to disappear into systems and code. MIT’s full scholarship was wasted when they expelled me for “ethical violations” in my second year. Still, by then, I’d already absorbed everything their outdated curriculum could offer.

What I needed was time—time to build this sanctuary, study Kira, and ensure every variable was accounted for.

I swipe to another screen showing my property—five acres of densely wooded land with a custom-built house that appears modest outside but extends three levels underground. The basement levels don’t exist on any building plans. The room I’ve prepared for her sits ready, designed to mirror her bedroom with subtle improvements. It has the same purple LED lights, the same gaming setup, only better, and even her favorite snacks stocked in the mini-fridge.

The construction took eight months, employing separate crews for different phases so no single contractor knew the full scope. Paying a triple rate ensured no questions were asked. The surveillance systems alone cost more than most people’s homes—\$1.3 million in proprietary tech, some of it “borrowed” from KentSec’s government prototypes.

My phone buzzes again. A direct message from Kira.

“Hey Rogue, you never answered about GamerCon. Are you going this year? We could finally meet IRL!”

I smile at my screen, eager and trusting. I type back carefully: “Work’s crazy right now. I’m not sure I can swing it. Let’s talk about it later?”

Another deflection. Another small disappointment I have to cause my girl. Temporary pain for permanent pleasure.

I turn to the wall where I’ve mapped out every detail of the convention center, including staff rotations, security camera positions, and the exact route from her hotel to the main hall. Two weeks from now, everything changes.

I’ve had eyes inside GamerCon’s planning committee for fourteen months. One of my shell companies is a major sponsor, giving me access to staff lists, security protocols, and facility blueprints. The \$250,000 “donation” to the convention’s charity partner bought me a seat on their advisory board, allowing me to suggest certain security measures—all designed with specific vulnerabilities I could exploit.

I pull up my favorite folder on my encrypted hard drive. “Kira Ellis—Timeline.” Twenty-four months of data, meticulously organized. Her daily routines have been mapped with military precision. Her menstrual cycle tracked like clockwork. Her entire digital footprint is cataloged and analyzed.

Maintaining dual lives hasn’t been easy. By day, I’m Ryker Kent, the reclusive tech genius whose rare public appearances make headlines in the business world. My executive team handles most client interactions, allowing me to disappear for days without raising eyebrows. “Mr. Kent is working on a new security protocol” has become corporate shorthand for “don’t ask questions.” The eighty-hour weeks I put in during KentSec’s early days bought me the freedom to vanish now.

Three personal assistants manage my public life, none with access to my private calendar. My board of directors knows better than to question my methods, not when our stock price has tripled in eighteen months. The beauty of being a billionaire is that eccentricity becomes an expected trait rather than a red flag.

I scroll through screenshots of her private messages to Jenna. “I don’t know what it is about Rogue, but there’s something so... safe about him?”

Safe. I laugh. If only Kira knew the lengths I’ve gone to know every inch of her life.

I tab over to the 3D rendering of the convention center, toggling between layers showing electrical systems, security protocols, and staff schedules. I’ve already secured employment for two of my aliases at GamerCon—one working security, the other handling tech in the main hall.

Creating these identities cost \$75,000 and involved soliciting favors from contacts in the web’s darkest corners. The background checks were thorough, but nothing compared to what KentSec provides for government contractors. Ironically, my company’s security protocols would have flagged these identities as suspicious—the ultimate insider threat.

The sedative doses are exact for her body weight—76.4 kilograms, as of last Tuesday’s doctor’s appointment. The half-life is timed so she’ll wake disoriented but unharmed in the room I’ve prepared. The observation suite connects through a two-way mirror, allowing me to monitor her adjustment phase.

I open another file containing furniture receipts. Everything in her future space matches her current bedroom, down to the thread count of her

sheets. I've even recreated the view from her window—a digital screen programmed with the exact pattern of sunlight that streams through her east-facing apartment.

The replica bedroom alone cost \$430,000. Custom furniture was built to match her IKEA originals but with higher-quality materials. Specialized lighting mimics her apartment's exact color temperature, and the digital window system costs more than most luxury cars.

I touch the screen where her face smiles from a selfie she never posted publicly. The practice dummies helped me learn the restraint system—comfortable enough to prevent tissue damage but secure enough to withstand her inevitable initial resistance.

"It's not kidnapping," I reason. "It's rescue."

I've seen her cry alone at night, scroll through dating apps without matching, and confess her loneliness to her reflection. I've spent two years as an observer of her life through cameras hidden in smoke detectors and everyday objects, knowing her better than she knows herself.

My company's board would throw me under the bus if they knew how their CEO spent his private hours. The man whose security systems protect nuclear facilities and presidential communications, using his expertise to monitor a woman who streams games at night.

In two weeks, none of that will matter. My COO is prepared for my extended absence—a "medical retreat" in Switzerland, complete with NDA-bound staff who'll maintain the illusion through scheduled emails and occasional video calls using deepfake technology. After all, reality is overrated.

GamerCon is where Kira's loneliness ends, and our real story begins.

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KIRA

I lean forward in my gaming chair, fingers tightening around my controller as Ghost's character model creeps around the corner on my screen. The familiar rush of adrenaline courses through my veins—this is what I live for.

“Got movement behind you,” Rogue’s deep voice comes through my headset. His West Coast accent still catches me off guard sometimes, even after gaming together for two years.

“Thanks for the heads up.” I spin Ghost around, catching the enemy player trying to sneak up behind me. Two quick bursts from my rifle, and they drop. “That’s what you get for thinking you can sneak up on MistressOfMischief.”

Rogue’s low chuckle fills my ears. “Nice shot. Your aim’s getting better.”

“Getting better? I’ve always been this good.” I stick my tongue out even though he can’t see me. “You’re just mad because I’m about to break your kill streak record.”

“In your dreams.”

The match timer counts down as we clear the map together, our characters moving in sync. Rogue and I met in a random lobby, but his skill caught my attention. Now, we’re an unstoppable team.

“So, how’s the convention prep going?” he asks between firefights.

“Just finished my Aloy costume, actually.” I grab a handful of chips from the bowl next to my keyboard. “The armor pieces were a pain to make, but worth it. Even got the bow looking perfect.”

“Horizon Zero Dawn? Nice choice.”

“Yeah, figured I’d do something different than my usual League costumes. Plus, she’s badass.” I wipe my fingers on my sweatpants. “You should come to GamerCon, you know. It would be cool to finally meet my gaming partner in person.”

“Not really my scene.” His voice takes on an edge I can’t quite read.

“Come on, it’ll be fun! There are tournaments, panels, merch...” I lean back in my chair. “Plus, you can see my cosplay in person instead of just the progress pics I keep sending.”

“Those pics have been... interesting.” My cheeks heat at the tone of his voice.

“Well, there are still tickets available if you change your mind. You already have the Ghost costume you sent me photos of.”

The sound of gunfire interrupts as another player rushes our position. I take them down with a clean headshot.

“I’ll think about it,” Rogue says after a moment. “When is it again?”

“In two weeks. Friday through Sunday at the convention center downtown.” I bounce in my seat. “Please say you’ll come? I need someone to watch my back while I navigate the vendor hall in full armor.”

His laugh sends a shiver down my spine. “Always looking out for you. Let me check my schedule.”

My phone buzzes on the desk, Jenna’s smiling face lighting up the screen.

“Sorry, Rogue. I have to take this.” I switch to my phone. “Hey, Jen!”

“Girl, where are you? We were supposed to meet for coffee like twenty minutes ago!”

I glance at the time and curse. “Shit, sorry! Got caught up in a match with Rogue.”

“Of course you did.” Jenna’s eye roll is practically audible. “You better not be late for the costume fitting tomorrow. I’m not letting you walk around GamerCon with unfinished armor.”

“I’ll be there.” I start gathering my things. “Hey, Rogue might actually come this year!”

“Mhmm. Just like he was ‘thinking about it’ last year.”

“He seemed more interested this year.”

“Kira, sweetie, he’s been stringing you along about meeting up for how long now?”

“It’s not like that.” I pull on my shoes while balancing the phone. “We’re just gaming friends.”

“Right. Gaming friends who flirt constantly and send each other cosplay pics.”

“I gotta go, Rogue,” I speak into my headset. “Thanks for the matches!”

“Later, Mischief.” His voice still has that edge to it.

I disconnect and grab my bag. “He’s different from what you think, Jen. You should hear how he talks about game mechanics and strategy. The guy’s brilliant.”

“I’m sure he is. But two years of ‘maybe next time’ is a pattern.” Jenna sighs. “Just be careful, okay? I’ll see you at the café in ten?”

“Make it fifteen.”

“Fine. But you’re buying my coffee to make up for being late!”

I laugh and hang up, but Jenna’s words stick with me as I head for my car. Maybe she has a point about Rogue always finding excuses not to meet, but it feels different this time.

The late afternoon sun filters through Crimson Coffee’s windows, casting golden rectangles across the worn wooden floors. I weave between tables filled with students hunched over laptops and young professionals tapping on phones, the familiar scent of espresso and pastries wrapping around me like a hug.

Jenna’s laptop is open at our usual corner table, fingers flying across the keyboard. Her blonde hair is piled in a messy bun, held together with what looks like two pencils.

“Before you start,” I drop into the chair across from her, “I brought peace offerings.” I slide a chocolate croissant across the table, seeing her face light up despite her attempt to maintain a stern expression.

“You’re lucky I love you.” She breaks off a piece, flaky crumbs scattering across her keyboard. “Help me with this boss fight? My players are getting too cocky and need a reality check.”

I peek at her notes, squinting at her chaotic handwriting. A barista passes by, and I flag her for my usual caramel latte.

“What level are they?”

“Eight. And they just steamrolled through my carefully planned dungeon like it was nothing.” She gestures at her screen, where a complex dungeon map is filled with crossed-out traps and encounters.

“Throw a Beholder at them.” I pick at the croissant, stealing a piece for myself. “That’ll teach them to respect your authority as DM.”

“Evil. I love it.” Jenna types furiously, her grin almost predatory. The afternoon crowd swells around us, the café filling with after-work customers seeking caffeine fixes. A group of teenagers at the next table erupts in laughter, momentarily drowning out the indie folk music playing overhead.

My latte arrives, and the barista sets it down. I take a sip, the sweet caramel cutting through the bitter espresso.

“So,” Jenna says, closing her laptop with a decisive click. “Rogue situation. Updates?”

I play it cool, but can’t help the warmth creeping up my neck. “It’s not a ‘situation.’ We game together.”

“Uh-huh.” She leans forward, resting her chin on her hand. “And I spent three hours picking my Discord profile pic because I’m ‘just really into photography.’”

“That’s different! You need to maintain your image as a serious Dungeon Master.”

“Right, because the cat ears filter really screams ‘fear my power.’” She flicks a croissant crumb at me.

I dodge it, laughing. Outside, the street lights flicker on as dusk settles over the city. The café’s ambient lighting shifts in response, warm bulbs casting everything in a cozy glow.

“But seriously,” Jenna says, her voice dropping as she stirs her coffee. “You’re being careful, right?”

I trace the rim of my mug as the caramel swirl dissolves into the foam. “I know, I know. Strange men on the internet, stranger danger. But we’ve been gaming together for two years, Jen. He’s not some random creep.”

A customer drops a mug at the counter, the crash momentarily silencing the café before conversations resume, slightly louder than before.

“Just promise you’ll let me meet him if he shows up at the con?” Jenna reaches across the table, squeezing my hand. “My spidey senses are usually right about people.”

“Deal.” I squeeze back. “Though your spidey senses also told you that guy at last year’s convention was cosplaying Naruto when he was clearly Bleach.”

“That was ONE time!” she protests, throwing her hands up.

“Are you forgetting when you mistook a Pikachu for a Raichu?” I remind her.

Jenna’s face turns red. “That was in middle school! And they look practically identical.” She grabs her phone, presumably to do a Google image search.

“One has a long tail and is three times bigger!” I laugh, pulling my own phone out. “Look, I’ll show you.”

We huddle over our phones, shoulders bumping as we compare Pokémon images, bickering good-naturedly. The café has emptied somewhat, the after-work rush dissipating as evening settles in. Outside, streetlights cast pools of yellow on the darkening sidewalk.

“Anyway,” Jenna says, setting her phone down with a definitive tap. “Back to your mystery man.”

I fiddle with my coffee cup, running my finger through a drop of condensation on the table. “He’s sent me some photos.”

“Of him in that skull mask? That doesn’t count.” She breaks off another piece of croissant, popping it into her mouth.

“The Ghost mask is iconic! And he rocks it.” I pull up my phone, scrolling to the latest pic he sent in full tactical gear, the stark white mask a sharp contrast against the dark background. “See? Tell me that’s not hot.”

Jenna studies the image, her lips pursed. The café’s overhead lights reflect in her glasses as she leans closer to my screen.

“All I see is a guy who won’t show his face.” She leans back, crossing her arms. “What if he’s catfishing you?”

“He’s not.” The conviction in my voice surprises even me. A server passes by, collecting empty cups from nearby tables. The café is winding down, and only a few patrons remain.

“You should hear how he talks,” I continue, lowering my voice. “Last week, we talked for hours about everything from game design philosophy to our favorite cereal. He’s different.”

“Different enough to finally show up at GamerCon?” Jenna raises an eyebrow, her skepticism palpable in the dim café light.

I bite my lip, remembering the edge in his voice when we discussed it. “Maybe. He seemed more open to it this time.”

“And you’re not curious what he looks like under that mask?”

“Of course I am!” The words burst out before I can stop them. “I mean... yeah, I’ve thought about it. A lot.”

My mind wanders to late-night gaming sessions, imagining the face behind that voice that sends shivers down my spine. The café around us fades away as I picture possibilities—is he clean-shaven or scruffy? Are his eyes as intense as they seem through the mask’s eyeholes?

“Earth to Kira!” Jenna waves her hand in front of my face, the movement sending ripples through her coffee. “You’re doing that dreamy thing again.”

“I am not!” But the heat in my cheeks betrays me. Outside, rain begins to pitter against the windows, droplets racing down the glass and blurring the streetlights.

“Maybe it’s just because he plays Ghost so well,” I mumble into my coffee. “You know how I feel about that character.”

“Oh, I know.” Jenna’s eyebrows shoot up. “I’ve seen your TikTok likes.”

“Hey!” I nearly spilled my drink, the ceramic mug clattering against the saucer. “Those are private!”

“Not when you’re logged into my phone, and thirst trap videos keep popping up on my feed. ‘GhostDaddy’? Really?” She laughs, the sound mingling with the increasing drumbeat of rain outside.

I sink lower in my chair, face burning. The coffee shop’s closing music starts playing, a gentle hint to remaining customers.

“His cosplay is really accurate...” I mutter, tracing a coffee stain on the table.

“And the way he fills out that tactical gear has nothing to do with it?” Jenna smirks, gathering her things as the baristas begin wiping down counters.

“Shut up.” But she’s right. My FYP is filled with muscular guys in Ghost masks doing those slow-motion combat rolls, their shirts riding up just enough to...

I clear my throat, draining the last of my now-cold latte. “Rogue’s voice kind of sounds like him, you know? That deep, gravelly thing they do.”

“The one that makes you forget how to talk mid-match?” Jenna zips up her laptop bag.

“I do not—” But I think about last night’s game, how my fingers fumbled on the controller when he growled “good girl” after I pulled off a difficult shot. “Okay, fine. Maybe I have a type.”

“A type called ‘dangerous men in masks?’” She stands, slinging her bag over her shoulder.

We go to the door, nodding goodbye to the tired-looking baristas. Outside, the rain has intensified, drumming against the awning above us.

“It’s not just that.” I pull my jacket tighter against the sudden chill. “When Rogue talks about gaming, strategy, and positioning, it’s like he becomes Ghost. All commanding and confident. And his laugh...” I shiver, remembering how it vibrates through my headset late at night.

“Girl, you’ve got it bad.” Jenna shakes her head, pulling up her hood against the rain. “For both the character and your mystery man.”

“Is it weird that I can’t tell them apart sometimes?” The confession slips out, nearly lost in the sound of rain hitting the pavement. “Like, when we’re gaming, and he’s giving orders in that voice... It’s like my TikTok fantasies come to life.”

Jenna pauses under the shelter of the awning, raindrops creating a curtain around us. Her expression softens.

“Just be careful,” she says, squeezing my arm. “The sexier and more amazing someone seems online, the more you have to verify they’re real.”

“I know he’s real.” I pull my phone out again, scrolling through our Discord chat as rain splashes onto the screen. “Look at these conversations. The way he analyzes game mechanics and his specific callouts during matches. You can’t fake that kind of knowledge.”

“I’m not saying he’s not a gamer.” Jenna looks at me with genuine concern, raindrops glistening in her hair. “But skilled players can still be different in person. Promise me you won’t meet him alone if he shows up at the con?”

“Fine.” I tuck my phone away. “You can be my chaperone. Though I’m pretty sure I can handle myself.”

“Against a guy who’s probably built like a tank, based on those mask pics? Let me be your backup, okay? Like in your games.” She pulls me into a quick hug before darting into the rain toward her car.

I stand alone under the awning for a moment. The rain washes the streets clean, reflections of neon signs and traffic lights rippling in puddles. Jenna’s right—of course, she’s right. Two years of excuses and dodged meet-ups don’t lie.

That edge in Rogue’s voice when I mentioned GamerCon... I’ve heard it before. Every time I bring up a meeting in person, he gets distant, almost

cold. The warmth that usually fills his words disappears, replaced by clipped responses and a sudden urgency to log off.

I step out into the rain, letting it soak through my hair and run down my face. The cold drops feel clarifying somehow, washing away the fantasy I've built around a man I've never met.

The thing is, I get it. Meeting someone in real life whom you met online is scary. What if we don't click in person? What if the chemistry that makes us such great gaming partners doesn't translate to real life?

But there's something else in the way he avoids it. Something that makes my stomach twist when I think about it too hard. Like he's protecting himself—or maybe protecting me.

From what, though?

I reach my car and slide inside, sitting in darkness as rain drums on the roof. My phone lights up with a notification—Discord. Rogue.

“Checked my schedule. Might be able to make GamerCon after all. Let’s talk tomorrow.”

My heart skips despite everything Jenna just said. Despite my own doubts. Despite two years of disappointment.

Because maybe, just maybe, this time will be different.

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RYKER

*M*y finger darts across her image on my largest monitor, memorizing every pixel. Kira's latest TikTok plays on a loop—she's explaining her progress on her Aloy costume. The other five screens surrounding my command center display different aspects of her life: her browsing history, social media feeds, security camera feeds from her apartment building, and gaming stats.

“Who’s my good girl?” My obsession pulses through my veins like a drug.

The conversation from our gaming session last week replays in my mind. Her voice, so eager to meet at the convention, makes my cock twitch. She has no idea I’ve already mapped out every detail of our first encounter.

“Soon. Very soon.”

I pull up the convention center blueprints, checking my marked exits and secure locations for the hundredth time. The private security contract I arranged under a shell company ensures I can access and manipulate the camera feeds completely. My fingers fly across the keyboard, activating the self-erasing backdoor I installed in their security system last month during a “routine upgrade” from my company.

Most hackers get caught because they leave digital footprints, breadcrumbs that reveal someone has been there. Amateurs. As CEO of KentSec Systems, I’ve spent years developing undetectable intrusion methods that even government agencies haven’t identified. The same technology I sell to protect corporations is what I’ve modified to make myself a ghost in Kira’s systems.

Her browser history from last night makes me smile—more searches about Ghost and dominant men. She's practically begging for me to take her, to own her. Every night lately, she falls asleep with my TikTok videos still playing.

"You want to meet so badly, don't you?" I click through the surveillance photos I've taken over the years. "But we can't just bump into each other at some crowded convention. No, no, no. That won't do at all."

I pull up the schedule, assessing when the crowds will be thickest and when security will be distracted. Everything has to be planned meticulously. She deserves perfection.

"I've waited so long, trained so hard." I flex my muscles. "Time to level up our relationship. Game over for your old life."

I flip between camera feeds as Kira's key turns in her lock. The hallway cam catches her tired smile before she disappears inside. My fingers hover over the keyboard, switching to the interior feeds.

The cameras in her apartment are my finest work—nano-devices embedded in everyday objects. The smoke detector contains a 360-degree lens with infrared capabilities. The light switches house pinhole cameras that can be activated remotely. Even her bathroom mirror has a camera hidden behind the reflective coating, completely invisible to the naked eye.

None of these devices connect to her WiFi network—they transmit on a proprietary frequency my team developed for military applications, making them undetectable to standard bug sweepers. The signals bounce between three different relays before reaching my servers, routed through seven countries. Even if someone managed to follow the connection, they'd end up at a server farm in Mongolia registered to a shell company that doesn't exist.

"Welcome home."

She drops her bag and kicks off her shoes. The tension radiates through her movements. I know that walk, that look in her eyes. My pulse quickens as she heads straight for her bedroom.

The night vision camera gives me a clear view as she yanks open her bedside drawer. My favorite show is about to begin. The silicone vibrator, the one I've seen her use countless times, appears in her hand.

"There it is." My cock hardens as she strips, tossing clothes aside with desperate speed. "Show me what you need."

She sprawls across her sheets, phone in one hand, toy in the other. I activate the screen capture on her device, knowing exactly what she's searching for. My TikToks as GhostDaddy, just like every other night.

Her phone was the trickiest to infiltrate without detection. Most spyware leaves traces—battery drain, performance issues, and strange behavior which she had noticed in my initial hack and changed her phone. My solution was to create a replica of her phone's operating system with my monitoring code built into the kernel. I orchestrated a perfect SIM swap during a “chance” encounter with one of my guys at a coffee shop six months ago while “helping” her troubleshoot connection issues. She never suspected that the “kind IT guy” who fixed her phone had replaced its entire digital backbone.

Through her smart TV, Alexa, phone camera, hidden cameras I installed, and every digital eye I've placed in her sanctuary, I drink in the sight and sound of her, her subtle arch of her back, the way her thighs spread. But nothing is private from me, not anymore.

“Fuck, baby girl. Get yourself ready for me.”

I lean closer to the monitors, adjusting the camera angles for the best view. Every gasp and every moan feeds directly into my custom audio setup. The whole room fills with her needy whimpers.

My hand slides down to grip my aching cock through my jeans.

I unzip them, freeing my pierced cock. The metal glints in the glow of the monitors. Her moans fill my command center through the speakers, each one sending heat through my veins.

“Fuck it.” I strip off my shirt, revealing the ghost tattoo above my heart. “Time to give you what you really need.”

My fingers fly across the keyboard, activating the protocols I've tested a hundred times. One by one, her smart devices respond to my commands. Her Alexa crackles to life, the voice modulation making my words deep and distorted.

This is where most stalkers would make fatal errors. They'd leave evidence in device logs or command histories. But I've modified her Alexa firmware to create a shadow system that operates alongside the original. My commands route through a custom channel that never registers on Amazon's servers. The device will show no record of activation and no unusual activity. When I finish, a cleanup protocol will erase any temporary cache files, leaving her smart home system exactly as before.

“Such a needy little girl tonight.”

Her body freezes, and the vibrator drops from her trembling fingers.

“Who—”

“Shh.” I cut her off, drinking in her wide-eyed panic through the cameras. “Pick it up.”

Her hand hovers over the toy.

“Now.”

She obeys, her chest rising and falling with rapid breaths. My cock throbs at her instant submission.

“Good girl. Turn it on. Level three.”

The buzz fills the audio feed. Her thighs quiver.

“Show me how desperate you are.”

A moan escapes her lips as she presses the vibrator against her clit. Her free hand grips the sheets.

“Faster.”

My hand matches her pace, stroking my pierced length. The Prince Albert piercing slides against my palm with each pull.

“Please,” she whimpers.

“Please, what?”

“I need—I need—”

Through my speakers, I hear her breath catch. The sound shoots straight to my balls. Every gasp, every whimper—I’ve memorized them all over the past two years. But this? This is different. This is the first time I’m involved in her pleasure directly.

“Such a good girl, following my commands.” My voice modulator adds a dark edge. “But you’re holding back. Show me what you really want.”

Her hips buck, and the cameras catch every detail, including the flush spreading across her chest, the way her nipples harden, and how her free hand twists in the sheets.

“Just like that, but faster now.”

She obeys instantly. My cock throbs as I stroke myself, matching her desperate pace. The Prince Albert catching against my palm reminds me how I got it for her after discovering her secret browser searches about pierced cocks.

“Please,” she begs again.

“Tell me who you think about when you touch yourself.”

Her lips part, hesitating. I already know the answer.

“Ghost,” she admits, voice breaking. “I think about Ghost.”

Every detail of this moment was planned, crafted, from the voice modulation to the timing of my commands. Nothing was left to chance.

“Show Ghost how close you are.”

She arches off the bed, crying out. Through six different camera angles, I watch her come undone. My own release builds, but I hold back. Not yet. Not until I have her in person.

“Good girl,” I growl through the speakers. Then I cut the connection, leaving her panting and confused in the afterglow.

I close the connection and lean back, breathing hard and fast. The monitors glow with six different angles of Kira—confused, sated, vulnerable. My hand stills on my cock, saving my release. After two years of stalking silently, I’ve finally crossed the digital barrier.

“You felt it too, didn’t you? The connection.” My voice echoes through my empty command center. “You obeyed so beautifully.”

I rewind the footage, replaying her coming apart again. The way she froze at first, then followed my commands without question. My piercing throbs against my palm as I squeeze myself once more before tucking everything away.

Tomorrow, she’ll convince herself it was a glitch, a hack, maybe even a dream. The human mind rejects what it can’t explain, but deep down, she’ll know. And better still—she’ll want more.

I initiate the cleanup protocol with a single keystroke. The command erases all logs from Kira’s devices, removes any evidence of intrusion from her network, and resets her Alexa to its pre-infiltration state. The beauty of my system is its digital alibi—her devices will show normal operation throughout the evening, with no unexplained activations or commands. If she calls tech support, they’ll find nothing unusual. If she hires a security expert, their standard tools will detect no intrusions.

My company sells cybersecurity solutions to protect against the invasion I’m perpetrating. But the truth is, I’ve always been ten steps ahead of the industry. The vulnerabilities I exploit in Kira’s systems won’t be discovered by security researchers for years—if ever. I’ll have created new ones when they develop countermeasures for these techniques.

I pull up the GamerCon schedule, checking my timetable. Three days until I claim what’s mine. The Ghost costume hangs in my closet—just like she fantasizes about.

I shut down the monitors individually, leaving only her bedroom camera active. She's curled on her side now, phone clutched to her chest, searching for explanations.

"Next time, you'll feel my hands instead of just my voice."

I take one last look at her before heading to my bedroom—the one that mirrors hers exactly. Same sheets, same wall color, same view programmed into my digital windows. The only difference is the empty space beside me—the Kira-shaped void I've been waiting to fill.

I slip between the sheets, imagining her warmth beside me.

"Game on."

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KIRA

*M*y heart still races as I lie on my bed, thighs pressed together. The lingering sensation of that intense orgasm makes my skin tingle. Someone watched me. Someone invaded my space. The thought should terrify me, but a delicious shiver runs down my spine.

I grab my water bottle, taking long gulps. My mind drifts to Jenna's voice of reason. She'd freak if she knew, probably drag me straight to the police station. But this felt... different. Special. Like whoever did this understood exactly what I needed.

A tiny voice in the back of my mind whispers warnings. *This is how horror movies start. This is literally what every cybersecurity PSA warns about.* I push the thoughts away, but they linger like a shadow at the edge of my consciousness.

I hear the ding of a chat notification pop up on my computer. I get off the bed and head over, my fingers hovering over the keyboard. *Rogue.*

ROGUE: HEY, GOOD GAME EARLIER.

Should I tell him?

We've been gaming partners for ages, sharing strategies, jokes, and personal stuff. But this feels too intimate.

MISCHIEF: THANKS! YEAH, WE CRUSHED IT.

I type back, trying to act normal despite my racing thoughts.

ROGUE: YOU SEEM DISTRACTED. EVERYTHING OKAY?

I bite my lip.

MISCHIEF: JUST TIRED. BEEN A WEIRD NIGHT.

ROGUE: WEIRD HOW?

The cursor blinks at me accusingly. How do I even begin to explain? “Oh, someone hacked my devices and gave me the best orgasm of my life while watching me through my webcam?” Yeah, that would go over well.

MISCHIEF: JUST... STUFF. NOTHING MAJOR.

I deflect, fidgeting in my chair.

MISCHIEF: HEY, HAVE YOU DECIDED WHETHER YOU’LL COME TO GAMERCON?

ROGUE: SORRY, MISCHIEF. GOT STUCK WITH WORK. CAN’T MAKE IT THIS TIME.

My stomach drops. The lingering warmth from earlier vanishes, replaced by a cold weight in my chest.

My fingers tremble as I type.

MISCHIEF: OH. BUT YOU SAID YOU’D TRY TO COME.

ROGUE: I KNOW. THINGS GOT COMPLICATED AT THE OFFICE. RAIN CHECK?

He waited the night before the Con to tell me, after weeks of maybes and we’ll sees.

MISCHIEF: YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME SOONER.

I hit send before I can rethink it.

ROGUE: DON’T BE LIKE THAT. WE’LL MEET EVENTUALLY.

Eventually, the word feels like a dagger. I sink onto my bed, hugging my knees to my chest.

MISCHIEF: RIGHT. EVENTUALLY.

ROGUE: COME ON. NOTHING CHANGES. WE’RE STILL GAMING BUDDIES.

Gaming buddies.

Is that all this is? All these late-night conversations, inside jokes, shared victories—just pixels on a screen?

MISCHIEF: SURE.

I know saying more would be a mistake, so I leave it.

ROGUE: HEY, I GOTTA GO. EARLY MEETING TOMORROW.

I stare at his message, throat tight.

MISCHIEF: YEAH, WHATEVER.

His status switches to offline before I can say anything else. I grab my phone, pull Jenna's contact information, and stop. Her "*I told you so*" hovers redundant in my mind. She warned me about getting too invested in online friendships. I didn't want to hear it.

The worst part? I'd built this whole fantasy in my head. Meeting Rogue at the Con, maybe discovering we had chemistry in real life. Stupid. So stupid.

I flop back on my bed, staring at my ceiling and wiping my tears. A bitter laugh tears from me. Here I am, crying over some guy I've never even met. What am I, fifteen?

My reflection in the monitor catches my eye—mascara smudged, hair a mess. This isn't me. I'm not this pathetic girl pining over keyboard warriors who can't commit to showing up.

"Fuck this," I huff, grabbing my phone to call Jenna.

She picks up on the second ring. "What's wrong?" The concern in her voice makes me smile.

"Nothing's wrong. Well, okay, Rogue's being a dick, but whatever. Want to go out? I must dance, drink, and forget about stupid guys hiding behind screens."

"Now that's the Kira I know." Jenna's laugh fills the line. "Give me thirty minutes. I'll bring that bottle of tequila I've been saving. We can pre-game while getting ready."

"You're literally the best friend ever."

"I know. And Kira? I'm proud of you for not letting this bring you down."

“Yeah, well.” I stand up, already moving to my closet. “Life’s too short to waste on people who won’t show up for you, right?”

“Exactly. See you soon, babe. Wear that new black dress—the one with the mesh panels.”

I hang up and toss my phone on the bed. The heaviness in my chest lifts as I dig through my closet. Screw Rogue and his excuses. Screw mysterious hackers and their mind-blowing orgasms. Tonight’s about me hanging out with my best friend.

I pull out the black dress Jenna mentioned. It’s time to remind myself that there’s more to life than gaming and online relationships.

The doorbell chimes, and I practically skip to answer it. Jenna stands there, a bottle of tequila in one hand, a makeup bag in the other, grinning like the Cheshire cat.

“Ready to forget about Rogue?” She waves the bottle.

“God, yes.” I pull her inside.

We sprawl on my bed, passing the bottle back and forth while I vent about Rogue. Jenna nods, adding just the right amount of supportive sounds and “*what an asshole*” comments.

“Hold still,” she commands, wielding an eyeliner pencil. “I’m giving you smokey eyes that’ll make every guy at the club wish they were worthy.”

I try not to laugh as she works her magic. The tequila settles warm in my belly, making everything feel lighter. “Remember when you tried to teach me winged eyeliner, and I looked like a raccoon?”

“Oh my god, yes!” She snorts, nearly poking my eye. “Sorry! Don’t move!”

I help curl her hair while she does her lipstick. Our practiced choreography of getting ready together smoothly after years of friendship makes my heart happy. The music from my playlist fills the room as we dance around, take selfies, and down a couple more shots.

“Uber’s here!” Jenna announces, checking her phone. “Last mirror check!”

We stumble to the full-length mirror, arms around each other. My black dress shows just enough skin to be sexy without trying too hard. Jenna looks amazing in a red dress that hugs her curvy body.

“We’re hot,” I declare, the tequila apparently providing liquid courage.

“Damn right, we are.” She grabs my hand. “Let’s go show the world.”

We giggle all the way down to the Uber. Our driver probably regrets his life choices as we belt out Taylor Swift songs from the backseat. The city lights blur past, and I feel invincible with Jenna.

The bass from the club thumps through the air as we step out of the car, already swaying to the beat. The line isn't long, and the bouncer waves us through with a wink.

The club pulses with energy as Jenna and I weave through the crowd toward the bar. She flags down the bartender with practiced ease while I lean against the counter, still riding the buzz from our pre-game session.

"Two tequila sunrises!" Jenna shouts over the music. "And two shots of Patron!"

"Living dangerously tonight?" I bump her hip with mine.

"After that Rogue bullshit? We're going all out."

The bartender slides our drinks over. I lift my shot glass, clinking it against Jenna's. "To real-life adventures."

"And to men who actually show up." She winks.

We down our shots, and I chase them with a sip of my cocktail. The sweetness cuts through the burn, but then the hairs on my neck stand up.

I scan the crowd, trying to be subtle about it. The dance floor writhes with bodies, and the bar area is packed with people trying to get drinks. And then I see him.

He's leaning against a pillar near the VIP section, a glass of what looks like whiskey in his hand. Dark hair falls across his forehead, and even in the club's shifting lights, I can see his eyes—ice blue and intense, locked right on me. Tattoos cover his arms, disappearing under a fitted black t-shirt that shows off every muscle.

My breath catches. The man doesn't look away when I catch him staring. His lips curve into a knowing smile that makes my stomach flip.

That smile sends a warning signal flashing through my brain. It's too confident, too knowing... like he's been waiting for me. I think of the hacked Alexa earlier, Rogue's constant excuses, and every true crime podcast I've ever listened to. Red flags everywhere, like a freaking circus.

But then he raises his glass slightly in my direction, and my body responds with a flush of heat that has nothing to do with the tequila.

"Holy shit," Jenna hisses, following my gaze. "That man is eating you alive with his eyes."

I take another sip of my drink, larger this time, trying to drown the warring voices in my head. “Yeah, I noticed.”

“Go talk to him!”

“What? No!” But I can’t stop stealing glances. There’s a familiarity about him, but I don’t know why. “I’m not sure, Jen. He’s setting off my creep radar.” The way he’s staring is oddly intense. Definitely creepy.

“Yeah, but in a hot way or a ‘call the police’ way?” She studies him critically. “Because those are two very different vibes.”

I laugh, but it comes out as nervous. “I honestly can’t tell. That’s the problem.”

His eyes seem so familiar, but I can’t place them. The rational part of my brain that double-checks my locks at night and carries pepper spray is screaming caution. But another part, still tingling from my hacker situation earlier, is drawn to him like a moth to a flame.

“If he’s interested, he can come to us,” I decide, deliberately turning my back to him. “I’m not chasing some random guy, no matter how hot he is.”

Jenna raises her eyebrows, impressed. “Look at you, setting boundaries. I’m so proud.”

But even as I try to focus on our conversation, I feel his gaze burning into my back. My skin prickles with awareness. I take another large sip of my drink, hoping the alcohol will dull the magnetic pull I feel toward him.

It doesn’t work.

Jenna’s eyes widen. “He’s coming over!”

I hear someone approach, and before I can prepare myself, he’s right in front of me, extending his hand in silent invitation.

Up close, he’s even more striking. Those blue eyes hold an intensity that makes my breath catch. The tattoos covering his arms aren’t random designs—they’re intricate, meaningful pieces that tell a story I suddenly need to know. His hand stays extended in invitation, patient but commanding.

Two distinct voices war in my head:

Don’t be stupid. You don’t know him. This is exactly how women end up on true crime podcasts.

But look at him. Feel that energy. When was the last time anyone made you feel this alive?

“I—” I hesitate, almost stuttering, my hand halfway to his. “I don’t even know your name.”

He doesn't answer; he just continues to hold my gaze, his hand unwavering. The silence should be awkward, but it feels charged.

"Seriously?" I glance at Jenna, who shrugs, equally confused by his silence.

His confidence both unsettles and entralls me. In a world of men who hide behind screens and never show up, here's someone so present, so physically real, it's almost overwhelming.

"One dance," I say finally, placing my hand in his. "Just one."

His fingers close around mine, warm and strong. As he leads me toward the dance floor, I glance back at Jenna, mouthing, "Keep an eye on my drink," and holding up one finger to signal I'll be back soon.

The silence should be weird, but he's so alluring. He pulls me close as the music shifts to a slower, more sensual song. His hands find my hips, and mine naturally rest on his chest. God, he's solid muscle under that shirt.

The bass thrums through us as we move together. He leans down, his breath hot against my ear. "You move beautifully," he purrs. His lips brush my earlobe, eliciting a gasp from me.

That voice tugs at my memory, but the alcohol, the music, and his proximity make it hard to focus.

His hands slide lower, guiding my hips in time with his.

"I've been watching you."

My body freezes momentarily. Those words—the exact phrasing—set off alarm bells. Watching me? Like the hacker from earlier? Like someone who's been stalking me?

I try to pull back slightly to see his face clearly, but his grip tightens just enough to keep me close. One hand slides up my back to tangle in my hair.

"What do you mean?" I manage to ask, my voice barely audible over the music.

Instead of answering, he continues moving, guiding my body with his. He speaks in a hushed voice between songs, each word making my skin tingle despite my growing unease: "So beautiful. You feel amazing."

I should walk away. Every instinct for self-preservation tells me this is dangerous territory. Still, I respond to his touch, melting against him as we move together in the crowd.

His fingers draw patterns on my lower back, making it hard to focus when Jenna appears beside us.

"Hey! Sorry to interrupt, but we've got that other place lined up." She glances between us, eyebrows raised. "Unless you're... occupied?"

I look up at my mysterious stranger, his blue eyes still holding that intensity that makes my stomach flip. Part of me wants to stay here, to keep dancing until the club closes and find out where this connection between us leads. The rational voice in my head finally breaks through the fog of attraction, breaking the spell.

He hasn't said more than a few words other than he's been "watching" you. He won't even tell you his name. These are not the actions of someone safe.

"I should probably head out," I state, pulling away from him more firmly this time. The momentary flash in his eyes confirms I'm making the right choice. "Thanks for the dance."

Jenna loops her arm through mine, and we weave through the crowd toward the exit. The cool night air hits my flushed skin, clearing my head somewhat.

"Okay, spill. What was that?" Jenna flags down a passing cab.

"I don't know." I slide into the backseat, my skin still tingling where his hands had been. "He was... different. Barely said anything except whispering in my ear."

"Yeah, that was kind of weird. Like, *hot*, weird, but still weird." Jenna tells the driver the name of the next club. "Did you at least get his name?"

I shake my head, feeling a mixture of relief and disappointment. "He just... danced. And whispered. Wouldn't really answer questions."

"Major red flag." Jenna squeezes my hand. "Though I get it. The mysterious, intense thing can be hot. But also potentially serial killer territory."

"I know." I sigh, leaning back against the seat. "That's why I left with you. But..."

"But what?"

"There was just something about him." I turn to the city lights that blur past the window. "Something familiar, but I can't place it. And the way he said he'd been watching me... it creeped me out, but also—"

"Turned you on?" Jenna finishes, raising an eyebrow.

I nod, embarrassed. "What's wrong with me? I'm attracted to someone waving red flags in my face?"

“Nothing’s wrong with you.” Jenna’s voice softens. “The fantasy is hot. The reality would probably be a nightmare. That’s why we have brains and not just hormones—so we can make good choices even when our bodies are like, ‘Yes, please, dangerous stranger!’”

I laugh, the tension breaking. “My body was definitely saying that.”

“And yet you walked away. That’s growth, my friend.” She bumps my shoulder with hers. “Now, let’s go have fun without mysterious, silent men who are probably planning to wear your skin as a hat.”

“Gross!” I shove her playfully, but her words sink in. I did walk away. Despite the attraction, despite the pull I felt, I chose safety.

As we ride toward the next club, I can’t help but glance back once, half-expecting to see those intense blue eyes following us. The street behind us is empty, but the sensation of his eyes on me lingers like a phantom caress.

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RYKER

I clench my jaw as Kira stumbles into another taxi with her friend Jenna. Seeing other men gawking at her at the club made my blood boil. I couldn't risk speaking more than a few words to her on the dance floor because she'd recognize my voice from our gaming sessions. But feeling her body against mine, knowing she had no idea who I was... the power was intoxicating.

"Follow that cab," I tell my driver, adjusting the Ghost mask in my jacket pocket and tightening my grip on my suit bag, which houses my cosplay outfit. The voice modulator sits ready, though I won't need it unless I make my presence known.

My fingers drum against my phone screen as I track her location through the spyware I installed. The blue dot moves steadily across the map. She's heading to Neon, that new club downtown. The security there is a joke. I've already mapped every exit, blind spot, and surveillance camera in preparation for the convention.

"Should've stayed home, Mischief," I mutter, remembering how she felt in my arms. She melted against me, unaware that her online teammate, Rogue, was there. The same man who made her obediently come undone with my voice.

The taxi pulls up half a block from Neon. Kira and Jenna join the line, their laughter carrying across the street. My hands curl into fists. Tomorrow is the convention, and I can finally drop this charade and claim what's mine.

For now, I'll stick to the shadows. Make sure no one else touches her. These clubs are full of predators who don't deserve to breathe the same air as her.

I slip away from the crowd and locate the men's restroom in the back corner of the club. Perfect timing—it's empty. I lock the main door, place my suit bag on the hook, and unzip it carefully. The Ghost cosplay I've spent over a year getting right waits inside, every detail accurate.

First, I pull out the compression shirt with tactical padding sewn in to enhance my already muscular frame. The material hugs my skin as I strip off my club shirt and replace it with the base layer of my costume. Next come the custom tactical pants and boots—each piece selected to match Ghost's appearance while maintaining full mobility. I need to be able to move quickly when the moment comes.

"Perfect," I muse, examining my reflection in the bathroom mirror.

The voice modulator is a military-grade engineering masterpiece with my own modifications. I position it carefully against my throat, securing the nearly invisible band around my neck. A quick test confirms it's working, dropping my voice to the British growl Ghost is known for.

"Mischief," I test, hearing the character's British accent emerge from my throat. The same voice that will soon command her every move.

Finally, the mask. I lift it from its protective wrapping—a replica of Ghost's skull face covering. I've tested it dozens of times in my apartment, ensuring peripheral vision isn't compromised. The mask slides into place, completing my transformation.

I stare at myself in the large mirror. Ghost looks back at me, and it isn't just a costume—it's who I am beneath the surface. The predator. The watcher. The one who will claim what belongs to him.

When I return to the main club, Kira's at the bar with Jenna, laughing over some shared joke. My fingers twitch, remembering how her hips felt when we danced, but I can't risk touching her again tonight. One slip, one wrong move, and she might connect the dots between the stranger at the club and her gaming partner.

I position myself in a dark corner with a good view without being obvious. The mask helps since plenty of cosplayers hit the clubs before conventions. I'm just another fan getting into character early.

A guy in a leather jacket approaches the table they've just found. My jaw clenches as he leans close to Kira, trying to get her attention. She shakes her head, but he persists.

My hand slides into my pocket, touching my phone. One tap and I could trigger the fire alarm and clear the club, but there's a part of me that wants

blood.

The leather jacket guy's hand reaches for Kira's arm. My vision goes red. Six quick strides and I'm there, my fingers wrapping around his wrist before he touches her.

"She said no." The voice modulator turns my words into Ghost's signature rasp.

Kira's eyes go wide as she takes in the mask. Her lips part in a soft gasp that makes my cock harden. Even in the club's dim lighting, I catch the flush spreading across her cheeks.

"What the fuck, man?" Leather jacket tries to yank free, but I squeeze harder. The bones in his wrist grind together.

"Leave." I lean close, letting him see the promise of violence behind the mask's eyeholes. "Now."

He stumbles back when I release him, nursing his wrist. Smart choice. Another minute and I might have snapped it.

"Oh my God, that costume is amazing!" Kira's voice draws my attention back where it belongs. Her eyes sparkle with excitement as she takes in every detail of the mask. "The voice is amazing, too. Are you going to GamerCon?"

I nod, keeping my responses minimal. Even with the modulator, too much talking risks revealing my identity.

"You have to let me take a picture!" She's already reaching for her phone, but I catch her hand. Her skin is soft, warm. Mine.

I shake my head slowly. Playing mysterious. Making her want more.

"No pictures?" Her lower lip juts out in a pout that makes me want to bite it. "At least tell me if you'll be at the convention. I'm cosplaying as Aloy!"

"I'll be there." The modulator transforms my natural voice into Ghost's signature rasp. My fingers still tingle from touching her skin. "Wouldn't miss seeing that Aloy cosplay."

I smile behind the mask, mentally reviewing my layered plan for GamerCon.

"Can I buy you a drink?" Kira leans closer, her perfume mixing with the sweet scent of whatever cocktail she's already had. "To thank you for handling that creep?"

I shake my head. "I don't drink, but I'll get you whatever you'd like."

Jenna shifts in her seat, eyeing me with suspicion. Good. At least one of them has survival instincts. But Kira's already sliding her empty glass forward.

“Surprise me,” she says with a grin that makes my cock throb. “Something sweet?”

I signal the waitress, ordering a drink I know she’ll love—vanilla vodka and passion fruit. I’ve memorized every detail about her, including her drink preferences from her social posts.

“You’re not much for words, are you?” She takes a sip of her drink when it arrives. “Very in character.”

I lean against the table, enjoying her gaze drifting to my body. She has no idea she’s already seen me without a shirt through all those TikTok videos I post as GhostDaddy. She has no idea that just hours ago, I watched her come for me through her webcam.

“Words are overrated.” I let my modulated voice drop lower. “Actions matter more.”

“God, that voice.” She visibly shudders. “It’s exactly like in the game. Did you modify a real modulator or is it custom?”

“Custom.” I resist the urge to tell her exactly how many hours I spent on it just for her. “Everything I do is custom.”

Her cheeks flush at the implication. Even in the club’s dim lighting, I can see her pupils dilate. She’s aroused. Wanting. And she doesn’t even know who’s really behind this mask.

Jenna shifts forward in her seat, physically inserting herself between Kira and me. Her eyes narrow behind her glasses as she studies my mask.

“That’s an awful lot of effort for a costume,” she says, voice sharp with suspicion. “Most people just buy them from Amazon.”

I shrug, keeping my posture relaxed despite the urge to shove her aside. “I take pride in authenticity.”

“Right.” She turns to Kira. “We should probably head out. Early morning tomorrow, remember?”

Kira pouts. “Just a few more minutes? He saved me from that creep.”

“Which is great, but now he’s hovering.” Jenna’s hand wraps around Kira’s wrist. “And you’ve had enough to drink.”

My fingers twitch at the sight of someone else touching what’s mine, but I force them to stay loose at my sides. Can’t break character. Can’t let the mask slip.

“I’m just being friendly,” Kira protests.

“You’re being naive.” Jenna stands, tugging Kira up with her. “No offense, but masked strangers in clubs aren’t exactly safe bets. Even if they have great costumes.”

I incline my head, acknowledging her point while seething inside. If she only knew how many hours I’ve spent protecting Kira from real threats. How many stalkers and perverts I’ve blocked from her social media and gaming platforms before she even saw them.

“Thanks for the drink,” Kira says, apologetically smiling. “Maybe I’ll see you at the convention?”

“Count on it.” The modulator turns my words into a growl that makes her shiver.

Jenna practically drags her away, throwing one last suspicious glance over her shoulder. Smart girl. Too smart. She might be a problem when the time comes.

But for now, I let them go. Three days until the convention. Let Jenna play protector. Soon enough, Kira won’t need anyone else’s protection. She’ll have mine. Forever.

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KIRA

I run my fingers over the intricate details of my Aloy costume, checking every buckle and strap one last time in the mirror. The leather armor hugs my curves, and the synthetic red hair falls over my shoulders.

“You’re fussing again,” Jenna says from my bed, already dressed in her Lara Croft outfit. “It looks amazing! Stop worrying.”

“I know, I know.” I adjust the quiver on my back, ignoring the strange sense of foreboding that’s been following me all morning. “I want everything to be perfect. And maybe...” My voice trails off as I think about how the stranger’s hands felt on my hips as we danced.

“Oh no. I know that look.” Jenna sits up, a theatrical sigh escaping her lips. “You’re thinking about *club guy* again, aren’t you?”

Heat rises to my cheeks. “Not just him. That Ghost cosplayer who showed up at the second club... the way he scared off that creep who wouldn’t leave me alone. There was something about him...”

“Kira.” Jenna’s voice carries that warning tone I know too well, but there’s a hint of jealousy laced in her words. “Random guys in masks are not safe. We’ve talked about this. Honestly, can’t I catch a break? You’ve got all these guys fawning over you while I’m just here. It’s like I’m invisible.”

“I know, but—” I fiddle with one of Aloy’s braids, feeling guilty. “Did you see how he moved? How did he just know exactly what to do? And those shoulders...” A shiver runs through me at the memory.

“And what about Mr. Blue Eyes from the first club? Weren’t you obsessing over him, too?”

“I can’t help it.” I flop onto the bed beside her. “They both made me feel... different. Special. Like they saw right through me.” My phone buzzes with a convention alert, but underneath it is a notification from an unknown number:

Looking forward to seeing you today.

I quickly swipe it away before Jenna notices, a chill running down my spine. “At least I won’t be thinking about Rogue not showing up anymore.”

“Small mercies.” Jenna checks her prop guns. “Ready to head out?”

I grab my convention badge and prop bow, excitement bubbling up despite my confused feelings and that unsettling text. “Born ready. Let’s go be badass gaming heroines.”

I can’t shake the feeling that something’s different as we leave my apartment. The hallway security camera that never works tracks our movement, its small red light blinking steadily. I hurry Jenna past it, not wanting to voice my paranoia.

The bus lurches around another corner, and I grab the pole to keep my balance. My Aloy costume draws appreciative glances from fellow Con-goers packed into the crowded vehicle. A guy in a Kratos costume gives me a respectful nod.

“Look!” I nudge Jenna, pointing out the window at the growing line outside the convention center. The morning sun glints off prop weapons and armor as hundreds of cosplayers queue up.

I spot the first Ghost costume in line. Then another. And another. Each one makes my stomach clench with a mixture of anticipation and dread.

“Oh, wow, there are so many of them this year.” I press my face closer to the glass, trying to catch the details of each costume. Some have the classic mask, while others sport the newer tactical gear. A few even have working LED effects. Anyone of them could be him—the one from the club.

My phone buzzes again. Another text from the same unknown number:

I see you on the bus. Red hair suits you.

I quickly turn it face down on my lap, scanning the bus frantically. No one seems to be watching me specifically, but the message is clear: someone is.

“You okay?” Jenna asks, noticing my sudden tension. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“Just excited,” I lie, forcing a smile. “And maybe a little nervous.”

“Don’t forget about all the Konigs, too.” Jenna points out a group posing for photos outside the convention center as our bus approaches. “Though I know which one’s your favorite.”

I bite my lip, remembering the mysterious Ghost from the club. The way he appeared exactly when I needed help, like he’d been waiting for the moment to step in.

“Speaking of which.” Jenna raises an eyebrow as we step off the bus. “How exactly do you plan to find your club Ghost in this sea of cosplayers? There must be at least twenty just in the entrance line.”

“I’ll know.” I adjust my quiver strap, scanning the crowd with growing unease. “The way he carried himself was different. Plus, his costume had those custom details...”

“Uh-huh.” Jenna doesn’t sound convinced. “And what if multiple people have similar costumes? Or what if he changes something up?”

“If it’s meant to be, he’ll find me.” I shrug, adjusting my prop bow. “He saw my face at the club, after all. And I mean, look at me—how many Aloy cosplayers are rocking these curves?”

As we join the line, I notice a Ghost cosplayer about twenty people ahead turn and stare directly at me. Though I can’t see his face behind the mask, his posture sends a jolt of recognition through me. He raises his hand in a subtle gesture that could be a wave or a salute before turning back around.

“Did you see that?” I ask Jenna, gripping her arm.

“See what?” She looks around, confused.

“That Ghost cosplayer. He... never mind.” I shake my head, unsure if I’m being paranoid or perceptive.

Jenna rolls her eyes. “You’re such a hopeless romantic. What happened to the practical gamer girl I used to know?”

“She discovered that real life can be just as exciting as games.” I strike a pose, making my costume’s leather pieces creak, trying to shake off my growing sense of unease. “Besides, you’re the one who’s always telling me to put myself out there more.”

“Yeah, with normal guys. Not mysterious masked strangers.”

“But that’s what I’m into!” I grab her arm, practically bouncing, the enthusiasm only partly forced. “He knew exactly what to do when that creep wouldn’t back off... It was like he’d stepped right out of the game.”

“Or like he’d been watching you and waiting for the right moment,” Jenna mutters.

Her words hit uncomfortably close to my own unvoiced fears. I think about the text messages, the feeling of being watched, and how the club Ghost knew exactly when to intervene.

“Don’t ruin this for me.” I pout at her. “Let me have my gaming fantasy, just for today. Tomorrow, I’ll return to being sensible, the Kira who triple-checks her privacy settings.”

“Promise?”

“Cross my heart.” I make an X over my chest piece.

The line inches forward as more cosplayers join behind us. I can’t stop fidgeting with my prop bow, the excitement shaking my hands. My phone buzzes again, but I’m afraid to look at it.

“Look at that Master Chief!” Trying to distract myself, I point to an incredibly detailed costume with working LED lights. “The craftsmanship is insane.”

“Not as insane as those prices for photo ops.” Jenna scrolls through the convention schedule on her phone. “Seventy-five dollars to take a picture with voice actors? Highway robbery.”

“Worth it, though.” I pull up my own schedule, finally checking my phone. The new message on the screen makes my blood run cold.

Your bow is perfect. I've been watching you make it for weeks.

I quickly put away my phone, trying to keep my voice steady. “I’ve got slots booked for the Call of Duty panel and—”

“The Ghost meet and greet?” Jenna finishes, smirking. “You only mentioned it about twenty times.”

“Can you blame me? It’s the original voice actor!” My voice rises an octave, partly from genuine excitement, partly from nerves. “Plus, they’re showing exclusive footage from the new game.”

A group of Minecraft cosplayers shuffles past, their blocky cardboard costumes taking up half the walkway. One of them bumps into me, nearly knocking my quiver loose. As he steadies me, he leans in close—too close.

“See you inside,” he murmurs, his voice achingly familiar, before disappearing into the crowd.

“Careful of the props!” Jenna steadies me, noticing my sudden pallor. “You okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“I’m fine,” I lie, scanning the crowd frantically for the Minecraft guy. “Just someone being weird.”

“Remember last year when that guy’s sword fell apart during the costume contest?” Jenna asks, clearly trying to distract me. “Poor dude had to do his whole performance with just the handle.”

“At least he committed to it. Made it look like his character had just finished an epic battle.” I smile, but my eyes dart around the entrance area. The line of Ghost cosplayers has multiplied.

“I can’t believe you talked me into Lara Croft.” Jenna tugs at her shorts, oblivious to my growing panic. “These pockets are useless.”

“But you look amazing! Besides, what else can rival dual pistols and tiny shorts?” My voice sounds hollow even to my own ears.

“I could’ve been Bayonetta.”

“With her heels? You’d break an ankle before we hit the dealer’s room.”

We share a laugh, but mine comes out strained. The convention center looms ahead, its glass doors reflecting the morning sun and the crowd of cosplayers eager to enter. Somewhere inside, someone is waiting for me.

As we approach the entrance, I feel a hand brush against my lower back —so light it could be accidental in this crowded space. But the deliberate way it traces the exact pattern of my spine sends a chill through me.

“Jenna.” I grab her arm. “Promise you won’t leave me alone today, okay?”

She gives me a curious look. “Of course not. We’re sticking together. That was always the plan.”

I nod, relief washing over me. At least I have my best friend by my side, whatever happens, but as we hand our tickets to the attendant, I can’t shake the feeling that I’m walking straight into a trap.

The convention doors swing open, welcoming us into a world of noise, color, and excitement. A chill runs down my spine as my eyes scan the crowd. I can’t explain it, but a feeling deep in my gut tells me someone is watching and waiting. Like prey sensing a predator, I feel like I’m in danger.

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RYKER

I adjust my Ghost mask, ensuring the name tag “GhostDaddy” is visible. Through the crowd, I spot that familiar curve of her hips, the way she moves. My Kira. She’s even more beautiful in her Aloy costume than I imagined.

My fingers twitch with the need to touch her. Soon. Everything’s premeditated, every move precisely planned. I’ve seen her TikTok reactions to my content enough times to know exactly how she’ll respond when she realizes who I am.

The convention floor pulses with energy, but I tune it all out. There’s only her. I time my approach, weaving through the crowd until I’m behind her at the merchandise booth. She’s reaching for a Ghost poster.

I stretch past her, my chest brushing her shoulder, and grab it first.

“Hey, I was about to grab that!” She turns, and her eyes widen as they travel from my mask to my name tag. Her lips part. That subtle intake of breath, like I’ve heard through her webcam so many times.

“GhostDaddy?” Her voice trembles. “As in from TikTok?”

I nod slowly, savoring her reaction. My mask hides my smirk as I hold out the poster to her. “For a follower.”

Her fingers brush mine as she takes it, sending fire dancing across my skin. I touched these hands during our dance last night, but this feels different.

“I can’t believe it’s really you. Your videos are amazing.” She clutches the poster to her chest. “The way you break down Ghost’s tactical moves and those more sensual videos...”

“I hoped I’d run into you again after last night at the club.” Recognition flashes across her face, and her pupils dilate.

“Wait—you were—that was you? In the Ghost costume?”

“Guilty.” I tap my chest, pointing out the same detailed costume. “Thought I’d give you a preview.”

“Oh my god.” Her cheeks flush pink. “I didn’t even—this is crazy! You’re actually famous. And you totally saved me from that creep.”

She’s practically vibrating now, all excited energy and genuine enthusiasm. It’s intoxicating. This is my Kira—the real her. The way she talks with her hands is intoxicating.

“And now finding out you’re GhostDaddy? I literally watch your content every day.”

I know. I’ve seen every reaction, every like, every comment. Hell, the amount of times I’ve seen her touch her pretty little pussy and come to my videos... but hearing her admit it and seeing her excitement in person—it’s better than any surveillance feed.

“Where’s your friend?” I gesture casually around us.

Kira glances over her shoulder, scanning the crowd. “Oh, Jenna? Think she went to the bathroom.” She shrugs, still clutching the poster I gave her.

The timing couldn’t be better. I’ve waited for this moment, planning every detail.

“Let me buy you a drink. To celebrate meeting a fan.” I rest my hand on her back, steering her toward the convention bar. The touch sends sparks through my fingers, and I notice her slight shiver.

“That would be amazing, actually. All this excitement has me thirsty.” She beams up at me, trusting me. Innocent.

We reach the bar, and I position myself between her and the bartender. “Rum and coke?” I already know it’s her favorite.

“How did you—” She pauses. “Right, I probably mentioned it in the comments.”

I order our drinks, keeping her distracted with questions about her costume while the bartender prepares them. The moment they’re set down, I shift to block her view, slipping the powder into her glass with practiced precision. The movement takes less than a second—one I’ve rehearsed countless times.

A convention security guard in a yellow vest bumps into me, jostling my arm as I hand Kira her drink. Some of it splashes onto my wrist.

“Sorry about that,” the guard says, eyeing my costume appreciatively. “Great Ghost, by the way.”

I nod curtly, my pulse racing. Did he see it? The powder should have dissolved already, but the timing was off. I glance at Kira, who’s looking at her phone.

“Jenna’s looking for me,” she says, frowning at her screen. “Says she’s been texting for ten minutes.”

Shit. Not according to plan. I hand her the drink, maintaining my composure despite the unexpected complications.

“Here you go.” I make sure our fingers touch as she takes the glass. “To new friends.”

She clinks her glass against mine. “To new friends! And amazing Ghost cosplays.”

I watch her drink, timing each swallow. The security guard is hovering nearby, now speaking into his radio. My muscles tense, ready to adapt if needed. I’ve prepared for contingencies but prefer sticking to the original plan.

“I should probably find Jenna soon,” Kira says after a few sips. “She gets worried easily.”

“Let’s finish our drinks first,” I suggest, nodding toward her glass. “You’ve barely touched it.”

She takes another long sip. Good girl. Just a few more minutes, and the sedative will take effect. I check my watch—timing is everything.

“Actually,” she says, setting down her half-finished drink, “I really should find her. She’s near the main stage. Want to come with me?”

No. This isn’t right. She needs to finish the drink. I need her to be isolated and not walking through the convention.

“The main stage will be packed,” I counter smoothly. “I know a shortcut. We can cut through the back hallway and come out near there.”

She hesitates, glancing at her phone again. “I don’t know...”

“Trust me,” I say, leaning closer. “I’ve been to every GamerCon for the past five years. I know this place inside out.”

That seems to reassure her. She nods, taking one more sip before setting it down. Not enough, but it’ll have to do. The partial dose will still affect her, just more slowly.

I guide her through the crowd, my hand firm on her lower back. We pass a group of cosplayers taking photos, and one of them calls out to Kira.

“Aloy! Can we get a picture?”

She turns toward them automatically. No. I need to keep moving. Every second counts.

“Maybe later,” I say, steering her away. “We’re meeting friends.”

The cosplayer looks disappointed but nods. Kira glances back at them, a slight frown on her face.

“That was kind of rude,” she says. “It would’ve just taken a second.”

“Sorry,” I offer, leading her toward the service corridor. “I just don’t want your friend to worry.”

We reach the door marked “Staff Only.” I swipe my stolen security badge, which I acquired last week, and it opens with a soft click.

“Are we allowed back here?” Kira asks, hesitating at the threshold.

“It’s fine. I know one of the organizers.” The lie comes easily. “This will save us fifteen minutes of fighting through the crowd.”

She steps through, and I follow, letting the door close. The hallway is dimly lit and eerily quiet compared to the convention floor. I can see her starting to sway slightly—the drug beginning to take effect, but too slowly.

“I feel a little dizzy,” she says, blinking hard. “Maybe that drink was stronger than I thought.”

“The heat in there was intense,” I explain, steadying her with an arm around her waist. “Let’s get some air before we find your friend.”

I guide her down the corridor toward the exit I’ve scouted. Halfway there, a door opens ahead of us. A convention staff member emerges, carrying a box of merchandise.

“Hey! This area is restricted,” he calls, frowning at us. “You need to return to the main floor.”

I feel Kira tense beside me. This wasn’t in my calculations. I need to adapt quickly.

“I’m sorry. We got lost looking for the bathroom,” I explain, pulling Kira closer. “My girlfriend isn’t feeling well.”

The staff member’s expression softens slightly as he looks at Kira, who does appear unsteady on her feet.

“Bathrooms are back on the main floor,” he says, pointing in the direction we came. “Take the first right after you go through those doors.”

“Thanks,” I say, turning us around reluctantly.

This is a problem. The drug is working too slowly, and now we’re heading back toward the crowded convention. I need to get her alone.

“I think I need to sit down,” Kira mumbles, her words beginning to slur slightly. “Everything’s spinning.”

“Almost there,” I assure her, spotting a janitor’s closet. That will have to do.

I check that the staff member has gone, then quickly guide Kira to the closet. The door is locked, but I have tools for that. Thirty seconds of work with the pick set concealed in my costume, and we’re inside.

“What are we doing?” Kira asks, confusion evident in her voice. The dim emergency light casts shadows across her face. “This isn’t the bathroom,” she says.

“You need to sit for a minute,” I tell her, easing her onto an overturned bucket. “You’re not well.”

She attempts to focus on my mask. “I should text Jenna...”

“I already did,” I lie, taking her phone from her unresisting fingers. “Told her you’re taking a break in the quiet room.”

She nods slowly, accepting this. The drug is finally working, but we’re off schedule and in the wrong location. I need to get her to the van.

My earpiece crackles to life—my security monitoring app detecting radio chatter.

“...report of suspicious activity near the west service corridor. Male in Ghost costume with female Aloy cosplayer...”

Someone reported us—the staff member, most likely. I have minutes at most before security starts searching.

“We need to go,” I tell Kira, pulling her to her feet. “Can you walk?”

“I think so,” she mumbles, swaying against me. “Why is everything so fuzzy?”

I support her weight as we exit the closet. The hallway is still clear, but that won’t last. I guide her toward the emergency exit at the end of the corridor, knowing it will trigger an alarm but calculating that the resulting confusion will work in my favor.

“Where’s Jenna?” Kira asks, her voice is small and confused. “You said we were meeting Jenna,” she says.

“She’s waiting for us,” I assure her, moving faster as her legs weaken. “Just a little further.”

We reach the emergency exit. Beyond it lies the service alley where my van is parked. So close.

I push the door open, and the alarm blares immediately. Kira flinches at the noise, but I pull her into the alley. The cool air hits us, and she shivers against me.

“Something’s wrong...” she mumbles, trying weakly to pull away from me. “Where are we?”

“It’s okay,” I tell her, supporting more of her weight as her legs give out. “I’ve got you.”

A shout from the end of the alley makes me turn. Two security guards are running toward us, yellow vests visible even at this distance.

“Hey! Stop right there!”

No. Not when I’m this close. I lift Kira into my arms—she’s barely conscious now, her head lolling against my chest. The van is twenty feet away. I break into a run, her weight barely slowing me down after training specifically for this moment.

“What’re you...” Her words slur together as I reach the van. “Why...”

I shift her weight to one arm, using my free hand to unlock the van with the remote. The back doors swing open automatically—a custom modification worth every penny. The guards are closing in, maybe thirty seconds away.

“Shh.” I lay her on the padded floor, already reaching for the restraints I’ve mounted precisely where they need to be. “Don’t fight it.”

Her fingers weakly grasp at my sleeve. “Please...”

The click of each restraint is satisfying—ankles first, then wrists. I’ve measured everything to fit her. The padding will prevent bruising and keep her comfortable during the drive. I’ve thought of everything.

“Stop! Convention security!” The guards are almost at the van now.

I slam the back doors shut, rushing to the driver’s seat. The engine roars to life at the touch of a button. I’ve rehearsed this escape route dozens of times, knowing exactly which turns to take to avoid cameras and which streets have the least traffic at this hour.

The guards reach the back of the van just as I slam it into drive. One guard pounds on the rear door, but it’s too late. The vehicle lurches forward, tires squealing against the pavement as I accelerate down the alley.

In the rearview mirror, I see the guards shouting into their radios. It doesn’t matter. By the time anyone responds, we’ll be miles away on one of three possible escape routes I’ve mapped out. The van’s license plates are

already changing—another custom modification that costs a small fortune but is worth every cent for this moment.

I check the monitor showing the cargo area. Kira lies secured on the padded floor, her breathing even. Despite the complications, despite the near-misses, she's mine now.

"I don't..." Her voice comes through the speaker, weak and confused, as she tries to lift her head. The drugs are working fully now, pulling her under. "What's happening?"

I smile behind my mask. Everything I've planned for, everything I've worked toward—it's finally happening.

"Close your eyes, Kira," I say through the intercom. "When you wake up, you'll be home. Where you belong."

Her eyelids flutter, fighting to stay open. Even now, she's trying to understand, to make sense of what's happening. But the drugs are too strong, carefully measured for her exact weight.

"Sleep," I order. Her breathing evens out, deep and steady.

I turn onto the highway, merging smoothly with traffic. I'm just another van on the road. Nobody would suspect what—who—I'm carrying. The GPS shows our route to the compound, with an estimated arrival time of forty-seven minutes. Everything's proceeding according to plan now.

I glance back at Kira one last time. Everything has to be perfect.

"Game over," I murmur. "Level one complete."

KIRA

*M*y head throbs as consciousness creeps back in. Everything's a blur—the convention, the crowds, fragments drifting through my mind like scattered puzzle pieces.

The surface beneath me feels unyielding. My arms won't move. Why won't they move?

I force my heavy eyelids open. A gray concrete ceiling stretches above me, harsh fluorescent lights casting everything in a clinical glow. This isn't my room.

"Hello?" My voice rasps slightly. The air smells sterile, with the lingering scent of fresh paint.

I try to sit up but can't. Something holds my wrists and ankles in place. The panic hits like a punch to the gut as reality crashes in. I'm tied down. Actually tied down.

"Help! Someone help me!" I thrash against the restraints. The padded cuffs dig into my skin despite their cushioning. I have to get free.

"Jenna! Anyone!" My throat burns as I scream. The room remains silent except for my ragged breathing and desperate struggle. The fluorescent lights buzz overhead, indifferent to my terror.

Tears blur my vision as I twist and pull, searching for any weakness in the bindings. This can't be happening.

But it is happening. I'm trapped in some windowless concrete room, tied to a bed, with no idea where I am or how I got here. The convention... That guy... What did he do to me?

My heart pounds so hard I can barely breathe. The room spins as a full-on panic attack sets in.

“Please,” I beg, though I know no one can hear. “Please let me go.”

The room’s silence mocks my plea. There are no windows, no natural light, and no way to tell if it’s day or night. There is only the faint hum of lights and the soft whir of ventilation.

I pull against the restraints again, ignoring the pain. I won’t give up. But deep down, a horrible realization hits me—I’m completely at the mercy of whoever brought me here.

Time warps in my panic. I drift between frantic struggling and exhausted stillness, my wrists rubbed raw. Thirst claws at my throat. The unchanging artificial light adds to my disorientation.

The convention. I remember fragments now—the Ghost cosplayer. GhostDaddy from TikTok. The drink that made everything fuzzy. He drugged me. Lured me away from the crowd.

A small voice tells me that part of me had been attracted to his intensity, his mystery. I’ve fantasized about men in masks, about being taken and dominated, but not like this—not for real.

The sound of a lock disengaging jerks me to alertness. My pulse skyrockets as I strain against my bonds. A heavy metal door slides open with a pneumatic hiss.

“Please,” I beg, voice cracking. “Whatever you want, we can talk about this.”

No response. Just heavy footsteps approaching from behind me, where I can’t see.

A figure moves into my field of vision. He is tall, muscular, and dressed in tactical gear. His face is hidden behind the Ghost mask from Call of Duty—the same one from GhostDaddy’s videos and the same one from the convention.

“You’re awake.” His voice is distorted through the mask. “Good. I was getting impatient.”

“Who are you? What do you want from me?” I keep my voice steady.

He tilts his head. “You know who I am, Kira. You’ve been following me for a while, touching yourself to my videos.”

Heat floods my face despite my terror. How does he know that?

“I don’t understand.” I pull against the restraints helplessly. “Please, just let me go. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Let you go?” He laughs, the sound hollow, almost mechanical through the mask. “Why would I do that when I’ve invested so much time and effort

bringing you home?”

Home. The word makes my stomach drop. This isn’t a random abduction. This was planned.

His gloved hand reaches toward my face, and I turn away, but there’s nowhere to go. His fingers brush my cheek gently.

“You’re even more beautiful in person,” he murmurs. “The cameras never quite captured it.”

Cameras? The feeling of being watched in my apartment. The strange glitches with my Alexa. The texts from unknown numbers at the convention. *What the actual fuck?*

“How long?” My voice is barely audible. “How long have you been watching me?”

“Long enough to know everything about you, Mischief.” He uses the nickname Rogue always used in our gaming sessions.

“Rogue?” The name slips out before I can stop it.

He removes the mask smoothly, and I finally see his face. Those piercing blue eyes from the club, that jawline, those lips that smirked at me across the dance floor. “Among other names. You know me as GhostDaddy, too.” His lips curve into a malicious smile. “But you can call me Ryker.”

My mind reels. Rogue, my gaming partner for two years, the mysterious blue-eyed man from the club, the GhostDaddy account I’ve been obsessing over—all of them are the same man?

“No.” I shake my head. “That’s not possible.”

“Oh, it’s very possible.” He sets the mask down on a sleek metal table. “I’ve been part of your life for two years, Kira, gaming with you most nights and watching you through your webcam.”

“My webcam is always off when we’re not streaming,” I protest weakly.

He laughs—Rogue’s laugh. “That little green light? Child’s play to bypass. Technology is my specialty, remember? All those conversations about my ‘tech job’? Not entirely a lie.”

The implications hit me like a physical blow.

“Why?” I ask. “Why me? Why all this?”

Ryker kneels beside the bed, bringing his face level with mine. This close, I can see the obsession burning in his eyes.

“Because you’re perfect,” he says simply. “Because from the moment I heard your voice in that first lobby, I knew you were meant to be mine.”

“I’m not yours. I don’t belong to anyone.”

“Don’t you?” His touch skims my jaw. “You’ve belonged to me since the moment I found you.”

He stands abruptly, returning with a water bottle, which he holds to my lips.

“Drink,” he commands. “You’re dehydrated.”

I want to refuse, but my parched throat overrides my pride. I drink greedily, water spilling down my chin.

“Good girl,” he murmurs, wiping the water with his thumb.

The praise sends an unwelcome warmth through me. After years of hearing that voice congratulate me on kills and victories, my body has been conditioned to respond.

“What are you going to do with me?” I ask when I find my voice again.

“That depends on you.” He sets the water bottle aside. “On how well you play the game.”

“Game?” I repeat, confusion momentarily overriding fear.

“Our game.” He gestures around the room. “The one I’ve been designing for you all this time.”

For the first time, I really look at my surroundings. What I initially took for a simple concrete cell is actually a sophisticated space. The restraints aren’t crude ropes but carefully designed cuffs. Everything is deliberate and planned.

“You’re insane.”

“No. I’m dedicated.” He sits on the edge of the bed, his weight making the mattress dip. “I’ve put more thought into this than anything else.”

“Into kidnapping me?” My voice rises with hysteria. “That’s not dedication, that’s a crime!”

“Labels,” he dismisses with a wave. “Society has such limited vision. They can’t understand what we have.”

“We don’t have anything!” I yank at my restraints again. “We played games together online. That doesn’t give you the right to do this!”

His expression darkens. “You felt the connection, too. Don’t lie to yourself. All those late nights, those personal conversations. The way you’d linger in the lobby after everyone else left.”

He’s right, and that’s what terrifies me most. I had felt a connection with Rogue beyond being just gaming partners. I’d imagined meeting him, fantasizing about putting a face to the voice I’d grown to care for.

But not like this.

“You could have just told me,” I say, my voice breaking. “Asked me out like a normal person.”

“And risk rejection?” He shakes his head. “No, I needed to control the variables and ensure you saw me how I wanted to be seen.”

“By kidnapping me? How is that better than rejection?”

“Because now you’re here.” His hand finds my hair, fingers threading through it possessively. “Now you can know the real me without distractions. Just us, in the environment I’ve created.”

“Ryker, please. This isn’t right.” I make my voice gentle. “If you care about me, you wouldn’t keep me tied up like this.”

Something flickers in his eyes—doubt, perhaps? It’s gone instantly.

“The restraints are temporary,” he says, his thumb tracing my lower lip. “Just until you understand the rules and accept your role in our game.”

He moves to a sleek console built into the wall. Multiple screens flicker to life, displaying security camera feeds of different rooms.

“My life has always been about games,” Ryker explains, gesturing to the screens. “Strategy, knowing every possible move. When I found you, I knew I’d discovered the perfect ‘player two.’”

He taps command, and the screens change to display a game interface with my name, health bars, and achievement trackers.

“I built this entire compound for us,” he continues, pride evident in his voice. “Every room, every level, is designed specifically for your progression. This is just the starting area—the tutorial.”

“I’ve designed specific levels,” he continues, his voice taking on that familiar cadence from our gaming sessions. “Complete the challenges, earn rewards. Fail...” He pauses, eyes darkening. “Well, let’s hope you don’t fail.”

“You can’t be serious.” I stare at the screens in horror. “You expect me to play along with this?”

“I expect you to adapt,” he corrects, returning to my bedside. “Like you always do in games. You analyze the situation, learn the mechanics, and excel. It’s what makes you such a good match for me.”

“This isn’t a game, Ryker! This is my life!”

His hand covers my mouth, cutting off my words. His eyes are cold now.

“I can do whatever I want,” he says quietly. “I’ve spent two years planning this, creating this space, designing these levels. There’s no escape.

No rescue coming. The sooner you accept that, the easier this will be.”

He removes his hand slowly. I remain silent, fear freezing the words in my throat.

“Good,” he says, nodding approvingly. “Now, let’s discuss the first level.”

He moves to release my restraints. For a brief moment, I consider attacking him. But he’s bigger, stronger, and clearly prepared. My best chance is to play along while looking for opportunities to escape.

My wrists ache as he removes the cuffs. I sit up slowly, rubbing at the raw skin. Ryker blocks the heavy metal door, his imposing figure between me and freedom.

Music fills the room—a slow, pulsing beat mocking my racing heart.

“The first challenge is simple,” Ryker says, settling into a leather chair. “Strip tease for me. Make it good, and you’ll earn experience points.”

I stare in disbelief. After everything—the kidnapping, the restraints, the years-long deception—he expects me to perform?

“And if I refuse?” My voice is steadier than I expected.

His smile doesn’t waver. “Then you lose points. Lose enough, and the penalties aren’t pleasant. But earn enough?” He gestures to a menu of “rewards” on a screen. “You can trade them for privileges. Better food. Softer restraints. Maybe even a walk outside, eventually.”

“You’re sick,” I say, hugging my arms around myself.

“No, I’m a completionist. And you? You’re my favorite game yet.”

The screens pulse with colored light, creating an atmosphere like my favorite virtual worlds, except I’m trapped in someone else’s twisted reality.

I consider my options. Fighting would be futile, and refusing might lead to punishment. I need to survive, understand the rules, and find weaknesses.

With shaking hands, I stand from the bed. The screens display my “health” bar, already depleting as I hesitate.

“Time to start playing,” Ryker says, now wearing the Ghost mask again.

“Dance for me. Show me what you’ve been practicing in your room.” His voice carries that same commanding tone from our gaming sessions. “Bonus points for a lap dance.”

“You saw that?” The realization makes my skin crawl.

“Every move.” He taps the arm of his chair. “The points are counting down. Better start dancing.”

I force my body to sway, fighting back tears. The Ghost costume he wears, which had always seemed so alluring, now feels like a cruel joke.

“Come closer,” he commands, patting his lap.

I take a shaky step forward.

I move to the music, trying to remember how dancers look in movies. My hands shake as I slip off my top, letting it fall. The cold air prickles my skin. I focus on the health bar, seeing it stabilize as I comply.

“Good girl,” Ryker murmurs behind the Ghost mask. “You’re learning.”

I turn away, unable to meet those dark eyes as I shimmy out of my costume. Standing in my black lingerie, I wrap my arms around myself.

“Don’t be shy. The lap dance earns bonus points.”

I perch awkwardly on his lap, trying to move to the beat. His hands grip my hips, directing my movements. The Ghost mask stares up at me, emotionless and cold.

“Relax,” he commands, fingers digging into my skin. “Let the music move you.”

I close my eyes, pretending I’m anywhere else.

My hips move against him, and I feel his hardness pressing up through his clothes. A small gasp escapes my lips. Heat floods my cheeks.

His hands guide my movements, making me grind down harder. Each roll of my hips sends sparks of pleasure through me. I try to fight it, but my body responds to his touch.

Opening my eyes, I see Ghost, those eyes burning behind the mask. I recall watching GhostDaddy’s videos and imagining scenarios like this. But this is wrong. This isn’t consensual roleplay—this is captivity.

My thighs quiver as his hands move to grip me. His muscles flex beneath me, exactly like I’d fantasized. The costume, the mask, his commanding presence... It’s as if he pulled the fantasy straight from my dreams and twisted it into this nightmare.

“Your body knows what it wants,” he growls. “Stop fighting it.”

I bite my lip to hold back a moan as he shifts beneath me. Shame and arousal war inside me as my body responds to his expert manipulation.

This can’t be happening. I can’t be getting turned on by my kidnapper. But with each movement, my resistance crumbles.

“That’s it... let go.”

His hands roam over my skin, and each touch sends shivers down my spine, making it harder to remember this isn’t one of my fantasies.

“Please,” I beg.

“Your points are increasing.” One hand slides up my back. “You’re doing so well.”

The praise strikes me deeply, the same thrill I get from our gaming victories. But this isn’t a game. This is my life now.

He grips the edge of my bra strap. “You’ve imagined this, haven’t you? All those nights watching my videos, touching yourself...”

I squeeze my eyes shut, trying to block out how right he is.

His hand tangles in my hair when I don’t comply, forcing my head back. “Open your eyes.”

I meet his gaze through the mask.

“You’re mine now,” he says, rolling his hips up against me. “Every fantasy, every desire—I’ll make them all real.”

A whimper escapes my lips as pleasure shoots through me. My body trembles, caught between fear and arousal. His grip tightens, holding me in place as he grinds against me.

“That’s it,” he growls. “Let go. Show me how much you want this.”

But I don’t want this. Do I? My mind screams no while my body begs for more. Each touch brings me closer to the edge of something I’m terrified to fall into.

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RYKER

T

he embarrassment washing over Kira's face as she freezes mid-dance surprises me. She came so easily whilst giving me a lap dance. Her body heat and movements affect me in ways I hadn't calculated.

"You aced that level. Top points." I take her by the hair, forcing her to gaze at me. "Look at the screen. See how well you did?"

She looks up, eyes widening at herself on screen, straddling me. I replay the moment, her eyes glazing over. Her face reddens as she realizes the extent of my stalking.

"Deny it all you want. That sweet little pussy of yours betrays you every time." My voice sounds strange—tighter, more desperate than intended. "Your pulse races, your skin flushes when I push you. You want this. Admit it." I tug gently on her hair, bringing her closer. "Tell me you want more."

My breath brushes her lips as I wait. I need to hear her acknowledge the truth. Not just for my plan but for something deeper stirring inside me—a need for her to want this and me.

Her eyes lock with mine. "I-I..." Her voice falters. "I want..." She swallows, resistance crumbling.

Seeing her give in excites me in unexpected ways. I lean closer, inhaling her scent. "Admit you want more of me, Kira."

Her body tenses as she shifts on my lap, eyes meeting mine with newfound determination. The fear remains, but something else burns behind it—defiance.

"Let me go." Her voice comes out stronger than expected. "I want you to let me go."

A laugh escapes my throat, hollow even to me. Something twists in my gut. I release her hair, skimming my fingers down her neck. “And why would I do that when we’re just getting started? When you’re finally understanding what you truly need?”

She tries to pull away, but my arm keeps her firmly in place. “This isn’t what I need. You’re wrong about me.”

“Am I?” I gesture to the screen where her dance still plays. “You just came while giving me a lap dance and grinding on my cock.”

“That was...” She shakes her head. “You manipulated me. Drugged me. None of this is real.”

I grip her chin, forcing eye contact. Her skin feels warm under my fingers, alive in ways my screens never captured. “Everything about this is real. More real than those fantasies you’ve harbored. More real than those late-night gaming sessions where you pretend to be someone else.”

“You don’t know me.”

“But I do.” I graze her lower lip with my thumb, and something unfamiliar cracks inside me. “I know every part of you, Kira Ellis. I’m the only one who can give you what you want.”

She tries to turn away, but I hold her still. “The only thing I want is to leave.”

“No.” I smile, noticing her pulse jump at my touch, doubt creeping in where certainty once reigned. “You want to stop feeling guilty about enjoying this and wanting more.”

“Let me go or get on with your sick game.” Kira’s eyes flash with determination. “The faster I play along, the faster this ends, right?”

My grip tightens on her jaw. Rage courses through my veins, but beneath it runs something else—fear. She thinks this is temporary? Can she leave?

“Ends?” A dark laugh escapes my throat, masking sudden panic. “You think this is some game you can rage quit?” I yank her closer, lips brushing against her ear. “There is no ending, Mischief. No save point. No respawn.”

Her body trembles against mine. Good. She needs to understand.

“You’re mine now. I’ve learned every detail about you and created this world just for us.” My fingers track the column of her throat, feeling her rapid pulse. My voice softens unexpectedly. “Your apartment? Emptied. Your job? Resigned. You don’t exist out there anymore.”

Panic crosses Kira's face. She pushes against my chest, fingers splayed across my shirt. The pressure makes something stir in me—a longing for connection I hadn't anticipated having.

"That's impossible. My family will notice I'm missing. Jenna was literally with me at the convention. She'll know something happened." Her voice trembles but strengthens. "People will look for me."

I smile at her naivety, a strange ache forming in my chest. The confidence in her eyes almost makes me feel bad for what I'm about to tell her. Almost.

"Mischief, Mischief, Mischief." I stroked her hair, enjoying her flinch while wishing she wouldn't. "You think I didn't account for that? Your precious Jenna received a text from your phone explaining you'd met up with an old friend and decided to take an impromptu trip."

"She wouldn't believe that. I'd never—"

"You did mention wanting to be more spontaneous last month during your little wine night." I run my thumb across her lower lip. "Remember? When you complained about how predictable your life had become?"

"How could you possibly know—"

"Your mother already received your call explaining that you needed space. Very emotional. Very convincing." I play a recording of her voice—pieced together from hundreds of hours of footage, manipulated to say exactly what I needed.

She listens, horrified, as her voice explains she's taking time off from everything, needs to disconnect, and promises to check in occasionally.

"That's not... You can't..." Her breathing quickens.

"As for your job? Your manager received your resignation letter two weeks ago. Quite professional." I lean closer, inhaling her scent. "You even thanked them for the opportunity."

Tears well in her eyes as recognition flashes in their depths. No doubt her boss was giving her shit ever since she "resigned." "No one will believe—"

"They already have." I brush my knuckles along her collarbone, a strange tenderness creeping into my touch. "Everyone's happy you're finally living your best life."

She tries to pull back, but I hold her firm, unwilling to let go now that I finally have her in my arms.

“The only life you have now is with me. The only pleasure you’ll feel is what I give you.” I brush my thumb across her lower lip again, my voice dropping. “The only air you breathe is what I allow.”

Tears well in her eyes. “You’re insane.”

“No. Obsessed? Maybe.” I slide my hand into her hair, gripping it tight but gentler than planned. “But you created this. Every late-night game. Every TikTok of mine you watched. Every innocent teasing conversation while we gamed. You built this reality, and now you live in it.”

Her chest heaves against mine as panic sets in. She’s learning this isn’t a game—it’s her new forever. Her weight against me feels different from what I imagined—more significant. I hadn’t considered how her actual presence would affect me.

“Now,” I release her hair, exploring her spine. “Should we move on to the next level? Or do you need another reminder of who owns you?”

I stand, lifting Kira with me. Her legs wobble as I set her on her feet, hands gripping her waist. The warmth of her body drives me wild, not just from lust, but something more complex that wasn’t in my programming.

“Time to level up.” I inhale the scent of her hair. “You’ve passed the tutorial. Now we get to the good part.”

I secure her wrists behind her back with a zip tie—not too tight, just enough to remind her who’s in control. Her breath catches as I lead her through a door hidden behind a bookshelf. I prepare to show her the next phase of my plan.

The room beyond stops her as she takes in every detail of my creation. A strange vulnerability washes over me—I’m showing her my obsession laid bare, two long years of meticulous planning exposed.

“Recognize it?” I ask, guiding her forward, suddenly anxious for her approval.

The space is an exact replica of her gaming setup at home, but twisted. It includes her desk, chair, and PC with customized RGB lighting. But surrounding it all are monitors displaying surveillance footage of her apartment, workplace, and coffee shop—years of her life captured and categorized.

“This is where I first knew I had to have you,” I explain, the confession slipping out before I can analyze its strategic value. “Watching you play. Seeing that little furrow between your brows when you concentrate.”

I push her gently into her gaming chair—the same model as in her apartment, down to the worn spot on the left armrest. My hands linger, savoring the contact.

“I’ve set up a special game.” I lean over her, chest against her back, as I boot up the system. “A custom one. Just for us.”

The screen flickers to life. On one side is her bedroom, and the screen is split, showing a feed of my bedroom. Timestamps show simultaneous moments—Kira touching herself while I did the same. Showing her this feels different from expected—more intimate, more invasive. Doubt flickers in my mind.

“See?” I brush her hair aside, lips grazing her neck, feeling her pulse jump beneath my touch. “We’ve been playing together longer than you realize.”

Her body trembles as the monitor displays dozens of synchronized moments—her most intimate seconds paired with mine.

“For tonight’s level...” I slide my hand down her arm, feeling goosebumps rise under my touch. “You’re going to see and feel what I felt.” My fingers trace the edge of her lingerie, hesitating briefly. “And I’m going to show you exactly how I’ve wanted to play with you since I first found you.”

I lean over Kira’s shoulder, mouth close to her ear as I operate the keyboard. The monitors flicker between videos—all of her and me—synchronized moments captured without her knowledge. My breathing becomes uneven as I watch our past selves, remembering the loneliness of those nights when she was pixels on a screen.

“See how we were connected even before you knew me?” I press play on a clip from three months ago. There she is, headphones on, hand sliding beneath her shorts while I mirror the action in my space. “Look how in sync our timing is.”

She tries to turn away, but I grip her chin. “Watch it. All of it.” My voice comes out harsher than intended, masking my vulnerability in sharing these private moments.

I queue up a playlist—dozens of clips. Her face flushes as she watches herself in her most private moments, paired with my responding actions. The horror and shame playing across her features make something twist inside me. It wasn’t supposed to feel this way.

“Hours of us,” I announce, voice rougher than usual. “Together but separate. Until now.”

My fingers find the zip tie binding her wrists, cutting it with a knife. I reposition her hands in front of her, securing them to the arms of the chair with handcuffs. She won’t be going anywhere. But as I secure her, I find myself gentler than planned, careful not to mark her skin more than it already is from her struggling with the zip tie that rubbed her skin raw.

“You know what I’ve thought about every time I watched you?” I glide my fingers up her thighs, feeling her tense under my touch. “How you would taste.”

I slide to my knees, positioning myself under the edge of her desk. Looking up at her with a hunger that transcends my careful planning, this moment feels monumental in ways I hadn’t calculated.

“Keep your eyes on the screen,” I command, pushing her legs apart, my voice revealing more than I should allow. “Don’t you dare look away!”

Her thighs resist at first, but I force them open. I hook my fingers into the waistband of her panties, slowly dragging them down her legs. She whimpers above me, a sound caught between protest and desire, sending heat flooding my veins.

“I’ve waited so long for this,” I murmur against her inner thigh, my voice cracking with my pent-up hunger for her. “...imagined this every night.”

On-screen, another video plays—her touching herself, moaning softly as I did the same miles away, both of us unknowingly synchronized. I finally taste what I’ve coveted for so long.

Her body jerks as my tongue makes contact, but the chair holds her in place. I grip her thighs harder, keeping her spread open for me. My first taste of her is more intense than any simulation I’d run in my mind. Two years of waiting, planning, and now she’s here, spread open for me. Her body’s reactions betray her words. Despite her protests, she’s wet and responsive.

“Look at us,” I murmur against her inner thigh, a strange emotion catching in my throat. “I want you to witness how we match.”

I circle my tongue around her clit, feeling her thighs tremble. Her breathing changes—shorter, faster. The chair creaks as she pulls against the restraints. The sounds she makes—soft, reluctant moans—affect me more deeply than anticipated.

“That’s it… Stop fighting what you want.”

I lick her slowly, methodically—the same way I planned this entire operation. Her body responds beautifully, finally performing a symphony I’ve rehearsed for two years. But the reality of her—her taste, scent, and warmth—overwhelms my careful planning.

On-screen, the compilation continues—moments when I stroked my cock and watched her touch herself. Now, there’s no distance between us—no screens, just her taste on my tongue and her reluctant moans filling the room.

“You’re so fucking amazing,” I growl against her, the words carrying more weight than I imagined possible. “Everything I knew you’d be.”

I lift her legs and drape them over my shoulders, drawing her closer and groaning against her cunt. Her hips buck and she involuntarily fucks my face, making my dick harder than stone as I hold her in place. I’ve manipulated every aspect of her life for more than two years, and now I’m manipulating her body—showing her that I know what she needs better than she does. Something shifts inside me as I feel her body respond—a need for her to want this as much as I do, to want me.

I glance up to see her face flushed and confused, eyes fixed on the monitors. Her expression makes my chest tighten, a sensation unfamiliar.

I press deeper, harder, my tongue relentless as I feel her body climbing toward release. Her resistance is futile. I’ve already won. Even so, I want more than victory—I want her submission to be real.

“Come for me,” I order, the vibration of my words against her most sensitive flesh making her gasp. “Show me you can be a good girl.”

Her body trembles beneath my tongue as I push her closer to the edge. Her resistance is crumbling—I can feel it in the way her hips begin to move against my mouth, seeking more pressure despite her mind’s protests. Knowing that her body wants this, even if her mind doesn’t yet, fills me with a deep satisfaction.

“That’s it,” I growl against her slick flesh. “Stop fighting what we both know you want.”

Her breathing changes, becoming ragged and desperate. The chair creaks as she pulls against the restraints, her body arching. Our past selves perform in silent synchronicity on the screens surrounding us, but nothing compares to reality. The connection I feel transcends my careful planning.

I look up and see her face contort with pleasure. Her eyes squeeze shut, head thrown back as she tries to deny what's happening. Her vulnerability reaches past my dominance, touching something primordial within—an instinct to protect and possess.

I pause just long enough to make her whimper at the loss. "Watch me while you come."

Her eyes flutter open, glazed with conflicting emotions—shame, fear, and undeniable arousal. I smirk against her inner thigh before returning to my task with renewed determination, circling her clit with precise pressure. Beneath my confident exterior, something shifts again—a need for her to see me, to acknowledge what's happening between us as more than just captor and captive.

The moment builds like a masterfully executed game strategy—every move precise, every response anticipated. Her thighs begin to shake, her chest heaving as she fights against the inevitable.

"Give in to me," I demand, feeling her body tense on the precipice. "Tell me you belong to me."

She breaks with a sharp cry, her body convulsing as pleasure rages through her. "Fuck, I'm yours!"

The admission snaps my control. I continue my assault on her senses, drawing out her orgasm as she trembles and moans, feeling an unexpected tenderness bloom alongside my triumph.

"Let me hear you say it again," I command, looking up at her flushed face. "Who made you come? Who owns your orgasms?"

Her eyes are wide with horror at what she's just said, but her body continues to pulse against my tongue. "You did," she breathes, tears spilling down her cheeks—whether from pleasure or shame, I don't know. "You do."

Victory surges through me, but it's accompanied by a fierce protectiveness, a desire to shelter her even as I break her down. Sweet validation of everything I've known, yet somehow more meaningful. This isn't just about possession anymore. It's about connection.

I rise slowly, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand, studying her face with newfound wonder. The dynamic has shifted. The game has changed. And I'm no longer certain who's really in control.

KIRA

I wake to my ceiling fan spinning lazily above me. My eyelids feel weighted with exhaustion that clings like a second skin. My head pounds with each heartbeat, making thinking difficult.

“What the hell?” My voice comes out raspy and foreign.

I’m in my bedroom. The blue comforter pools around my waist as I struggle to sit up. Dizziness washes over me, and I grab the edge of my nightstand. The wood feels solid beneath my fingertips. Real. But the fog in my brain refuses to clear.

The last thing I remember is...

The convention. Aloy costume. GhostDaddy.

Fragments flash through my mind but slip away before I can grasp them, like water in cupped hands.

I squint at my surroundings. My gaming setup sits in the corner. My clothes spill from the hamper. My Aloy poster hangs on the wall. Everything looks right, but the room feels... off.

The light coming through my window has an artificial quality. The traffic sounds lack the random peaks and lulls of actual city noise.

I swing my legs over the side of the bed and immediately regret it. The room tilts, and my stomach lurches. I feel drugged.

“Hello?” I call out.

No answer.

I focus on the details of my room, catching inconsistencies I hadn’t noticed before. For example, the spine of my favorite gaming guide is a different color, the pattern on my area rug runs in the opposite direction, and the books are arranged by height instead of alphabetically.

This is my bedroom, but it's not my bedroom.

I reach for my phone, but my movements are clumsy. My fingers feel thick and useless as I fumble with the device. The screen lights up with my lock screen image, but even that looks subtly wrong.

Suddenly, the door opens, and Ryker strides in. His tall frame fills the doorway, and the sight of him hits me like a punch. Everything comes flooding back in a nauseating rush.

“Morning, Mischief.” His voice carries that same deep timbre that made my stomach flutter when we’d game together. Now, it makes my skin crawl.

I’m not home. This isn’t my bedroom. It’s a replica hidden somewhere far from civilization. And Ryker—my gaming partner Rogue, my TikTok crush GhostDaddy—constructed it all.

“You drugged me again.” My words slur slightly.

He smiles, that dimple appearing on his right cheek. “Just a little something to help you rest. You were... over-excited after our session.”

Our session. Images flash through my mind—me dancing for him in that first “level.” The feel of his hands gripping my hips during the lap dance he demanded. The humiliation burns through me all over again.

“How long have I been out?” I pull the blanket tighter, suddenly aware of my nakedness.

“Just overnight.” He approaches the bed and sits on the edge, too close. “You did so well yesterday, Kira. I knew you would.”

My stomach turns as I remember how my body betrayed me, responding to his touch even as my mind screamed in protest.

“Water?” He offers a glass, and the gesture triggers another memory—accepting a drink from him yesterday, the world going fuzzy around the edges—just like at the convention. The realization that he’s done this multiple times makes me want to vomit.

“Get away from me.” I press myself against the headboard, as far from him as possible.

His blue eyes darken. “Don’t be like that. Not after everything we shared.”

I stare at him, this stranger who isn’t a stranger. The man whose voice has been in my ears for countless nights of gaming, whose TikToks I’ve watched obsessively, who somehow became two separate fantasies, now merged into one terrifying reality.

“You’re insane.”

He tilts his head. “Is that what you think?”

“You kidnapped me. You drugged me. You built a fake version of my bedroom.” My voice rises with each accusation. “What part of that sounds sane to you?”

A smile plays at the corners of his mouth. “I prefer to think of it as dedication.”

Despite everything—the fear, the violation, the absolute horror of my situation—I can’t stop my eyes from taking him in. He’s beautiful in a way that makes me hate myself for noticing. Tall enough that I’d have to stand on tiptoes to reach his mouth. His arms are covered in intricate tattoos that disappear beneath his tight black T-shirt. His shoulders stretch the fabric, muscles shifting beneath as he leans toward me.

I hate that I can still see what attracted me to his online personas. I hate that some traitorous part of me still responds to his physical presence, even as every rational part of my brain screams danger.

“You don’t understand what you’ve done,” I say, hating how my voice trembles. “People will be looking for me. Jenna—”

“Is now under the impression you took off with a friend on a trip.” He shrugs, the casual gesture chilling me to the bone. “As I explained before your last rest, she received texts from your phone. Very convincing ones.”

I feel sick. My best friend, the one person who would move heaven and earth to find me, thinks I’m off on some romantic adventure.

The methodical way he’s erased my existence from the outside world makes my blood run cold. He’s thought of everything.

“Someone will figure it out,” I insist, clinging to hope. “People know me. They’ll know something’s wrong.”

“Will they?” He raises an eyebrow. “The beauty of modern life is how disconnected we all are, even while seemingly connected. How many friends do you talk to daily? How often does your mother really check in? How many colleagues would notice if your social media posts became slightly less frequent but continued nonetheless?”

He’s right, and that terrifies me. My life has been increasingly online over the past few years. Aside from Jenna, my closest relationships have been with people like Rogue, people I’ve never met.

“You need to eat.” Ryker stands, clearly considering the matter settled. “We’ve got a busy day ahead of us.”

The way he says it makes my skin crawl—it's like we're colleagues about to start a project, not captor and captive.

"Gaming day." He grins, that dimple appearing again. "Time to level up."

My stomach drops. After yesterday's "games," I can't imagine what fresh hell he has planned.

"Follow me." He stands and holds out his hand expectantly.

"No." The word comes out stronger than I expected. "I'm not playing your sick games anymore."

His expression darkens, and I see the monster beneath the handsome exterior. "This isn't optional, Kira."

"What are you going to do? Drug me again? Force me?" I pull the blanket tighter. "Go ahead. Show me who you really are."

"I don't want to force you. I want you to participate willingly."

"Then you shouldn't have kidnapped me!" My voice rises, anger temporarily overriding fear. "You can't kidnap someone and then expect them to 'participate willingly' in whatever twisted fantasy you've concocted!"

Ryker takes a deep breath, visibly composing himself. "I understand you're upset—"

"Upset?" I laugh, the sound harsh and borderline hysterical. "I'm not upset, Ryker. I'm terrified. I'm angry. I'm disgusted. This isn't a game. This is my life you've stolen."

"I haven't stolen anything," he counters, his voice still unnervingly calm. "I've given you an opportunity. A chance to experience something beyond your mundane existence."

"By kidnapping me? By forcing me to strip for you?" The memory makes bile rise in my throat. "That's not an opportunity. That's assault."

His jaw tightens. "You enjoyed it. Your body responded to me."

"My body responded because I'm human!" I shout, past caring if it angers him. "Bodies respond to stimulation even when the mind doesn't want it! That's biology, not consent!"

We stare at each other, the air between us charged with tension.

"Get dressed," he says finally, his voice clipped. "There are clothes in the closet. I'll wait outside."

He turns and strides to the door, his back rigid with tension. At the threshold, he pauses without looking back. "Five minutes. Then I'm coming

back in, whether you're dressed or not.”

The door closes behind him with a soft click. It’s not a slam, which makes it more unnerving.

I gently slide off the bed, wrapping the blanket around me as I approach the closet. Inside, I find replicas of my clothes mixed with items I’ve never seen before, all in the styles I would choose. The attention to detail is as impressive as it is disturbing.

I select jeans and a simple t-shirt, ignoring the lingerie and revealing outfits. As I dress, I scan the room for anything I could use as a weapon. Nothing obvious presents itself—no sharp objects, nothing heavy enough to do damage.

The five minutes pass too quickly. True to his word, Ryker opens the door exactly on schedule. His eyes take in my clothing choice, and I see a flicker of disappointment that I didn’t select something more revealing. Good.

“Let’s go,” he gestures for me to precede him into the hallway.

I consider refusing again but decide to conserve my energy for battles I might actually win. Reluctantly, I step past him into the hallway, which is an exact replica of my apartment building. The attention to detail is nauseating. How many times did he visit my building to get everything so exact?

The kitchen surprises me. Unlike my cramped apartment kitchenette, this spacious chef’s kitchen has gleaming stainless steel appliances and marble countertops.

“Sit.” He points to a barstool at the island where a plate of pancakes waits, steam still rising from the stack. The smell hits me—buttermilk and vanilla—and my traitorous stomach growls despite everything.

I perch on the edge of the stool, as far from him as possible. “I’m not hungry.”

“You need to maintain your strength.” Ryker slides the plate closer. “Eat.”

“No.” I push the plate away, a small act of defiance in a situation where I have so little control.

His jaw tightens. Without breaking eye contact, he taps on his phone. The wall-mounted TV flickers to life, displaying what looks like a video game interface. I see my name at the top, beside status bars labeled HEALTH, HYDRATION, and ENERGY.

My health bar hovers at 70%, yellow rather than green.

“Your body needs fuel, Kira.” Ryker’s voice is eerily calm. “Every action has consequences. Every choice affects your stats.”

He taps his phone again, and the HEALTH bar drops to 65%.

“What the hell is this?”

“Your life, gamified.” He pushes the plate back toward me. “Eat or you’ll see those numbers drop more. Trust me, you won’t like what happens when they hit critical levels.”

I stare at the screen, then back at Ryker, rage building inside me. The gamification of my captivity is sick—a twisted extension of the online world we once shared.

“This is insane,” I mutter. “You can’t just—”

“Can’t what?” His voice remains calm, almost gentle, which somehow makes it worse. “Can’t make sure you stay healthy? Can’t care about your well-being?”

“This isn’t caring,” I hiss, clenching my hands into fists. “This is control.”

Ryker’s eyes darken, and his finger hovers over his phone. “Test me if you want.”

I glance at the screen again. What happens at critical levels? Punishment? Force-feeding? Something worse I can’t even imagine?

“You know what? Go ahead.” I cross my arms, finding unexpected courage. “Drop my health to zero. Show me what happens. Because I’m not playing your sick game.”

Surprise flickers across his face, quickly replaced by something that makes me believe he has ice running through his veins. “You don’t want to do this, Kira.”

“I didn’t want to be kidnapped, but here we are.” I hold his gaze, refusing to back down. “You think gamifying my captivity makes this okay? It doesn’t. It makes it worse.”

We stare at each other, locked in a silent battle of wills. Then, to my surprise, Ryker sets his phone down.

“Fine.” His voice is tight. “But next time I offer you food, you’ll eat, or there will be consequences.”

A small victory, but I cling to it. I’ve established a boundary, however minor. I’ve shown him I won’t be completely compliant.

“Now come with me.” He grabs my arm, his grip firm but not painful. “It’s time for Level Two, whether you’ve eaten or not.”

He leads me through the kitchen to a heavy steel door I hadn’t noticed before. The contrast between it and the replica of my apartment is jarring—a reminder that this entire setup is a prison.

“Where are we going?” My voice sounds small, even to my own ears.

“Down.” He punches a code into a keypad beside the door, and it swings open with a metallic groan.

A staircase descends into darkness. My heart rate spikes, and I instinctively pull back.

“No. I’m not going down there.” The basement. It’s always the basement where the worst things happen.

Ryker’s expression hardens. “It wasn’t a request.”

“I don’t care.” I plant my feet, refusing to move. “I’m not playing your game anymore.”

His patience snaps. In one fluid motion, he throws me over his shoulder. I scream, pounding my fists against his back, kicking wildly.

“Put me down! Let go of me!”

He ignores my struggles, carrying me down the stairs as if I weigh nothing. The stairwell is concrete and cold, the fluorescent lights flickering to life as we descend. My struggles are useless against his strength, but I don’t stop fighting.

At the bottom, another steel door awaits. When Ryker pushes it open, I glimpse what lies beyond and momentarily stop struggling in shock.

“What the actual fuck?”

Before us stretches an elaborate maze with walls nearly reaching the ceiling. The space is far larger than should be possible in a residential basement. This isn’t a house; it’s a compound.

Ryker sets me down but keeps a firm grip on my arm. “Welcome to Level Two,” he says, pride in his voice. “Do you like it? It took a long time to build.”

“You’re crazy,” I observe. “This is... this is...”

“Impressive? Thank you.” He steps beside me, scanning the maze entrance with satisfaction. “The rules are simple. There’s a prize waiting at the center—something you’ll want. You get a five-minute head start.”

My mind struggles to process what’s happening. “And if I make it there before you catch me?”

His smile widens. “Then you keep the prize. But if I catch you first...” His eyes darken as they sweep over my body. “I get to use you however I please.”

I swallow hard, understanding exactly what he means.

“And if I refuse to play?” I ask, trying to keep my voice steady.

His expression hardens. “Then we go back upstairs, and I introduce you to the punishment room. Trust me, Kira, the maze is the better option.”

I believe him. How he casually mentions a “punishment room” sends ice through my veins.

“Your time starts now,” he says, tapping his watch. “Better run, Mischief.”

I take a hesitant step toward the maze entrance, my mind racing through options—none of them good.

“Wait.” Ryker grabs my arm as I start to move. “You’re forgetting something.”

Before I can react, he produces a knife from his belt and cuts through my shirt in one swift motion. I scream, trying to back away, but his grip on my arm is iron. The knife continues its work, slicing through my jeans and underwear until I stand before him in shreds of fabric.

“What the fuck are you doing!?” I shriek, trying desperately to cover myself.

“Level Two is about vulnerability,” he says calmly as if explaining a normal game mechanic. “Physical and psychological. You’ll run the maze as nature intended.”

I stare at him in horror, my arms crossed over my chest in a futile attempt to maintain dignity. “You’re sick. This is sick.”

“It’s a game, Kira. My game. My rules.” He steps back, admiring his handiwork as I stand naked and trembling. “Four minutes and thirty seconds left of your head start. I suggest you use it wisely.”

Tears of rage and humiliation burn in my eyes, but I refuse to let them fall. I won’t give him the satisfaction of seeing me break. Instead, I channel my fear into anger, letting it fuel me.

“Fuck you,” I spit, backing toward the maze entrance. “When I get out of here—and I will get out—I’m going to make sure you rot in prison for the rest of your miserable life.”

He smiles, unperturbed by my threat. “Four minutes, fifteen seconds.”

With no other choice, I turn and run into the maze, naked and afraid. The concrete floor is cold beneath my bare feet. The air chills my exposed skin, raising goosebumps everywhere. But I don't slow down. I can't.

Left turn. Right turn. Another right. The maze walls blur past as I run, my breath coming in desperate gasps. Ryker's countdown echoes in my mind—four minutes left of my head start.

I refuse to be his prey. I refuse to let him win. Somehow, I'll find a way through this maze and whatever sick games he has planned next. And then, somehow, I'll find a way to escape.

Because no matter what he thinks, no matter what he's planned, I am not his to keep. I am not his game to play. And I will never, ever willingly submit to him.

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RYKER

I check my wristwatch, counting the seconds of Kira's head start. The digital numbers blink methodically—four minutes left, then three. My pulse quickens with each passing moment. The basement air feels electric against my skin.

I track her movements through the security monitors on the wall behind me. She's disoriented, taking wrong turns already. I designed this maze with psychological torture in mind—corridors that seem to lead somewhere only to dead-end, paths that circle back on themselves. Even if she had an hour, she might never find the center.

Two minutes remaining. I slide the ghost mask over my face, feeling the familiar contours press against my skin. It's become more than a disguise—it's a transformation. When the mask covers my face, I become something beyond human constraints.

One minute. My cock strains against my pants as I watch her naked body fleeing through the corridors. When she glances back, I imagine the fear in her eyes. She doesn't realize yet that this isn't about escape. It's about the hunt.

Zero. Time's up.

"Ready or not," I call out, voice echoing through the maze's speaker system. "I'm coming to find you."

I enter the labyrinth at a measured pace. No need to rush—the maze funnel design ensures she'll eventually hit major blockades that force her toward the center through increasingly difficult routes. I know every corner, every shadow. I built this place inch by inch and tested every angle.

Her breathing reaches me from somewhere ahead—quick, panicked gasps. I follow the sound, my footsteps deliberately heavy on the concrete floor. I want her to hear me coming.

My arousal builds with each step, my body responding to the thrill of the chase. The knowledge that she's mine—has always been mine—floods my system with heat. She's running naked through my creation, exactly as I've imagined countless times.

"I can smell your fear, Kira," I call out, tracking her footprints in the thin layer of dust I deliberately left on the floor. "And I'm going to enjoy claiming my prize."

I stalk through the corridors, my fingertips grazing the walls I built with my own hands. Every turn, every dead end—all designed with her in mind. My creation for my obsession.

The sound of her bare feet slapping against concrete sends jolts of pleasure through me. She's running from me now, but soon she'll run toward me. Soon, she'll see that everything—the cameras, the games, the masks—was always about bringing us to this moment.

"I hear you breathing, Mischief," I call out, using the nickname that's bounced around in my skull since I first found her under her gaming username.

Blood rushes in my ears as I catch a glimpse of her naked form darting around a corner. The flash of skin makes my mouth dry. My fingers twitch with the need to claim, mark, and possess.

I could catch her now if I wanted to. I've memorized every inch of this labyrinth; I could cut her off at any juncture. But the chase—God, the chase is intoxicating. Her fear perfumes the air, and I inhale deeply, letting it fill my lungs.

"You can't escape what's meant to be," I call out, quickening my pace. "I've spent two years learning every detail about you, Kira. Your gaming patterns, sleep schedule, the way you touch yourself when you think no one's watching."

I round a corner and spot her pressed against a wall, chest heaving, eyes wild. For a moment, our gazes lock before she bolts again. The terror in her eyes only inflames me further.

"That's it, run faster. Make me hunt you properly." My voice echoes through the concrete corridor. "I want to earn my prize."

I've never felt more alive than at this moment. With its rules and consequences, the outside world might as well not exist. There's only her, me, and the maze.

I slow my pace deliberately, letting the echo of my footsteps fade. The following silence is delicious—I can practically hear her heartbeat pounding through the concrete walls. I know exactly where she is: in the third corridor, approaching the false exit. I designed that particular dead end to inspire hope before crushing it.

“You’re getting warmer,” I call out, my voice bouncing off the walls, making it impossible for her to pinpoint my location. “But I’m getting hot.”

I take a shortcut through a hidden passage, emerging two turns ahead of where she’s headed. When she realizes I’m manipulating her path, the look of shock on her face will be exquisite. My body thrums with anticipation.

I hear her breathing change—she thinks she’s found an escape route. The maze’s trick lighting makes the path ahead of her glow faintly, beckoning her forward. She doesn’t know I control everything—the lights, the sounds, even the subtle air currents that draw her deeper.

“Tell me,” I murmur into the microphone clipped to my collar, my voice suddenly surrounding her from hidden speakers. “Do you feel like prey yet?”

I hear her gasp, followed by her sprinting in the opposite direction. I chuckle, adjusting a dial on my wrist controller that seals off the corridor she’s running toward. The soft hiss of hydraulics echoes through the maze as a panel slides into place.

“That’s not fair!” Her voice bounces back to me, frustration and fear spiking.

“I never said I played fair,” I respond, scuffing my boot against the floor so she can hear how close I am. “Only that I play to win.”

I round the corner silently, catching sight of her naked back as she presses herself against a wall. Her skin glistens with sweat, muscles tense beneath smooth flesh.

I drink in the sight of her naked form pressed against the concrete. She doesn’t know I’m here yet—doesn’t sense me just feet away, savoring the final moments of the hunt. Her breathing comes in short, panicked bursts, her shoulders rising and falling with each gasp. My Mischief, cornered at last.

“Found you,” I announce.

She spins around, eyes wide with terror and something that makes my blood sing. Recognition, desire, hate—all of it is beautiful on her face.

I lunge forward before she can bolt again, my body crashing into hers. The impact knocks the air from her lungs in a satisfying gasp. My hands find her wrists, pinning them above her head against the cold wall in one smooth motion. Our bodies press together—her soft, naked flesh against my clothed form, a deliberate power imbalance I planned from the start.

“Caught you,” I growl, tightening my grip on her wrists. Her pulse hammers against my palm—a frantic, trapped bird. “Now you’re mine to claim.”

She struggles against me, her body writhing in a way that only hardens my cock further. I push my hips forward, pinning her more firmly to the wall. The concrete must feel like ice against her bare back, but I don’t care. I want her uncomfortable. I want her to be aware of every sensation.

“Stop fighting,” I command, pressing harder until she whimpers. “You’re exactly where you’re meant to be.”

I shift her wrists to one hand, my fingers encircling her delicate bones. My free hand grabs her jaw, forcing her to gaze at me through the eyeholes of my mask. Her pupils are dilated, black, nearly swallowing the color of her irises.

“Level two complete,” I say. “But you didn’t win, Mischief, and now it’s time to pay up.”

I release her wrists but keep my body pressed against hers, trapping her between the cold concrete and my heat. My hand slides down her throat, feeling her pulse race beneath my fingertips.

“Last night, I gave you pleasure.” My thumb traces her bottom lip. “Made you come until you screamed for me. Remember?”

Her eyes flash with defiance, but I catch the involuntary shiver that runs through her naked body.

“Now it’s your turn to please me.”

I step back just enough to create space between us, my hand moving to her shoulder. The pressure is firm, unmistakable.

“Down.”

She resists, of course. I expect it and welcome it. The fight in her eyes only makes my cock harder.

“I said down, Kira.” I apply more pressure, making her knees tremble with the effort to remain standing. “Don’t make me force you more than I

already am.”

My free hand moves to her hair, tangling in the strands tight enough to restrain without hurting. I guide her downward, the pressure on her shoulder increasing until her knees finally connect with the concrete floor. The position brings her face level with my crotch, exactly where I’ve imagined her countless times.

“There’s my good girl,” I murmur, tightening my grip on her hair. “You’re learning.”

I hold her hair to tilt her face toward mine, even as I keep her kneeling. Through the eyeholes of my mask, I lock my gaze with hers, savoring the conflict I see there—fear wrestling with something darker, something she’s not ready to acknowledge.

“Now, Mischief,” I say, my voice dropping lower, “you’re going to give back what I gave you last night. And I expect enthusiasm.”

I unzip my pants slowly, deliberately. Kira’s eyes track the movement of my hand. The sound of the zipper teeth separating fills the concrete corridor. Her breathing quickens—fear or arousal, it hardly matters. Both feed my hunger.

“Open,” I command.

She presses her lips together, defiance flashing in her eyes. Predictable. Beautiful. I’ve anticipated every response and planned for every moment of resistance.

“We can do this the easy way or the hard way,” I tell her. “But make no mistake, this is happening.”

I outline the shape of her lower lip with my thumb, applying pressure to the soft flesh until she gasps. The moment her lips part, I push my thumb inside, feeling the wet heat of her mouth.

“That’s it,” I murmur, my thumb exploring her mouth. “Show me what that pretty mouth can do.”

I withdraw my thumb and replace it with two fingers, pushing deeper, making her take them to the knuckle. Her throat constricts as she struggles not to gag.

“Suck,” I order.

Something shifts in her eyes—perhaps resignation or the dawning realization that fighting only prolongs the inevitable. Her lips close around my fingers, and the wet heat of her mouth envelops me. The sight of her on

her knees, naked and vulnerable, taking my fingers between her lips, nearly undoes me.

“Good girl,” I praise, removing my fingers from her mouth to free my cock from my boxers. “Now show me how much you want the real thing.”

I tug Kira’s hair harder, forcing her mouth toward my cock. The power coursing through me is intoxicating—her naked, vulnerable body kneeling before me in my maze, exactly as I’ve imagined countless times. When I dreamed of this moment, designing every detail of this labyrinth, I knew it would feel good. But this—this transcends imagination.

“Open wider,” I command, pressing the head of my cock against her lips. “That’s it.”

Her mouth trembles as it stretches around me. I push forward slowly, savoring each millimeter of her tight little throat engulfing me. Beneath my mask, I grit my teeth against the rush of sensation.

“I want to see your eyes while you take me.” I tighten my grip on her hair until her eyes lift to mine.

The conflicting emotions in her gaze only fuel my arousal—fear dancing with something she’s fighting against recognizing. Her resistance is crumbling. I can feel it in the way her tongue hesitantly moves against the underside of my cock.

“That’s it, angel. Show me what that mouth can do.”

I thrust deeper. Her hands brace against my thighs, not pushing away but steadyng herself. A subtle shift—her first genuine surrender.

“You’ve thought about this,” I tell her. “I’ve heard you whisper ‘Ghost’ when you think no one’s listening.”

Her throat contracts around me as she tries to pull back, but my hand in her hair holds her firmly in place.

“No running now.” My voice drops lower, rougher. “We both know you’ve wanted this—wanted me—for longer than you’re ready to admit.”

I rock my hips forward, establishing a rhythm that forces her to adapt or choke.

The pleasure builds at the base of my spine as I watch her swallow my cock. Her reluctance transforms into acceptance that makes my blood roar in my veins. I quicken my pace, my grip tightening in her hair as I chase the crescendo building within me.

“That’s it,” I growl, feeling her throat constrict around me. “Take what I give you.”

Her eyes water as she struggles to accommodate me, but she no longer fights. That knowledge—that I've broken through another layer of her resistance—pushes me closer to the edge.

"You're going to swallow every drop," I command, my voice rough with need. "Every. Fucking. Drop."

The sight of her, naked, kneeling, taking me—combined with the wet heat of her mouth sends me over the edge. I hold her head firmly in place as I come, ensuring she has no choice but to swallow. The wave crashes through me, white-hot, as I empty myself down her throat.

"Good girl," I pant as the aftershocks ripple through me. "Such a good girl for me."

I release my grip on her hair, allowing her to pull back and gasp for air. Tears stream down her flushed cheeks, her lips swollen and red. She's never looked more beautiful.

I tuck myself away, crouching to her level, cupping her face. Her body trembles beneath my touch—exhaustion, fear, and confusion all warring within her.

"You think we're done?" I ask, my thumb wiping a tear from her cheek. "This was just the warm-up, angel."

I stand and pull her to her feet, her naked body unsteady against mine.

"I've designed twelve levels for us, Kira. Twelve ways to break you down and build you into what you're meant to be."

I press my lips to her ear, feeling her shudder.

"By the time we reach the final level, you'll beg to be mine."

I pull the syringe from my pocket, uncapping it with practiced ease. She's still breathing hard, tears and defiance mingling on her beautiful face. So strong, my Kira. So perfect. But now she needs rest. We both do.

"Shh, angel. Time for a little break."

Before she can process what's happening, I drive the needle into her thigh, depressing the plunger smoothly. Her eyes widen in shock, then slowly glaze over as the sedative floods her system. The fight drains from her body like water from a bathtub, and I catch her before she crumples to the concrete.

"There we go. Let me take care of you."

Her weight in my arms feels right. I cradle her against my chest, one arm supporting her shoulders, the other beneath her knees. Her head lolls

against my shoulder, breath warm against my neck. Mine. Finally fucking mine.

The maze that seemed necessary earlier now feels like an obstacle keeping me from safely tucking her away. I take the staff corridor back to her room—my specially designed mirror of her apartment bedroom.

“You did well today,” I murmur as I carry her, even though she can’t hear me. “Fighting back, showing that spirit. But we both know where this ends.”

Her naked body feels small in my arms. Fragile. Something precious I need to protect from the world—and from herself. The drugs will keep her under for at least four hours.

“I’ve mapped it all out. Every step. Every tear.”

I lay her gently on the bed, arranging her limbs in a comfortable position before securing the restraints. Can’t have her waking up and hurting herself. The soft cuffs encircle her wrists, tethering her to the bed.

“By the time we finish our games, you’ll understand. You’ll see that I’m the only one who truly knows you. The only one who can give you what you need.”

I brush hair from her forehead, marveling at how peaceful she looks. How right.

“You’re already mine. Your body knows it. Your mind will catch up.”

KIRA

M

y eyelids flutter open, my mind swimming through a fog. A familiar ceiling comes into focus—my ceiling. No... not mine. His version of mine. The recognition hits with a sickening lurch in my stomach.

I'm back in Ryker's twisted replica of my bedroom.

I test my limbs, finding my wrists secured to the bedposts with padded restraints. It's not tight enough to hurt, but snug enough to remind me I'm not going anywhere. The attention to detail makes this so fucked up. Every poster matches mine exactly. My limited-edition Horizon figurines line the shelf in formation. Even my ancient stuffed penguin sits in the corner chair, watching with judging button eyes.

"Hey, Peng," I mutter, my voice cracking. "You're not real either, are you?"

A hysterical laugh bubbles up before dissolving into a sob. I'm talking to a stuffed animal in a fake bedroom created by my stalker. This cannot be my life.

I squeeze my eyes shut to block out the uncanny horror. The duplicate room is terrifying, like looking in a mirror where your reflection blinks when you don't.

The maze. I remember running naked through that concrete labyrinth, Ryker hunting me like an animal. The humiliation burns fresh. He caught me, of course. He was always going to catch me. The game was rigged from the start. And then... God, what he did to me when he caught me...

My body shudders involuntarily. That's the most terrifying part—how my body responded to him despite my mind screaming in protest. What

kind of person does that make me?

The sound of footsteps outside makes my heart slam against my ribs. I tug harder at the restraints, knowing it's useless, but unable to stop myself from trying.

"Level three." Footsteps pause outside my door. "What sick game is level three?"

The door opens, and Ryker fills the frame. He's changed since the maze—a clean black t-shirt stretches across his chest, dark jeans hanging just right. His hair is damp like he just showered. The normality of his appearance makes this all so much worse.

"You're awake." His voice is soft. The same voice that guided me through countless game battles. The same voice that called me "Mischief" when I pulled off a particularly impressive kill shot.

I turn my face away, unable to look at him without seeing flashes of what happened in the maze. "Let me go, Ryker."

"We both know that's not what you really want." He crosses to the bed and sits on the edge. The mattress dips under his weight. His hand hovers over my ankle before landing, warm and heavy. "Your pupils are dilated. Your skin is flushed."

"It's called fear." I try to sound angry, but my voice betrays me with a tiny crack.

"I know the difference between your fear and your arousal."

A shiver races up my spine. I hate that he can read me so easily. I hate even more that he might be right about what my body is feeling, even as my mind recoils from him.

"This is kidnapping. This is abuse. This is—"

"A fantasy you've had for a while." Ryker cuts me off, his voice carrying a quiet certainty that crawls under my skin. "You've spoken it to your vibrator at three a.m. Typed it in incognito tabs."

My face burns hot. How much has he seen?

"You don't know anything about me," I spit, renewed anger strengthening my voice. "You're not normal."

A shadow crosses his face. For a split second, something almost vulnerable flickers in his eyes.

"Normal is a setting on a washing machine." His fingers drum against my ankle in a pattern I recognize—the same rhythm he taps out when waiting for a game to load. "Normal people don't notice when you say

you're fine, but your voice pitches higher. Normal people don't care that you sleep with three pillows because you hate feeling alone."

My breath catches. I never told anyone that.

"You don't know me."

Ryker leans closer, his scent—pine and musk—filling my senses. "I know you cry during commercials with suffering dogs and restart levels when NPCs die, even when it doesn't affect gameplay. I know you hum the Tetris theme when you're nervous."

He reaches up and brushes a strand of hair from my face, his touch feather-light. I flinch away, pressing my head into the pillow to escape his fingers.

"Don't touch me," I hiss, finding a spark of defiance.

Something dangerous flashes in his eyes. "I have every right. You're mine, Kira. You have always been. You just didn't know it yet." His lips curve into a smile that doesn't quite reach his eyes.

My stomach drops. "No more. I can't—"

"You can. You will." His voice hardens as he stands, towering over me. "Level one was about claiming what's mine. Level two tested your survival instincts." His fingers trace the edge of my restraint. "Level three is about truth."

He wheels over what looks like a medical cart. My pulse spikes when I see the array of items—small devices, wires, a laptop, and things I don't even recognize.

"What are you going to do to me?" My voice sounds small, broken by fear.

"We're going to play a simple game." Ryker sits beside me again, opening the laptop. "For every truth you tell me, you earn a reward. For every lie..." He holds up a small remote with a red button. "Consequences."

"How would you even know if I'm lying?" I challenge, fighting against the fear crawling up my throat.

He taps the laptop screen, where a program displays a series of graphs and metrics. "Your physical reactions betray you. I've been researching you long enough to know your tells."

"This is insane!" Tears well in my eyes again.

"This is intimacy, Kira. Real intimacy. No screens between us. No usernames to hide behind." He connects a small sensor to my finger and

another to my temple. “People spend their whole lives lying—to others, to themselves. Not here. Not with me.”

The clinical precision of his movements makes this somehow more terrifying than if he’d just raged or threatened me.

“We have all the time in the world.” He checks the restraints one last time. “Weeks, if necessary. However long it takes you to accept that your place is with me.”

I try to swallow, but my mouth has gone dry. Level three isn’t just another game—it’s completely dismantling who I am. A surgical excavation of every secret I’ve buried.

Ryker’s fingers move with clinical precision, attaching more sensors to my body—one on my chest, another at my wrist. Each touch is businesslike yet intimate, giving my skin goosebumps. His fingertips brush against the side of my breast as he places a sensor, and to my horror, I feel my nipple harden in response. A flash of heat travels through my body, pooling low in my belly.

I turn my face away, disgusted with myself. How can I respond to his touch when my mind is screaming in terror?

“Almost ready,” he murmurs, more to himself than to me. From the cart, he retrieves something black and sleek. “Lift your hips.”

“What? No.” Fear surges through me again.

His eyes lock with mine, patient but unyielding. “Either you lift your hips, or I force them up. Your choice, but one preserves your dignity.”

With burning cheeks and fresh tears, I raise my hips as much as the restraints allow.

Ryker slides what looks like high-tech underwear up my legs. The material is soft but fitted with small metal contacts that press against my most sensitive areas. My breath hitches when I realize what it is, and a sob escapes my throat. As his knuckles brush against my inner thigh, I feel another unwelcome pulse of arousal that makes me want to scream with frustration. What is wrong with me?

“Remote controlled,” he confirms, reading my expression. “The sensors detect your physiological responses to questions, but this”—he holds up the sleek black remote—“provides immediate feedback for lies.” His thumb caresses the button almost lovingly. “It can deliver anything from a gentle vibration to a significant shock, depending on the severity of the deception.”

Terror floods my system as he connects the final wires to the laptop. This isn't just about monitoring my responses—it's about conditioning them, training me like a lab rat.

"Please don't do this," I beg, all pretense of strength abandoned.

"Truth shouldn't hurt. It only hurts when we fight it." His thumb brushes my lower lip. "I'm setting you free. You just don't know it yet."

The machine hums to life, displaying my vital signs in real time: elevated heart rate, respiration, and rising temperature.

"First question." Ryker's eyes lock with mine. "What frightens you more—that I might hurt you or that you might enjoy it?"

His question hangs in the air between us, invasive and raw. My mind races with potential answers, each more shocking than the last.

What frightens me more? The truth is complicated, twisted up in my own contradictions. I've fantasized about someone wanting me so badly they'd cross lines to have me. But this—this real-life nightmare version—is something else entirely.

Then I realize something. He's so confident in his system, in his ability to read me. I should test it. See if there's a weakness, a way to fool his precious technology.

"I'm afraid you'll hurt me," I say, forcing my voice to remain steady. I try to believe my words as I speak them, to convince myself they're the complete truth. "I'm terrified of the pain you could inflict."

The lie sits awkwardly on my tongue. It's not completely false—I am afraid he'll hurt me—but it's not what frightens me most. What truly terrifies me is the part of myself that responds to his dominance, to his obsession—maybe this is what I've been waiting for all along.

I study Ryker's face for any reaction, any hint that he's detected my partial deception. My muscles tense in anticipation of whatever "consequence" his device might deliver.

Ryker's expression doesn't change, but something in his eyes hardens. The corner of his mouth twitches slightly. The screens behind him flicker with red indicators.

"First lesson, Mischief." His voice lowers, disappointment evident in his tone. "Never lie to someone who knows your tells better than you do." He taps the screen where my vitals are displayed. "Your pulse jumped. Your micro-expressions gave you away. Your skin flushed along your collarbone—you always flush there when you're being dishonest."

I swallow hard. The fact that he knows my body's reactions better than I do makes me feel more exposed than the fact that I'm naked.

"The rules were clear. Truth earns rewards. Lies earn consequences." His thumb hovers over the remote. "You're not afraid of pain, Kira. You're afraid of wanting it. That frightens you—the part of yourself you've kept locked away."

Before I can argue, his thumb presses the button.

The sensation hits without warning—an electric current pulsing through the contacts against my skin. I arch off the bed, a cry tearing from my throat. It's pain—sharp, immediate, burning through every nerve ending. But beneath the pain, something else rides along—a buzzing sensation that sends confusing signals to my brain. The dual sensations war within me, my body unsure whether to retreat or lean in.

"Fuck!" I gasp when it stops, my chest heaving, tears streaming down my face.

"That was the lowest setting." Ryker studies my reaction clinically, but I catch the darkening of his pupils. "A reminder that dishonesty has a cost. But I suspect part of you enjoyed that more than you'd like to admit."

I glare at him through my tears, hating him for being right, hating myself for my body's betrayal. "You're a monster."

"No." He leans closer, his breath warm against my ear. "I'm just the first person to see you clearly. To accept all of you, even the parts you hide from yourself." His touch lingers at the curve of my neck. "Now, shall we try again? What frightens you more—that I might hurt you or that you might enjoy it?"

The electricity fades but leaves my skin tingling, a ghostly reminder of what happened. I hate this—hate how the pain and pleasure blur together in ways I don't want to understand.

"Fine," I concede. "What frightens me more is... that I might enjoy it." The words taste like defeat. "That there's something wrong with me for responding to this. That deep down, all those fantasies weren't just fantasies."

The admission hangs in the air between us, heavy with implication. I feel naked in ways that have nothing to do with my actual nakedness.

Ryker's expression softens, though that predatory focus never leaves his eyes. His fingertips ghost along my collarbone, tracing the flush that's betrayed me. My body arches slightly into his touch before I can stop

myself. I feel a fresh wave of shame at my involuntary response. My body wants his touch even as my mind recoils from it. The confusion is maddening.

“Eyes on mine, Kira.”

I reluctantly meet his gaze, feeling utterly broken.

“There she is,” he murmurs. “The real Kira. Not the one who smiles for streams or pretends for friends. The one who lives beneath all those careful layers.” His voice carries an almost reverent quality. “Do you know how rare you are? Most people live their entire lives without facing their true selves.”

Something in his praise makes my chest tighten. Not just because it’s manipulation, but because part of me has always longed to be seen this way. Completely. Without judgment.

“That said...” His tone shifts, becoming clinical again. “You don’t get a reward for honesty that follows deception. Trust is earned, and you’ve just taken your first small step.”

I swallow hard, embarrassed by the flicker of disappointment I feel. What reward could I possibly want from my captor? Yet some traitorous part of me had anticipated it, whatever it might have been.

Ryker adjusts something on his laptop, eyes scanning the data and scrolling across the screen. “Next question.” His gaze returns to mine, penetrating and direct. “When you think about me—about Rogue, about GhostDaddy—what fantasy often plays in your mind?”

His question pierces through me like a knife. My most frequent fantasy? The one that plays in my mind when I think of him? My throat closes up, and I feel the blood drain from my face.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” The lie sounds hollow even to my own ears.

Ryker raises an eyebrow. “Your heart rate just spiked to 110 beats per minute. Try again.”

I close my eyes, unable to look at him. The fantasy that visits me most often in the dark of night, the one I’ve never admitted to anyone... It’s exactly this. Being taken and having my autonomy stripped away by someone who wants me so desperately they’d cross every line to have me.

“I can’t,” I say, my voice barely audible. “Please don’t make me.”

“That’s not how this works.” His fingers brush a path over my arm, raising goosebumps. My nipples tighten again in response, and I bite my lip

to keep from making a sound. The disconnect between my mind's revulsion and my body's eagerness is torturous. "The truth will set you free, remember?"

I release a bitter laugh that dissolves into a sob. "There's nothing freeing about this."

His finger hovers over the remote, a silent warning.

"It's... It's too private," I try again, feeling tears burn behind my eyelids. "Some things should stay inside our heads."

"Nothing stays inside with me. Nothing."

I know I should just tell him. The punishment will be worse for lying. But how can I admit that my deepest fantasy mirrors my current nightmare? That in my darkest moments, I've imagined someone wanting me so much they'd take me against my will?

If I tell him, I validate everything he's done, give him permission retroactively, and admit that something broken inside me aligns with his twisted view.

"I can't. I just can't."

His face hardens, disappointment etched in the lines around his mouth. Without warning, his thumb presses the button on the remote.

This time, the shock is nothing like before.

White-hot pain lances through me, a current that seizes every muscle. My back arches off the bed, restraints cutting into my wrists as I shake. A ragged cry wrenches itself from somewhere deep inside me, unfamiliar and untamed. The electricity surges through places I didn't know could feel such intensity, each nerve ending igniting like a fuse. And beneath it all, horrifyingly, a deeper pulse of something that isn't pain at all.

When it stops, I collapse against the mattress, gasping. Tears stream down my temples into my hair. My body trembles with aftershocks, muscles spasming involuntarily.

"That was level two," Ryker says calmly as if he's just adjusting the volume on a television. "There are eight more levels, and I have all the time in the world."

I shake my head weakly, still trying to catch my breath. "You're sick."

"I'm patient," he corrects. His fingers hover over the remote again. "Your most frequent fantasy about me. Detail it. Graphically."

"Please," I beg.

“I won’t stop until you tell me.” The certainty in his voice chills me. “Each shock will increase in intensity until you share your truth. This is a battle you can’t win.”

His thumb presses down again, and this time, I can’t even scream—my entire body tenses so violently that sound can’t escape. The current seems to reach deeper, finding places inside me that shouldn’t feel both agony and dark, twisted pleasure simultaneously.

When it stops, I’m sobbing, my chest heaving with ragged breaths.

“Your fantasy, Kira.” His voice cuts through the fog of pain. “Every detail. Now.”

My entire body throbs with the aftermath of the shock. I can’t take another one. I just can’t. The truth claws its way up my throat, desperate to escape.

“Fine,” I gasp, my voice breaking. “I’ll tell you.”

Ryker’s eyes gleam with victory, his finger thankfully moving away from the remote. “I’m listening.”

I close my eyes, unable to look at him while I expose the darkest corner of my mind. “I...I fantasize about being taken. About someone wanting me so badly they’d...” The words stick in my throat, shame burning through me.

“Continue,” he prompts, his voice softer now.

“Someone who’d cross every line to have me.” Each word feels like ripping off a layer of skin, revealing raw, exposed flesh beneath. “In my fantasy, he knows what I want before I do. He doesn’t let me hide behind excuses.”

My chest heaves with ragged breaths. The sensors must be recording my humiliation, my pulse racing with the confession.

“He doesn’t ask permission. He just takes what he wants because he knows I want it too, but I’m too afraid to admit it.”

The tears flow freely now, not from pain but from the unbearable vulnerability of having this secret dragged into the light.

“I imagine being completely at someone else’s mercy. No choices, no responsibility. Just...surrender.” My voice cracks at the last word. “And the worst part is that I’m not fighting in these fantasies. I’m...grateful.”

I finally open my eyes to face him, shame burning my cheeks. “Are you happy now? Does knowing how broken I am make you feel justified?”

The confession hangs between us, my deepest shame laid bare under the clinical lights, captured by his machines and sensors. The truth I've never spoken aloud to anyone—that my fantasy is a twisted mirror of my current nightmare.

“Broken?” Ryker’s voice is surprisingly gentle. “No, Kira. Not broken. Human. Beautifully, perfectly human.”

His words should comfort me, but they only deepen my shame. Because even after everything he’s done, some part of me wants to believe him. Some part of me wants to accept this twisted absolution he offers. And that terrifies me more than any shock ever could.

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RYKER

*H*er sobbing fills the room like music to my ears—the sweet sound of walls coming down. I've suspected this about Kira, catching glimpses in her search history and how her breath catches when I take control during our gaming sessions. However, hearing her admit it out loud is better than I imagined.

"So you've always wanted this." I drag my finger along her tear-stained cheek. "To be completely dominated. To have someone take what they want while you pretend to resist."

Her eyes flutter closed, shame and arousal warring on her face.

"You've dreamed about it while touching yourself. You've pictured Ghost forcing you to submit." I lean closer, my lips brushing her ear. "That's why you followed GhostDaddy obsessively. Why you never declined a game with Rogue."

"Please..." Her voice breaks.

"No reward this time, Kira." I pull back, keeping my expression neutral despite the satisfaction. "You weren't honest at first. Made me work for that confession when you should have given it freely."

The restraints jingle as she shifts, testing their give. Finding none.

"Maybe you'll earn something with the next question." I stroke her hair, gentle yet possessive. "Tell me about the first time you touched yourself thinking about me, about Rogue. What was the fantasy? Don't skip any details."

I adjust the dial on the remote in my hand, making sure she sees the movement. "And remember, I'll know if you're lying. I always know."

I sit back, enjoying her internal struggle—how her chest rises and falls with shallow breaths, the flicker of resignation in her eyes when she realizes there's no escaping this confession.

"I..." Kira's voice cracks. She swallows hard, her gaze fixed on the ceiling rather than meeting mine. "The first time was after that match against SkullCrushers. You stayed up coaching me until three a.m..."

Her words gain momentum like a dam breaking.

"I imagined you tall—taller than me by a lot. Dark hair that I could grab onto." A deep flush spreads across her chest, climbing her neck. "Your voice was so deep over the headset that night, and I pictured you as muscular. Really built, with tattoos covering your arms and chest."

I lean forward, drinking in every syllable. She's describing me.

"I pictured you walking into my room, not saying anything, just... taking what you wanted." Her breathing quickens. "Pinning me down, ripping my clothes off. Not asking permission."

The corner of my mouth twitches upward. Her fantasy mirrors my reality so closely it's uncanny. Like she's been waiting for me all along.

"And..." she hesitates, her face burning crimson now.

"Continue," I command, thumb hovering over the punishment button. "Every. Detail."

"I imagined you had a piercing. Down there." Her voice drops to barely a whisper. "A Prince Albert. I saw it in porn once and couldn't stop thinking about how it would feel inside me, how you'd use it to make me beg."

My cock stiffens instantly against my jeans.

"I came so hard thinking about it," she confesses, tears leaking from the corners of her eyes. "I was ashamed afterwards, but I kept doing it. Over and over. Imagining you forcing me to—"

I press my palm against her mouth, silencing her, not because I want her to stop but because I need a moment to savor the symmetry of our desires.

The confessions fall from her lips like jewels I've been hunting for. Her fantasy lines up so accurately with my plan that I almost laugh. The universe has a way of delivering what truly belongs to me.

"I think you've earned a reward after all."

I reach for my belt, the metal buckle making that distinctive sound that causes her breath to catch. Slowly, deliberately, I unbutton my jeans.

"Something you should know," I say, my voice low as I lower my zipper. "In the maze, when you had your mouth on me—" I pause, enjoying

how her cheeks flush at the memory, “—I wasn’t showing you everything.”

Confusion crosses her face. I free myself from my boxers, letting her see all of me. Her gaze drops and her pupils dilate immediately when she spots the glint of steel through my cock—the curved barbell of a Prince Albert piercing catching the light.

“Oh my God.” She’s unable to look away.

“You know what this is, don’t you?” I move closer. “Of course you do. I found it in your browser history. ‘Prince Albert piercing pleasure,’ ‘what does Prince Albert feel like inside,’ ‘men with cock piercings’—the dirty research rabbit hole you went down.”

Her lips part, no sound emerging.

“I got it done nine months ago,” I continue, caressing her inner thigh. “Specifically for you.”

I grip her chin, forcing her to look into my eyes. “I had to remove it during our little game in the maze. Didn’t want to spoil the surprise.” I stroke myself slowly, letting her see how the piercing moves. “I know all your fantasies, Kira. Every dark corner of your mind. You’ve been too ashamed to admit every twisted desire, even to yourself.”

The metal glints as I move it, mesmerizing her.

“This is just the beginning of how I’ll fulfill every single one.”

“For your honesty, I think you deserve a little comfort,” I tell her, stroking her hair while my other hand continues working my length. “Your reward is simple—you get to suck on me. Like a pacifier. Just for a few minutes.”

That familiar conflict flashes across her face.

“No need to do anything fancy. No need to make me come. Just take me in your mouth and suckle like the good girl I know you are.” I move closer, adjusting her restraints to give her enough freedom to reach me. “This is meant to soothe you and calm your nerves before we continue.”

I position myself at her lips. Kira hesitates momentarily before parting them. The warmth of her mouth engulfs me, and I suppress a groan of satisfaction. Her tongue instinctively finds the metal piercing, exploring its curve with cautious curiosity.

“That’s it,” I murmur, threading my fingers through her hair. “Just like that.”

I watch in fascination as the tension in her body begins to melt away. Her eyes drift half-closed, the rhythm of her sucking becoming steady and

almost meditative. The psychological shift happening before me is incredible—she's using me to comfort herself, just as I knew she would.

Her breathing synchronizes with the gentle motion. I can practically see her thoughts quieting, her mind accepting the moment. This is more intimate than any frantic fucking could be—this is psychological surrender at its purest.

“You’re doing so well,” I praise, my voice low and soothing. “Such a pretty mouth. Such a beautiful girl.”

The minutes pass, and I carefully withdraw before I get too close to the edge. Her lips chase after me momentarily before she catches herself, eyes fluttering open to meet mine.

“Did that help?” I ask, knowing the answer from the dazed look in her eyes and the relaxed set of her shoulders.

She nods almost imperceptibly, her defenses temporarily dismantled.

“Good,” I say, readjusting her restraints and preparing for the next level of our game. “Now for the next question.”

I tuck myself back into my jeans. The glazed look in her eyes suits her and makes her even more beautiful. Her lips are slightly swollen, glistening with saliva. My beautiful pet is learning.

I lean closer, stroking her cheek with my thumb, feeling her lean into my touch despite herself. This vulnerability is the canvas for my next question.

“Tell me,” I start, my mouth inches from her ear, “if I brought your friend Jenna here, would you hold her down for me?”

Her body goes rigid, eyes flying open in horror.

“What did you just—”

I press the remote button, sending a short shock through her body. Just enough to remind her of the rules.

“Answer the question.” I sweep my palm over the plane of her stomach. “If I decided I wanted her too, would you help me take her? Would you whisper in her ear that everything would be okay while I tied her up? Would you tell her to stop fighting because it only makes me want her more?”

She’s shaking her head, tears gathering.

“Would you get wet watching me break her the way I’m breaking you?” I continue, voice soft and reasonable. “Or would you be jealous? Would you beg me to hurt her worse than I hurt you to prove you’re still my favorite?”

“Please stop,” she sobs.

“There’s no right answer here, Kira.” I grip her chin, forcing her eyes up. “I want to see how far the darkness in you goes. Because I know it’s there. I’ve always known. That’s why we belong together.”

I run my thumb across her trembling bottom lip. “So tell me. Your best friend. Would you sacrifice her to please me? To keep me? Or would you try to save her?”

I notice the exact moment something breaks inside her. My question about Jenna shatters whatever fragile equilibrium she’s been maintaining. Her face contorts, and tears flood her eyes—not the few tears from before, but a torrent of raw emotion.

“Fuck you.” The words barely escape through her sobs. “You fucking psycho.”

Her body thrashes against the restraints with renewed vigor. The calm from moments ago vanishes completely, replaced by visceral rage.

“Is that jealousy I see?” I ask, tilting my head as I study her reaction. “Interesting. You don’t want to share me.”

“You leave Jenna out of this. She has nothing to do with this!” she screams, face flushed with anger.

I grab her jaw, savoring how she jerks away from my touch. “Everything in your life has to do with me now.”

“You’re a fucking asshole.” Her words come through gritted teeth, eyes burning with hatred. “I’m not answering your sick question. I won’t play this game.”

I sit back, observing her rebellion with clinical interest. This is expected—necessary, even. Breaking points reveal the truth.

“Go fuck yourself, Ryker.” She spits the words at me. “I don’t care what you do to me. I’m not helping you hurt anyone else.”

Her defiance is beautiful in its own way—like watching a wounded animal bare its teeth—pointless but admirable.

“I’m not telling you anything else,” she continues. “Shock me all you want. I don’t care anymore.”

Her defiance makes me smile, and pride swells in my chest. This—this right here—is why she’s mine.

“That’s exactly the right answer.” My voice softens as I reach for her face, wiping away tears with my thumb. “You passed.”

Confusion flickers across her features, her rage momentarily derailed.

“I would never bring Jenna here. Never touch her.” I stroke her hair gently, soothing. “That was a test, and you passed beautifully.”

Her breathing comes in ragged gasps, uncertainty replacing anger in her eyes.

“I only get hard for you, Kira. Only dream about you.” I press my forehead against hers, feeling her tremble. “There’s never been anyone else. There never will be.”

I cup her face between my palms. “I needed to see if there was a line you wouldn’t cross for me. If there was still that core of goodness inside you—the part that makes you special.”

Her face crumples, and fresh tears spill down her cheeks.

“You protected your friend even while restrained, drugged, and terrified.” My thumbs brush away the wetness on her skin. “That loyalty, that heart—it’s why I chose you. Why I’ve always chosen you.”

A sob tears from her throat, her entire body shaking with it. The psychological whiplash breaks her, and she collapses into herself, crying with desperation.

“Shhh, you did so well.” I kiss her forehead, her temple, the corner of her eye. “I’m so proud of you.”

Her sobs intensify, echoing through the room as fear, confusion, and trauma pour out. I hold her face, continuing to whisper praise and devotion while she breaks apart in my hands.

KIRA

I wake with startling clarity, my eyes snapping open to the same ceiling I've been staring at for... I don't even know how long anymore. My body feels heavy, but my mind is sharp—too sharp. The fog of whatever drugs he's been pumping into me is gone, replaced by a crystalline awareness that cuts worse than any knife.

My fingers grip the sheets beneath me. Not restrained. That's new. The absence of bindings should feel like freedom, but my wrists still burn with phantom pressure. I don't move. Can't move. Something inside me has shattered.

Level three. God, level three.

The physical pain from the shocks was nothing compared to the way he peeled back every layer of my mind. Made me confess things I'd never spoken aloud, desires I'd buried so deep I barely acknowledged them myself. Things I typed into incognito browsers at night. Things I whispered into the darkness when I thought no one could hear.

But he heard. He saw. He knew.

A tear slips down my temple, soaking into the pillow. The worst part wasn't the violation of privacy or even the humiliation. It was the recognition. The terrible, undeniable mirror he held up to my soul.

The quiet in this room feels like a courtesy now, a small mercy after the storm. My chest rises and falls with even breaths, but inside, I'm in a war zone. Every structure I built to define myself lies in ruin. Gamer. Independent woman. Strong. Free. All those identities feel like costumes now, superficial layers he stripped away with surgical precision.

I curl onto my side, drawing my knees to my chest. The movement doesn't trigger pain or restraints. Nothing stops me but the knowledge that there's nowhere to go. He's mapped every escape route—from this place and myself.

Level three didn't just break me. It revealed me.

I'm still curled on my side when I hear the door open. My body tenses instinctively, every muscle coiling tight. I don't turn to look at him. Don't need to. The weight of his footsteps, the particular rhythm of his breathing—I know it's Ryker without seeing his face.

"Look at me, Kira." His voice is softer than before, almost gentle.

I roll over slowly, expecting to see that cruel smile, that predatory gleam. Still, his expression is neutral, almost business-like.

"Time to eat." He sets a tray on the bedside table. The smell of food hits me—real food, not those protein shakes he's been forcing down my throat. My stomach clenches painfully, reminding me how empty it is.

"Why?" The word scratches out of my dry throat.

Ryker sits on the edge of the bed, his weight creating a dip that pulls me slightly toward him. "Level four starts in an hour. You'll need your strength." His fingers brush a strand of hair from my face. "It's more physical this time. Less... in here." He taps his temple.

Relief floods through me so intensely that I nearly sob. Physical pain I can handle. Bruises heal. But what he did to my mind in level three—the way he crawled inside me and made me speak my darkest truths—left wounds I can't even locate, let alone treat.

"Thank God."

A smile tugs at the corner of his mouth. "That bad, huh?" There's actual humor in his voice, like we're sharing a joke.

I push myself to a sitting position, keeping my back against the headboard, creating whatever distance I can. "You know exactly how bad it was. You designed it that way."

He reaches for the tray, placing it across my lap. "Eat. All of it."

The food looks normal. Scrambled eggs. Toast. Fresh fruit. A glass of water. It could be a room service breakfast at any hotel. The absurd normalcy of it makes me want to laugh or scream—I'm not sure which.

I force down each bite of food, not because I want to, but because I need the energy to fuel whatever resistance I can still muster. Ryker glares at me as I eat with unnerving intensity, eyes tracking every movement of my hand

from plate to mouth. When I finish, he takes the tray away, setting it aside with methodical precision.

“Good girl. Now it’s time to get you cleaned up.” Ryker extends his hand, and when I hesitate, his expression hardens just enough to remind me of the consequences of disobedience. I place my trembling hand in his and let him guide me off the bed.

The bathroom is all sleek tile and chrome, bigger than the one in my actual apartment. Ryker turns on the shower, steam quickly filling the space. He turns to me, expectation clear in his eyes.

“I can wash alone,” I manage, hating how my voice wavers.

“You can, but that’s not how this works.” He hooks his fingers under the hem of my oversized t-shirt—his shirt—and pulls it over my head smoothly.

Standing naked before him isn’t new, but it still burns. I cross my arms over my chest, a futile attempt at modesty that makes his lips quirk up in amusement.

“Into the shower, Kira.”

The hot water would feel good if I were alone. However, I’m acutely aware of Ryker’s eyes on me through the glass door. I soap my body and rinse my hair. Every movement feels performative, my skin prickling with unwanted awareness.

He wraps me in a towel when I step out and pats me dry with unexpected gentleness. The tenderness is worse than cruelty—it confuses everything.

“Put these on.” He gestures to items on the counter: a black lace bra with matching panties, a garter belt, and sheer stockings. There are no clothes and nothing to provide any real coverage.

“Why this?” My fingers hover over the delicate fabric.

“Level four.” His gaze locks with mine in the mirror. “Every level has its uniform.”

My hands shake as I pull on each piece, hyper aware of his eyes tracking every movement. The lingerie fits—of course, it does. He’s measured everything about me, inside and out.

I follow Ryker down a hallway I haven’t seen before, the lace and silk of the lingerie offering no protection against the cool air or his hungry gaze. Each step on the hardwood floor feels like walking toward my own execution.

“Level Four is about endurance,” Ryker explains, his hand firm on the small of my back. “How much can you take? How long can you last?”

He opens a door to reveal a room unlike any I’ve seen. It’s circular, with mirrored walls and a polished wooden floor. In the center stands what looks like a ballet barre, but modified with restraints at various heights. Surrounding it are different stations: weights, resistance bands, and devices I don’t recognize.

“What is this?” I ask.

“Your training room.” He guides me to the center. “You’ll hold positions while I touch you. Move, flinch, or make a sound without permission, and there are consequences.”

My stomach twists as he positions me, arms extended along the barre, legs spread with my feet shoulder-width apart. The mirrors force me to see myself from every angle—vulnerable, exposed, terrified.

“We begin with thirty minutes. Each time you fail, we add ten minutes.”

The first touch is gentle—fingers mapping my spine. Soon, he’s alternating between soft caresses and sharp pain, pinching sensitive skin, and dragging ice cubes followed by burning wax. My muscles scream from holding the position. Sweat drips down my temples.

“Look at you,” he murmurs. “Fighting so hard not to move.”

When his hand slides between my thighs, I bite my lip until I taste blood, desperate not to make a sound. The conflicting sensations—my aching muscles, his knowing touch, fear mingling with inescapable pleasure—all of it creates a hellish cocktail of confusion.

“You’re dripping wet, but can your mind overcome it? That’s the real question of Level Four.”

I close my eyes, trying to escape, but his voice pulls me back.

“Eyes open, Kira. I want you to see everything I do to you. I want you to see yourself breaking.”

I feel his patience snap like a rubber band stretched too far. One moment, he’s circling me; the next, his fingers are digging into the lace of my bra, tearing it from my body with a violence that makes me gasp. The delicate fabric gives way easily, shredding beneath his hands.

“Enough games,” he growls, his voice hitting a register I haven’t heard before.

Before I can process what’s happening, he’s ripping the panties from my hips, the elastic biting into my skin before snapping. The stockings follow,

leaving me in tattered scraps of black lace.

“Hands forward,” he commands, and when I hesitate, his palm connects with my ass in a stinging slap. “Now.”

My body responds before my mind can catch up, leaning forward over the barre. The cool metal presses against my stomach as Ryker secures my wrists to the attachments on either side, pulling them taut so I’m stretched across the barre like an offering.

The position forces me to bend at the waist, my back arched, and my legs straight. The mirrors surrounding us reflect every angle of my exposure, leaving nowhere to hide from my vulnerability or his hungry gaze.

“Look at you,” he breathes, his hands gripping my hips. “Fucking gorgeous.”

I close my eyes, trying to escape the sight of myself splayed open for him, but snap them open when his tongue makes sudden contact with the sensitive flesh between my legs. The shock tears a strangled sound from my throat—half protest, half something I don’t want to name.

Ryker devours me like a starving man. His tongue explores with devastating precision, finding every nerve ending. His hands grip my ass, spreading me wider as he licks and sucks without mercy. The intensity is overwhelming, building a pressure inside me that conflicts violently with my fear.

My wrists strain against the restraints as his tongue delves deeper. I catch a glimpse of us in the mirror—my face flushed, eyes wide with shock and unwanted pleasure, his head buried between my thighs, completely focused on dismantling whatever resistance I have left.

The pleasure builds higher and higher, a tsunami quickly gathering force. Despite my hatred for this situation—for him—I’m lost completely as his fingers replace his tongue, curling inside me with terrifying precision. His thumb circles my clit with just the right pressure, and pleasure builds that’s different from any orgasm I’ve ever experienced.

“Stop fighting it,” he growls against my inner thigh. “Let go, Kira.”

I can’t hold back any longer. The climax crashes over me with such violent intensity that I scream, my entire body convulsing against the restraints. And then a rush of wet heat pulses from inside me, gushing over his hand and down my thighs.

I'm mortified and confused, but still riding waves of the most intense pleasure I've ever felt. Through tear-blurred eyes, I catch Ryker's expression in the mirror, and it stops my breath.

His calculating precision, which has defined every moment since my capture, shatters. His eyes widen, pupils blown black with hunger as he tracks the evidence of my release dripping down his wrist.

"Fuck," he breathes, voice ragged. "You squirted for me."

He laps up the wetness with his tongue, groaning against my flesh like a man possessed. It's animalistic, desperate—nothing like his usual measured dominance.

"Always knew you could," he pants between licks. "So fucking beautiful when you fall apart. I've wanted to taste this since I first saw you." His words tumble out unfiltered. "Your sweet little pussy, gushing all over my hand, my mouth."

The restraints bite into my wrists as aftershocks ripple through me. I've never seen him like this—face flushed, movements frantic, composure completely abandoned. His hand trembles against my thigh, and the realization hits me: I've somehow broken through his armor.

"Christ, Kira," he moans, meeting my gaze through the mirror with reverence. "You have no idea what you do to me."

I stare at Ryker through the mirror, shocked by his transformation. His meticulous persona—the man who's been ten steps ahead this entire time—is unraveling. His chest heaves with ragged breaths, his eyes wild with a hunger I've never witnessed before.

"Can't wait," he growls, more to himself than to me. His fingers fumble with his belt buckle, hands trembling in their urgency. "Need to—fuck—"

The restraints hold me in place, bent over the barre, forced to watch as he yanks down his zipper and shoves his pants and underwear down just enough to free himself. His cock springs out, thick and long, the metal of his Prince Albert piercing catching the light. I can't look away as he wraps his hand around himself, already slick with my release.

"Look what you do to me," he pants, stroking himself with an intensity that seems almost painful. "Always so fucking perfect."

The controlled persona he's maintained dissolves into a beast. His eyes lock with mine in the mirror as he positions himself behind me, the tip of his cock brushing against the curve of my ass. But instead of pushing

inside, he continues stroking himself furiously, his free hand gripping my hip so hard I'll have bruises.

"I've wanted you for so fucking long," he groans, his voice breaking.
"Dreamed about this—about you—"

His rhythm becomes frenzied, his whole body tightening. A guttural sound tears from his throat as he comes, hot pulses landing across my lower back and ass. The sensation makes me flinch in the restraints, the warmth of it spreading across my skin as he marks me with his release.

The only sound in the room for several beats is our combined panting. In the mirror, I see him stare down at his handiwork with an expression of reverent disbelief, his fingertips gently spreading his cum across my skin like an artist signing his canvas.

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RYKER

*M*y hand trembles as I wipe it clean. This wasn't part of the plan.

I stare at the mess I've made across Kira's skin, at how her body still quivers from her release. Her scent hangs thick in the air—that thick arousal that's driven me to the edge. I've mapped out every second of our time together and calculated her responses to the millisecond. Still, this... this wasn't in my programming.

When she squirmed, a beast I barely recognized clawed to the surface. In that instant, it became nothing but instinct—an animal snarling at the gates of my restraint that had to be sated. The sound that tore from my throat wasn't mine. The way I pounced, consumed, marked her... that wasn't scripted.

I unfasten her restraints around her wrist. "Get up." My voice sounds foreign even to me. Harder than intended.

Kira flinches, and I hate how that satisfies the demon within. She moves slowly, her limbs unsteady. I grab a blanket and wrap it around her shoulders, not meeting her eyes.

"Follow me."

The hallway stretches before us, my footsteps measured while hers shuffle behind. My mind races through calculations and recalibrations. I need to reset. We need to reset.

I unlock a door at the end of the corridor and step aside. "Recreation room. You have three hours."

Her eyes widen at the sight—comfortable seating, a wall of books, a gaming console, television. A slice of normalcy in this underground prison.

"Why?" she asks.

“Because I need to...” What? Think? Regain composure? Remember who’s in charge here? “You earned a break. Don’t make me regret it.”

I move to the observation panel hidden behind a one-way mirror. From here, I can see everything while remaining invisible.

“I’ll be watching.”

As I close the door, locking her inside, I press my forehead against the cool metal. There’s a glitch I need to debug in my system. I feel my control slipping like falling without a parachute.

I can’t allow it again.

I settle into my chair on the other side of the one-way glass, fingers drumming against the metal desk. The monitors surrounding me display every angle of the recreation room—a space I designed specifically for her comfort and pleasure. She should be thrilled and grateful.

Kira sits motionless on the edge of the couch, blanket clutched around her shoulders like armor. Her eyes—those expressive eyes I’ve stared at for countless hours through her webcam—stare blankly at the wall. The gaming console remains untouched. The books are unread. Everything I’ve provided, ignored.

“What the fuck?” I mutter, leaning closer to the glass. This isn’t how it’s supposed to go. She should explore, test boundaries, and enjoy herself despite her circumstances. This broken shell wasn’t part of my calculations.

I pull up her vitals on the nearest screen. Her heart rate is steady but elevated, and her respiration is normal. Physically, she’s fine, but her expression makes my stomach clench.

A single tear tracks down her cheek, and she doesn’t even bother to wipe it away.

I run my hands through my hair, tugging at the roots. Did I push too far? Break something essential in her? The thought makes my chest tighten in a way I don’t recognize. This isn’t satisfaction. It’s... something I didn’t account for.

“Use the fucking console,” I whisper against the glass. “Play something. Anything.”

But she doesn’t move. Just sits there, shoulders curved inward, looking smaller than I’ve ever seen her. The fierce gamer girl who trash-talked opponents and bounced with excitement over new releases is nowhere to be found.

For the first time since I brought her here, doubt creeps in. Not about my right to have her—she’s mine, always has been—but about my methods. The broken look in her eyes wasn’t part of the fantasy. I wanted fire and challenge, not this hollow response.

I press my palm flat against the glass, suddenly desperate to reach through and shake her back to life.

I stare at the monitors, checking the timestamp. She’s been sitting in the same position for exactly fifty-eight minutes and twenty-three seconds. There has been no movement except occasional blinking and the silent tears that have dried on her cheeks.

This is a serious miscalculation on my part. Breaking her wasn’t the objective—molding her was. What good is a perfect doll if she’s shattered inside?

I run simulations in my mind, calculating variables and outcomes with the same precision I used to plan her abduction. Physical comfort won’t work. Threats are counterproductive at this stage. And continued isolation will only deepen whatever dissociative state she’s entering.

The answer comes to me like code resolving: vulnerability. Show her the man, not the monster. Let her see behind the mask, just enough to form a connection without sacrificing my plan.

I gather what I need at precisely two hours and unlock the recreation room door. The sound makes her flinch, but her eyes remain fixed on that same spot on the wall.

“Kira.” My voice comes out softer than intended.

No response.

I cross the room slowly, like approaching a wounded animal, and set down two steaming mugs on the coffee table. The scent of hot chocolate fills the space between us.

“You haven’t moved in two hours,” I say, settling onto the couch beside her, carefully leaving space between us. “Your choice, of course. But I thought... maybe you’d like this.”

She doesn’t acknowledge the drink or my presence. I expected resistance, not this emptiness.

“I went too far.” The words feel foreign on my tongue. Admitting a miscalculation isn’t in my nature. “That wasn’t... how I wanted things to be between us.”

Still nothing. Just the hollow stare of someone retreating deep inside themselves.

I reach out slowly, telegraphing my movement and gently turning her face toward mine. Her eyes finally meet mine—vacant, distant, yet still defiant in their emptiness.

“I need you here with me, Mischief.” The nickname slips out, the one I’ve used a hundred times through our headsets while gaming. “Not just your body. Your mind. Your fire.”

Something flickers in her expression—recognition, perhaps. The smallest spark in a dark room.

I slide closer to Kira, anxiety clawing at my chest. This emptiness in her eyes—it’s wrong. All wrong. I didn’t hack into her life, study her for years, create this space just to break her into this hollow shell. I need her fire, her challenge, her mind. Without that, she’s just another failed experiment.

“Look at me.” My voice comes out harsher than intended. I soften it. “Please, Kira.”

Nothing. Just that vacant stare.

I run my hand through my hair, tugging hard enough to hurt. Pain centers me and reminds me of what’s real. I must give her something real, too—something beyond the monster she sees.

“When I was eight,” I start, “my father made me watch him play Doom for fourteen hours straight. If I looked away, he’d hit me. If I fell asleep, he’d pour ice water over me.”

My throat tightens. I’ve never told anyone this, not even in the mandatory therapy sessions after I was found half-starved in that internet café at twelve.

“He was drunk, high... Said he was going to make me into the best gamer.” A bitter laugh escapes me. “The perfect soldier in his imaginary war. I pissed myself twice before morning. Wasn’t allowed to clean up.”

Kira’s breathing changes—just barely. I press on.

“That night, gaming became two things for me: torture and escape. My prison and my freedom.” I stare at my hands. “When I found you online—saw how you played, how you loved it—it was like finding someone who understood both sides without knowing they existed.”

I look up to find her eyes on me. The expression is not vacant anymore but wary. Calculating. Good. That’s my girl.

“I didn’t plan to lose control like that. With you... The script keeps changing.” I reach out slowly and touch her cheek with just my fingertips. “I need you here. Not some broken doll. The real you. The one who cusses me out when I steal her kills. The one who makes me feel... human.”

I swallow hard, my hand still hovering near her face, afraid to complete the touch. “The internet café where they found me—I’d been living there for weeks. Hacking security systems just to stay warm inside at night. The owner started leaving food out after hours. Never called the cops. First kindness I’d ever known.”

My voice catches. These aren’t tactical revelations. This isn’t part of the plan. But her retreat into herself triggered pure panic. I need her present, even if it costs me this exposure.

“I learned to code there. Learned to game seriously. Created my first online identity.” I drop my hand and curl my fingers into a fist on my thigh. “You know what the first username I chose was? SafeNow. Pathetic, right?”

A flicker crosses her face—recognition, maybe even understanding. It terrifies me.

“When I watch you game—how you throw yourself into those worlds—I recognize it. That escape. That hunger.” I risk reaching for her hand, not grabbing it, just covering it with mine. “But you also have this joy I never found. This pure fucking happiness that I...”

My throat closes around the words. I can’t finish.

Her fingers twitch beneath mine.

“What?” The single word is barely audible, but it’s the first she’s spoken voluntarily in hours.

“That I want for myself,” I finish, the confession burning my throat. “That I thought maybe I could have, through you.”

She’s looking at me now, really looking—eyes tracing my face like she’s seeing me for the first time. Not Ghost. Not Rogue. Not her captor. Just the broken man beneath it all.

“That doesn’t make this okay.” Her hand turns slightly beneath mine, not quite holding it but not pulling away.

“I know,” I admit. “But I need you here with me. Not lost inside your head. I want all of you—your anger, fear, and fight. Not this emptiness.”

A tear slides down her cheek, but it’s different now, conscious, present.

“I’m still here,” she says, voice stronger. “I don’t break that easily.”

Relief floods through me, so intense it's almost painful. My Kira is returning to me. The fire in her eyes has rekindled.

The way she's looking at me now—eyes alive with that familiar defiance—makes something shift inside my chest. Her gaze drops to my lips for just a fragment of a second, but it's enough to trigger an urge I've never experienced before.

I want to kiss her.

Not fuck her. Not own her. Not mark her.

Kiss her.

The realization hits like a system crash. In all my years of existence, through every meaningless encounter and physical release, I've never felt the need to press my lips against another human's lips. It's too intimate, too vulnerable, too real.

My hand moves of its own accord, fingertips grazing her jawline. This wasn't part of the plan.

"Kira," I whisper, her name a question I don't know how to ask on the tip of my tongue.

I lean forward slowly, giving her every chance to pull away, to reject this deviation in the character I've presented to her. Our breaths mingle in the space between us—hers quickening slightly, mine unsteady.

When our lips finally meet, the contact is so light it's barely there. Experimental, cautious. My eyes close instinctively, and other senses heighten to compensate. The softness of her lips surprises me—how something so simple can feel so overwhelming.

I start to pull back, already cataloging this new data point, when Kira makes a small sound in the back of her throat. Before my brain can process what's happening, she presses forward, her mouth capturing mine with unexpected hunger.

My entire body goes rigid with shock.

She's kissing me back.

My hands find her waist, lifting her effortlessly onto my lap. She comes eagerly, her body molding against mine as if designed for this exact configuration. Her fingers thread through my hair, tugging just enough to make every nerve-ending fire simultaneously.

I freeze as her lips press harder against mine, a circuit overloading with unexpected data. Kira's mouth moves with purpose, with knowledge I don't

possess. My hands hover with uncertainty at her waist as she takes complete control.

She angles her head, deepening the contact, and I let her lead. How could I not? This territory is unmapped in my experience—no algorithm exists for how her soft lips press and retreat, for the gentle pressure that sends electricity down my spine.

For once in my life, I'm completely out of my depth.

Her fingers grasp my hair, tugging slightly, and something clicks into place. A switch flips inside me—instinct overriding my paralysis. I pull her tighter against me, my tongue tentatively tracing the seam of her lips before pushing inside. The taste of her hits my system like a drug.

I devour her mouth now, claiming territory I didn't know I wanted until this moment. My hands span her back, holding her against me.

A confession tumbles from my lips when we break apart before I can analyze the strategic advantage of revealing or concealing this truth.

“I've never...” I struggle to find the words, hating how vulnerable this makes me. “This is my first kiss.”

“Your first...?”

I look away. “Your lips are the first to ever touch mine.”

I've had sex. I've fucked and been fucked. I've used bodies and let mine be used, but this press of lips, this breath-sharing, was too intimate, too vulnerable to allow.

Until Kira.

“No one?” Her fingers trace my jawline with soft, languid caresses

“No one,” I confirm, feeling naked in a way that has nothing to do with clothing.

Her eyes hold mine for a long moment, something unreadable flickering in their depths. Then, to my shock, she leans forward again and captures my lips.

This isn't happening. It can't happen after everything I've done, not after Kira knows who I am—*what* I am.

But her mouth moves against mine with undeniable intent, her fingers sliding into my hair, nails scraping lightly against my scalp. A shudder runs through me—a completely involuntary response that I couldn't control if I tried. I've never felt anything like this destabilizing rush of sensation.

I continue to let her lead, uncertain of the protocols for this exchange. Her tongue darts across my bottom lip, then pushes inside when I open for

her. The first slide of her tongue against mine sends electricity down my spine, and I hear a sound—a groan—and realize it came from me.

Her weight shifts on my lap, body pressing closer as her kiss deepens. This isn't a simulation. This isn't a calculation. This is Kira, my Kira, choosing to touch me. To taste me.

“Breathe,” she whispers against my lips, and I realize I’ve forgotten how.

I inhale sharply, then capture her mouth again, less tentative now. My hands frame her face, thumbs stroking her cheekbones with a gentleness I didn’t know I possessed. Something protective— primitive even unfurls in my chest—not possession, not control, but equally powerful.

Minutes blend together as we explore each other’s mouths—sometimes deep and hungry, sometimes so light it’s barely a brush of lips. I memorize the curve of her lower lip, how she sighs when I tug it gently between my teeth, and the small sounds she makes when our tongues meet.

Her fingers thread through my hair with tender curiosity. I mirror her movements, learning the contours of her face and the softness of her skin under my calloused fingertips. For once, I’m not calculating my next move or planning three steps ahead. I’m simply... here, present in this moment.

It’s terrifying. Exhilarating.

“Is this real?” I murmur against her mouth, the question escaping before I can contain it.

“Yes,” she confesses against my lips. “It’s real.”

Two words. Simple. Direct. Yet they crash through my system like a virus I have no defense against. My fingers tighten against her skin, suddenly afraid she’ll vanish if I don’t hold on.

Her admission rattles something loose inside me. Something I’ve kept locked down tight since that first night in the internet café—the understanding that control is safety, that deviation means danger.

I’m so far off-script right now, I can’t even see the original code. None of this was in my plan. Kira wasn’t supposed to kiss me. She wasn’t supposed to look at me with those eyes—not vacant, not terrified, but curious. Searching. She wasn’t supposed to touch me with gentle fingers that burned my skin in ways my punishments never could.

I planned every minute of her captivity. Created algorithms to predict her responses. Built contingencies for resistance, tears, rage, and attempted escape.

I never built a contingency for this, for her mouth soft against mine. For the way her weight feels on my lap. For how badly I want to taste her.

This isn't dominance. This isn't power. It's new—something pure and unfamiliar, making my hands tremble against her skin.

I should reset, return to the programming, and get back on schedule with the next level, the next test, and the next step in making her mine.

But I don't want to.

For the first time since I found control in code and calculations, I don't want to follow the script. I want to stay here, in this unplanned moment, with her breath mingling with mine.

My entire life has been about control. It's about never being the scared kid huddled in the dark again. It's been about building systems where I dictate every outcome.

Yet here, with Kira looking at me like I'm not just the monster who took her, I don't care that I've veered completely off course.

I don't care that this wasn't part of the plan.

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KIRA

I

wake up with swollen lips and a mind full of contradictions.

My body aches in places it shouldn't. Not from pain—from wanting. From yesterday. From him.

The sunlight streams through the window—fake or real? I've stopped questioning. My fingers brush my lips where Ryker's mouth had been. His first kiss. The thought sits heavy in my chest, spreading warmth I don't want to acknowledge.

He'd been so... different. Uncertain. When our lips met, he froze, completely seized up. I had to guide him and show him how to move against me. His inexperience should have been my advantage, my moment to manipulate him.

Instead, it overwhelmed me.

“Fuck!” I punch the mattress.

After that first hesitant press of lips, an ancient, feral part of him stirred to life. We didn't leave that couch for hours. His hands memorized me, greedy and desperate, like he'd been starving his entire life. His breath was hot against my neck, whispering things that made me press against him harder.

The grinding... Christ. Even now, heat pools between my thighs, remembering how he pinned me beneath him, moving with devastating precision despite the layers between us.

He knows my body. Studies me like I'm the final boss level he can't quite beat.

I squeeze my eyes shut, hating how my hand slides down my stomach, finding wetness before I even touch myself. I hate myself for needing this

release so badly that I can't stop my fingers from circling, pressing, and dipping.

"This isn't real," I tell myself, but my body no longer cares about reality.

When he brought me back here, something in his eyes had changed. He left me unrestrained. Trusted me. Or tested me. It doesn't matter which now as I arch off the bed, chasing the sensation, imagining his weight over me instead of this hollow emptiness.

I know that this is fucked up. Stockholm syndrome. Trauma bonding. Whatever psychological label belongs to this mess.

But my body doesn't care about labels, either.

My eyes flutter closed as my fingers move faster between my thighs. My breath hitches, back arching off the mattress. Images of Ryker flood my mind—his hands, mouth, and weight against me yesterday.

"Harder," I whisper, circling that sweet spot that makes my toes curl. My free hand grips the sheets, knuckles white.

The pressure builds, hot and insistent. I'm so close. My hips rock against my hand, chasing the edge of release. Sweat beads across my forehead, hair splayed across the pillow.

"God," I gasp, my body tensing. Just a little more—

"Don't stop now."

My eyes fly open. Ryker stands at the foot of the bed, arms crossed over his chest, eyes blazing with hunger.

Heat rushes to my face. I try to pull my hand away, but he makes a sound—sharp, disapproving.

"I didn't say you could stop." His voice drops an octave, rumbling through me. "Keep going."

My fingers freeze. Despite the embarrassment burning through me, my body throbs beneath my touch, desperate for release.

"I—"

"Finish what you started." He steps closer, towering over me. "Come for me, Kira. Now."

The command in his voice triggers me. My fingers resume their rhythm faster now. I should feel shame with his eyes devouring every inch of me, but power surges through my veins.

I'm performing for him. And fuck—I like it.

The intensity builds faster than before. My breath comes in short gasps, and my legs tremble as I climb higher.

“That’s it.” His voice wraps around me like a warm caress. “Let me see you fall apart.”

I’m balanced on the knife’s edge, my entire body coiled tight.

“Ryker—” I whimper, so close I can taste it.

His name escapes my lips like a prayer, and a feral spark ignites in Ryker’s eyes.

A deep growl rumbles from his chest. Before I can react, he lunges forward, ripping the sheets away from my body. The cool air hits my heated skin, but I barely notice because Ryker’s dropping to his knees at the edge of the bed.

“Mine,” he snarls, gripping my thighs and spreading them wider.

My fingers still hover between my legs, wet and trembling. He grabs my wrist, pulling my hand away and pinning it beside my hip.

“You started something that belongs to me.” His breath is hot against my inner thigh. “Only I get to make you come, understand?”

I can’t form words, just nod frantically, desperate for him to touch me.

“Who gets to make you come, baby?” His tongue darts out, so close to where I need him, but not close enough.

“Only you,” I gasp.

The first stroke of his tongue sends electricity shooting up my spine. My hips buck instinctively, but his strong hands hold me in place, fingers digging into my flesh.

“Fuck, you taste so fucking good,” he groans against me. “I’ve imagined waking up and eating you every fucking morning for over two years.”

His mouth devours me with devastating precision like he’s studied exactly how to take me apart. Each lick and suck is calibrated to drive me wild.

“That’s it,” he murmurs between strokes of his tongue. “Give it to me. Let me feel you come on my tongue.”

I’m so close, teetering on the edge, my entire body trembling with need.

His tongue laps at me skilfully, but suddenly, he pulls back. My body protests the loss, hips chasing his mouth.

“You remember what happened last time?” he asks, eyes locked with mine as he slides two fingers through my wetness.

I know exactly what he means. When it happened, I was horrified, the sudden gush of wetness shocking me.

“I want to see it again,” he growls, curling his fingers inside me.

His fingers find that spot inside me that makes my vision blur. He presses upward, the pressure building instantly.

“No, I can’t—” I gasp, trying to squirm away.

“You can. You will.” His voice is iron wrapped in velvet. “Let go for me.”

His thumb circles my clit while his fingers work that spot relentlessly. The pressure builds impossibly fast, different from a regular orgasm—more intense, more frightening.

“Ryker, I—”

“I’ve got you,” he promises, his eyes never leaving mine. “Let it happen.”

The pressure becomes unbearable. I’m climbing too high, too fast. My thighs tremble uncontrollably around his hand.

“That’s it,” he urges, fingers working faster. “Give it to me.”

The release crashes through me like a tidal wave, my back arching. I feel the wetness gush around his fingers, soaking the sheets beneath me. The intensity makes me cry out, tears springing to my eyes.

“Fuck yes,” Ryker groans, his fingers still coaxing more from me. “So fucking beautiful.”

I collapse back against the mattress, trembling. My body feels wrung out, used in the most delicious way possible.

I’m still trembling from the intensity of my release when Ryker begins a slow journey up my body. His lips press against my inner thigh, leaving a wet mark that cools in the air. My muscles twitch beneath his touch, sensitive and needy.

“You’re exquisite,” he murmurs against my hip bone, his tongue tracing the curve.

Every kiss feels like he’s marking territory, claiming another inch of me. His stubble scratches lightly against my stomach as he moves higher, the contrast between his rough face and soft lips sending shivers across my skin.

My breathing hasn’t even steadied when his mouth finds the underside of my breast. I arch instinctively, offering myself to him without conscious thought.

“Ryker,” I whimper, my voice ragged.

He pauses at my collarbone, sucking hard enough to leave a mark. The slight pain makes me gasp, my fingers threading through his hair, holding him to me rather than pushing him away.

When his face finally hovers above mine, I see a vulnerability in his eyes. For a moment, the carefully curated facade slips. I remember how he froze yesterday when our lips first met—how his entire body went rigid with uncertainty.

The knowledge sits heavy between us: I’m the first person he’s ever kissed.

This man who’s controlled every aspect of my capture, who’s mapped my body like a territory to conquer, who’s pushed me to heights of pleasure I’ve never known—has never felt another’s lips against his own until mine.

The revelation makes me feel powerful and terrified simultaneously.

His eyes search mine, seeking permission despite everything between us. I give the slightest nod, and he lowers his mouth to mine.

The kiss is achingly gentle. His lips carefully move, learning my responses rather than forcing them from me. When his tongue traces the seam of my mouth, I taste myself on him. The intimacy of it makes me moan against his lips, my hands sliding up his back.

He kisses me like he has all the time in the world, like he’s savoring every sensation, cataloging my reactions for future reference.

He breaks the kiss suddenly, pulling away just as I lose myself in him. His attention makes my lips feel swollen and tender, and I find myself leaning forward, chasing his mouth instinctively.

Ryker’s eyes are darker than I’ve ever seen them. There’s a gentleness there that doesn’t match the man who kidnapped me, who built a maze to hunt me through. It’s jarring and confusing, this dichotomy.

“You should grab a shower,” he says, his voice rougher than usual. “I’ll have breakfast waiting when you’re done.”

My body still thrums with aftershocks of pleasure, making it hard to focus on his words. I blink up at him, trying to process the sudden shift.

“Before level five starts,” he adds.

Level five.

The reminder slams me back to reality. This isn’t normal. This isn’t a romantic morning between lovers. This is a game—his game—with rules I don’t understand and consequences I can’t predict.

“What’s level five?” My voice sounds weak.

His mouth curves into that half-smile that makes my stomach flip despite everything. “Shower first. Then food.” He stands, creating distance between us. “You need your energy.”

The implications hang heavy in the air between us. I wrap my arms around myself, suddenly conscious of my nakedness in a way I wasn’t moments ago.

Ryker moves toward the door, each step measured and controlled. At the threshold, he pauses, looking back at me over his shoulder. I catch a glimpse of uncertainty in his expression.

“Take your time,” he says finally. “I’ll be waiting.”

Then he’s gone, the door closing softly behind him. The silence he leaves behind feels oppressive.

I stayed frozen on the bed for several minutes, trying to untangle the knot of emotions inside me: fear, desire, confusion, and anticipation.

Level five.

I force myself to stand on shaky legs and go to the bathroom. Whatever comes next, at least I’ll face it clean.

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RYKER

I stand at the doorway to the forest clearing, surveying my creation with pride. Levels five, six, and seven are my masterpiece—three acres of carefully designed wilderness on my property, transformed into the ultimate hunting ground. Every tree and shadow has been considered.

The morning dew glistens on the trip wires I've installed between the pines. She won't see them. Not with her heart racing, not with me on her tail. My fingertips find the pressure plate hidden beneath a thin layer of soil —when triggered, it'll release a net from above, designed to ensnare without injury.

I've built this place for us. She doesn't understand yet that the hunt makes the capture sweeter.

I check my watch. Almost time. My body tightens at the thought of Kira running through these woods, naked and afraid. The prior levels were necessary—breaking her expectations, testing her loyalty, pushing her boundaries. But this... this is where fantasy and reality truly merge.

“What are you thinking about?”

I turn to find Kira standing behind me, wrapped in the robe I provided and wearing the hiking shoes. The sight of her quickens my pulse. She's showered, her hair still damp, and her skin flushed. The marks I left on her throat are visible above the collar.

“The next three levels,” I answer honestly, reaching for the bow I've placed against a nearby tree. Not lethal—specially designed with rubber-tipped arrows that will sting but not penetrate. “The next three days, I will hunt you through these woods.”

Her eyes widen, fear and disbelief flashing across her face. She takes an instinctive step back, her breathing quickening as she processes my words.

“There’s more to this setup than you realize,” I tell her, as she scans the forest borders. “Look closer.” I gesture to the tree line where I’ve strategically placed three survival tents, barely visible against the autumn foliage. Each is stocked differently—one with water, another with basic medical supplies, and the third with a sleeping bag and thermal blanket.

“I’ve hidden shelters throughout these woods. Some obvious, others... less so.” Pride swells in my chest as I think about the hollowed tree trunk I spent weeks carving out, the small cave entrance disguised with brambles, the elevated platform twenty feet up that blends with the branches.

“And the food?” Her voice holds a tremor.

“Scattered everywhere. Protein bars wrapped in waterproof packaging. Jerky hanging in trees. Even a few MREs buried where rainwater naturally collects.” I’ve mapped it all and memorized every cache location. Some are easy finds—a deliberate trail of disturbed soil leading to buried supplies. Others require true survival instinct.

“Three days is generous, don’t you think?” She’s trying to understand my game, my purpose.

I step closer, breathing in her clean scent. “Three days gives you hope. Hope makes you fight harder and think clearer.” I won’t mention how I’ve studied the psychological impact of time frames on captives—too short, and they give up; too long, and despair sets in. Three days is just right—long enough to believe escape is possible.

“The property line—” she begins.

“Extends for miles,” I cut in. “And every inch is secured.” She doesn’t know the invisible perimeter I’ve created—motion sensors that alert my phone, tripwires connected to alarms, cameras disguised as bird nests. Beyond that, a reinforced fence buried three feet into the ground and extending twelve feet high, obscured by vegetation cultivated for years before I owned the property.

“Even if you reached the boundary, you couldn’t cross it.” I’ve ensured that. An electric current runs through the metal mesh. Barbed wire coiled at the top. “But that’s part of the challenge, isn’t it? Finding the edges of your world.”

Her brow furrows, that little crease I’ve seen countless times when she’s concentrating during our online matches. She’s calculating, strategizing—

exactly what I want.

“What happens if you catch me?” she asks, and my body responds instantly.

I step closer, deliberately invading her space. I want her to feel my presence and understand the visceral intensity of what’s about to unfold between us.

“When I catch you,” I correct her, my voice dropping to a lower octave. “There’s no ‘if’ about it. I’ll catch you multiple times over these three days.”

I reach out, touching the skin visible above the robe. “And each time I catch you, I’ll claim you. Right there in the dirt, against a tree, in one of the shelters if we’re close enough. I’ll mate with you like the animals we’re pretending to be.”

Her pupils dilate instantly, and her breathing quickens. I’ve seen her reactions to stimuli for so long that I recognize the conflicting emotions playing across her face—shock at my bluntness but unmistakable arousal, too. Her lips part slightly, tongue darting out to wet them before she speaks again.

“Do I... get any say in this?”

A note of hope in her voice tells me she’s already accepted the scenario—she wants to know where the boundaries lie.

I consider her question seriously. Everything about our relationship thus far has been about my control. Still, there’s been a change in me since that moment in the rec room.

“Yes,” I decide. “If what I do is too much—truly too much—you can use a safe word. Respawn. When you say that word, whatever’s happening stops immediately. I’ll check on you and ensure you’re okay before continuing the game.”

I tilt her chin up, forcing her to meet my eyes. “But understand something, Kira. I know the difference between fear and resistance that’s part of the fantasy, and genuine distress. Don’t use it unless you truly need to.”

Kira’s features settle into reluctant understanding. The fight hasn’t left her. It’s still there in the tightness around her eyes and the slight clench of her jaw, but she’s accepting the parameters of my game. This grudging compliance sends a rush of satisfaction through me. She’s learning.

“Fine,” she mutters, adjusting the robe tighter around her body. “I understand the rules.”

The morning light catches on her damp hair, turning the strands copper and gold. A need to claim what’s mine before releasing her into the wild stirs within me. Without warning, I close the distance between us in two quick strides. My hand snakes around her waist, fingers splaying across the small of her back as I yank her against me.

My mouth swallows her surprised gasp as I capture her lips. I kiss her with everything I’ve been holding back—all the tension, the planning, the anticipation. My tongue claims hers, demanding a response. I taste the mint of the toothpaste I provided and feel the softness of her mouth.

For a moment, she freezes, but then—God, yes—she melts against me, her hands coming up to grip my shoulders. The way she becomes pliable sends electricity through my veins. I deepen the kiss, my free hand tangling in her hair, angling her head, marking her before the hunt.

When I finally break away, we’re both breathing hard. Her lips are swollen, and her eyes are dazed. Let her carry this feeling of confusion and arousal into the woods.

“Twenty minutes,” I say, my voice rough. “That’s your head start, Mischief. Use it wisely.”

I step back, creating distance between us. My hands drop to my sides, though every instinct screams to pull her back.

“The clock starts now.”

My muscles tense with each step she takes toward the treeline. Kira pauses at the forest’s edge, turning to cast one final glance over her shoulder. Even from this distance, I can read every emotion crossing her face—fear, uncertainty, and a flicker of excitement she can’t quite hide beneath it all.

My blood pulses hotter. She feels it, too.

Twenty minutes. Twelve hundred seconds of restraint before I can follow.

I crouch, running my fingers along the ground, feeling the earth that will soon hold both our footprints. Every sense heightens as I prepare—hearing sharpened to detect the faintest snap of twigs, eyes narrowed to catch any movement among the pines. This hunt has lived in my mind, playing out countless scenarios during sleepless nights.

But now it's real. She's out there, skin prickling with awareness. Prey instinct awakened in her bones.

I check my watch. Five minutes gone already.

I could track her easily with the cameras hidden throughout the woods, but where's the challenge? No, I'll use only my senses, my knowledge of her psychology. Which way would she run? Would she seek high ground or water? Would she try to circle back?

My fingers itch to grab the bow to begin the pursuit. This is primal—man against woman, hunter against hunted. But it's also intimate in ways she doesn't yet understand. This chase will reveal her core nature to me in ways no conversation could.

I look toward where she disappeared, imagining her crashing through the undergrowth, breath coming in short gasps, glancing over her shoulder. The image sends adrenaline surging through me.

Fifteen minutes now.

God, I can't wait to hunt her.

KIRA

T

he forest whispers around me. Every snap of a twig, every rustle of leaves sends electric currents across my skin. I freeze, ears straining for the sound of Ryker's pursuit.

Twenty minutes. That's all the head start he gave me. How many minutes have passed?

A bird calls overhead, and I nearly jump out of my skin. My breath catches in my throat as I press myself against the rough bark of an oak tree. My skin burns beneath the thin fabric of the robe, hypersensitive to every sensation—the brush of cotton, the kiss of wind, the memory of his hands.

“This isn’t normal,” I tell myself, but the words lack conviction now.

When did this change? When did the thought of him hunting me down shift from terror to... anticipation? My nipples are hard, thighs damp with more than just exertion.

I think of his kiss before he released me into this forest. The way he claimed my mouth like a man drowning. The realization that those were his first kisses still staggers me. All his power, his obsession—and yet I’m the first person whose lips he’s tasted. Something about that knowledge has cracked open my resistance.

A twig snaps somewhere to my left.

My breath hitches. Is it him? The thought sends a rush of adrenaline through me, but it’s not fear driving me anymore. It’s hunger.

I move deeper into the trees, my shoes silent on the forest floor. Every sense is heightened. The forest smells green, alive, and dangerous—like him.

God knows how long ago at the start, I would have given anything to escape this nightmare. Now my fantasies have blurred with reality. The line between captor and lover has smudged beyond recognition.

Another sound—closer this time.

My skin flushes hot. My heart pounds not with terror but with want. I shouldn't feel this. Shouldn't crave his touch, his possession. But knowing I broke through his armor, that I affect him as deeply as he affects me—it's intoxicating.

He's coming for me. And God help me, I want him to find me.

I rush forward without direction, navigating the forest with clumsy urgency. The realization hits me like a punch to the gut—I'm just running blindly. No plan. No strategy. Exactly what he wants.

“Stop thinking like prey,” I coach, slowing my pace. “Think like a gamer.”

This is just another level in his sick game, but games have rules. Patterns. Exploitable mechanics. I’ve conquered enough virtual worlds to know better than to panic-sprint through unfamiliar territory.

I spot a dense thicket of brambles ahead, backed by a small depression beneath a fallen tree. I slide into the hollow space, wincing as thorns catch at my robe. The natural cave offers coverage from three sides while providing a clear view of the approach. It’s defensible—the first rule of survival gaming.

Catching my breath, I finally take stock of my surroundings. Three acres, he said. I need to understand the boundaries, the terrain. What would I do if I were designing this level?

I listen to the birdsong above, noting how it shifts and changes. There—a pattern interruption to my right. Something disturbed them. He’s circling, not directly pursuing.

My mind catalogs available resources: stones for distraction, mud for camouflage, and thorny branches for defensive barriers or traps.

If this were Call of Duty, I’d create a diversion, then flank. If it were Horizon, I’d set traps along predictable patrol routes.

I gather a handful of small stones, tucking them into my robe pocket. Then I smear cool mud across my exposed skin, masking my scent and breaking up my silhouette against the forest floor.

“Think, Kira,” I murmur. “He knows you. Anticipates your moves. So don’t be you.”

What would Ryker never expect? He's counting on my fear driving me forward, making predictable choices. So I'll be unpredictable. I'll think like a hunter, not like prey.

I settle deeper into my hiding spot, organizing my thoughts and forming a plan.

The mud cools against my skin as I reconsider my strategy. Hiding feels too passive, too predictable. Ryker knows I'm resourceful—he's played enough games with me to understand my tendencies.

"What would he never expect?" I ask myself, the answer crystallizing instantly.

He expects me to run forward, to seek escape. But what if I double back? Circle around behind him? The hunter becomes the hunted. It's the move I'd make in our late-night gaming sessions—sacrificing the obvious advantage for a surprising counter-attack.

I slip from my hiding place, moving with renewed purpose. No longer running blindly but executing a strategy. I track my footprints backward, carefully stepping precisely where I've already disturbed the ground. The forest feels different now, less threatening, more like a game board I can understand.

The thrill of outsmarting him sends adrenaline coursing through my veins. I imagine the shock on his face when he realizes I've maneuvered behind him. For once, I'll be the one in charge.

I smile, quieting my footsteps as I navigate a cluster of saplings. So focused on my brilliant plan that I miss the subtle differences in the forest floor ahead.

One step. Two. The ground feels oddly springy beneath my feet.

The world suddenly inverts.

A violent whoosh of air, my stomach lurches, and I'm airborne—then suspended, tangled in rough rope that bites into my skin. The net closes around me, hoisting me three feet above the forest floor.

"No!" I thrash against the bindings, but each movement makes the ropes dig deeper into my flesh. My plan is shattered in seconds.

Defeat washes over me as I hang helplessly, swinging slightly with each futile struggle. The reality is humbling—he anticipated this move. He knew me better than I knew myself.

The sound of unhurried footsteps approaches through the underbrush. My breath catches as Ryker emerges from the trees, a predatory smile

playing across his lips.

“Double-back strategy, Mischief? Classic you,” he says. “I’d have been disappointed if you hadn’t tried it.”

I hang suspended in the net, my body contorted into a grotesque display as the ropes bite into my flesh. Realization dawns with sickening clarity—how the net has caught me, legs spread, body accessible through the gaps in the rope pattern. I’m completely exposed. Vulnerable. The thin robe that barely covered me before now hangs open where the rough hemp has pulled it apart.

“Let me down!” My voice cracks as I thrash against my bindings.

Ryker circles beneath me, eyes dark with predatory intent. “The more you struggle, the tighter it gets.”

He’s right. Each movement cinches the ropes deeper into my skin, red indentations forming. I freeze, breathing hard as he pulls a hunting knife from his belt. The blade gleams in the dappled forest light.

“Don’t,” I plead, a new kind of panic flooding my system.

His smile is all teeth. “Trust me.”

The net sways as he approaches. I renew my struggles despite the pain, desperate now. “No! Ryker, stop!”

The knife slices through the air, and I flinch, expecting pain. Instead, I feel the subtle give of rope. He’s cutting carefully, methodically, maintaining the structure that holds me suspended while creating a strategic opening between my legs.

“Beautiful,” he murmurs, eyes fixated on his handiwork.

The cool flat of the blade suddenly presses against my inner thigh. I gasp, muscles tensing. He drags the knife’s smooth side up my leg, never breaking skin but threatening with every inch. My body responds to the caress with shameful heat.

“The hunter claims his prize,” Ryker says, dragging the knife across my stomach, between my breasts, up to my neck. “And you, Mischief, are exactly where I planned for you to be.”

I feel tears of frustration burn behind my eyes. Even my brilliant strategy was anticipated and worked into his sick game. The knife travels back down my body, and I shudder, suspended and helpless in his forest trap.

I hang suspended, as Ryker’s knife creates strategic openings in the rope net. My body trembles from fear, anticipation, and darkness I don’t want to

name.

“You really thought you could outsmart me?” His voice carries an edge that sends shivers down my spine. “I know every move you’d make before you make it.”

I should be terrified. I should be fighting, screaming, doing anything but hanging here watching him with wide eyes. The shifting power dynamic and the moments of vulnerability I’ve glimpsed in him have awakened something inside me.

“Fuck you,” I spit, but there’s no conviction behind it.

His laugh is dark. “Soon enough.”

The sound of his zipper sliding down makes my breath catch. My nipples harden beneath the thin robe, heat pooling between my thighs. I’m horrified at my response, yet unable to stop it.

“Look at you,” he murmurs, stepping closer to the net. “Fighting me even while your body begs for me.”

“I’m not—” The lie dies on my lips as his hand reaches through the opening he’s created, fingers tracing along my inner thigh.

“You’re soaked,” he says, voice rough with desire as his fingers brush against my center. “Your body knows what it wants, even if your mind is still catching up.”

I bite my lip to keep from moaning as he teases me with featherlight touches, never giving enough pressure where I desperately need it. The ropes dig into my skin as I instinctively arch toward his hand.

I hang suspended in the net, aware of how exposed I am. My breath comes in shallow gasps as Ryker’s fingers withdraw from my center. I should feel relief. Instead, I feel empty, aching.

“Remember your safe word?” he asks, voice husky with want.

“Respawn,” I whisper.

He nods, eyes never leaving mine. “Use it if you need to.”

I open my mouth to end this twisted game. The word sits on my tongue, ready to spill out, but I swallow it back. A darkness inside me doesn’t want this to stop.

Ryker positions himself at the opening he’s created in the net. I feel the hot, hard length of him against my inner thigh. He’s freed himself from his pants but hasn’t removed them completely.

“No,” I protest weakly, turning my face away. My hips shift toward him despite my words.

“Your mouth says one thing,” he growls, beginning to slide himself against my wetness without penetrating. “Your body says another.”

I gasp as a cool metal grazes my most sensitive spot—the Prince Albert piercing. I’d seen it before during our previous encounters, but feeling it against me sends electric shocks through my nervous system.

“Stop,” I plead, the lie evident in my pressing against him, seeking more contact with that tantalizing metal.

He drags himself slowly up and down my slick folds, the piercing creating the most exquisite friction against my clit. My head falls back, a moan escaping despite my attempts to stifle it.

“Say the word and I’ll stop,” he challenges, knowing I won’t.

The safe word burns in my throat, unspoken. I could end this now and reassert some restraint. Instead, I bite my lip as he continues his torturous rhythm, the piercing hitting exactly where I need it with each stroke.

“I hate you,” I gasp, even as my thighs tremble with building pleasure.

His dark chuckle tells me he sees right through me. “Keep telling yourself that.”

I feel him trembling against me, his body vibrating with restraint. His careful strokes along my folds become erratic, desperate. There’s a change in his eyes now—a wildness I haven’t seen before, even during his previous lapses in discipline.

“Fuck,” he groans, voice ragged. “I can’t—I need—”

The careful, calculating Ryker is fracturing before my eyes. His breathing grows harsh, pupils blown wide as he positions himself at my entrance.

“I’ve waited so fucking long,” he rasps, fingers digging into my thighs through the openings in the net. “Dreamed about this tight little pussy for too long.”

His words shock me—not just their crudeness, but the raw desperation behind them. This isn’t the meticulous man who planned my abduction. This results from the culmination of every action he’s taken in the last two years. A result he didn’t foresee in his meticulous planning.

“You’re mine,” he growls, pressing forward slightly. “I want to hear your pretty little voice tell me exactly who you belong to. Fucking say you’re mine, Mischief.”

I gasp as the head of his cock stretches me, the cool metal of his piercing a startling contrast to his heat.

“I—”

“I need to hear you admit what we both know.”

His composure disintegrates completely, hands shaking as they grip me. “Tell me your pussy belongs to me. Tell me that deep down you want this as bad as I do.”

The rope net sways as he presses closer, his whole body quivering with need. Sweat beads on his forehead, teeth clenched as he fights to maintain the last threads of his control.

“Please,” he begs, voice rough with vulnerability. “Fucking tell me, Kira. I’m dying here.”

The power I suddenly hold over this man, who’s dominated every aspect of my captivity, is intoxicating.

I stare into Ryker’s desperate eyes, feeling the head of his cock stretching my entrance while the metal of his piercing presses against my sensitive flesh. His vulnerability in this moment—the trembling hands, the cracking voice.

“I’m yours.” The words escape my lips before I can stop them, and they feel shockingly true. “My pussy belongs to you. I want this—want you—so fucking bad.”

His eyes flash dark, and everything changes in an instant.

A guttural sound tears from his throat as he surges forward, burying himself inside me with one powerful thrust. The net swings wildly, my body jerking against the ropes that bite into my skin.

“Fuck, yes,” he growls, gripping the ropes on either side of my hips for leverage. “Mine. You’re fucking mine.”

His grip shatters completely, and he pounds into me with savage intensity, each thrust rocking the suspended net. The piercing drags against my inner walls with each movement, creating a sensation so intense I cry out.

“Tell me again,” he demands.

“Yours,” I gasp, my body on fire with sensation. “I’m yours, Ryker.”

The net creaks and sways with his violent rhythm. My hands grip the ropes above my head as my body accepts each brutal thrust. The position—suspended, helpless, spread open for him—heightens every sensation.

I’ve never felt anything like this—this animalistic fucking. No gentle lovemaking, no careful consideration. Just pure, desperate need. My body

responds with shocking intensity, inner walls clenching around him as pleasure builds with frightening speed.

I'm suspended in the net, my body jerking with each powerful thrust as Ryker claims me completely. The forest spins around us, a blur of green and brown as the net sways violently.

"You fucking like that?" Ryker growls, his fingers digging into my thighs hard enough to leave bruises. "Tell me how much you love this thick cock stretching your tight little cunt."

His words shock me, the crude vulgarity so at odds with his usually proper speech. My cheeks burn with humiliation and arousal.

"I—I can't—"

His hand connects with my ass in a sharp slap. "Answer me when I fucking talk to you, Mischief."

"Yes," I gasp, the word torn from my throat. "I like it."

"Like what?" He slows his pace cruelly, barely moving inside me. "Be specific. Tell me exactly what you want."

The net creaks as he leans closer, his breath hot against my ear. "Tell me you want me to fuck this wet pussy until you scream."

My whole body trembles. "I want you to fuck me until I scream."

"Whose pussy is this?" His voice drops to a growl as he drives into me again, the piercing dragging against my g-spot.

"Yours," I whimper.

"I don't think everyone heard you." His fingers yank the net trap roughly. "Whose. Fucking. Pussy. Is. This?" Each word punctuated with a brutal thrust.

"Yours! It's yours!" I cry out, shame and pleasure twisting together.

"That's right," he snarls. "This tight little hole belongs to me now. I'm going to use it whenever I want, however I want. Going to fill it with my cum until you're fucking dripping with it."

I shouldn't be aroused by his filthy words, but my body clenches around him traitorously.

"You're my little slut now, aren't you?" He forces my gaze to meet his. "Tell me what you are."

The words burn in my throat, humiliation and arousal battling inside me. I shouldn't want this. Shouldn't be dripping wet as he pounds into me while I hang helplessly in this trap. Shouldn't feel this pleasure racing through my veins.

“I’m—” My voice breaks as he hits that spot inside me. “I’m your slut.” His eyes flash with triumph. “Again.”

“Your slut,” I gasp, the words sending a shameful thrill through me. “I’m your fucking slut, Ryker.”

He rewards me by speeding up his pace, hips slamming against mine with brutal force. The net swings wildly, the rope digging into my skin, adding pain to the overwhelming pleasure. Each thrust of his pierced cock sends shockwaves through my body.

“You’re going to come on my cock,” he commands. “Now.”

As if my body belongs to him completely, the orgasm crashes through me at his words. I shudder in the net, inner walls clamping down on him as waves of pleasure tear through me. My scream echoes through the forest as my back arches, body shuddering.

“That’s it, Mischief,” he groans, never slowing his relentless pace. “Squeeze that tight little pussy around me.”

I can barely breathe through the intensity of it, aftershocks rippling through me as he continues to fuck me through my climax. Tears leak from the corners of my eyes. From pleasure, from shame, from the overwhelming storm of emotions, I can’t even begin to process.

“Let me see your eyes,” he demands.

I force my eyes open to meet his gaze. What I see there shocks me. Behind the dominance, behind the cruel smile twisting his lips, his eyes shine with a reverent expression.

“Gorgeous.” His pace becomes erratic. “So fucking divine.”

His fingers dig deeper into my hips, cementing the fact that I will wear his bruises for days. I feel him swell inside me, the piercing pressing against my sensitive walls.

With his pace growing frantic, Ryker’s composed facade crumbles completely. His eyes lock with mine, his hunger and desperation replacing the precision I’ve grown accustomed to. His muscles tense, jaw clenched as he drives into me one final time.

“Kira,” he groans—not Mischief, not his pet name, but my actual name tumbling from his lips like a prayer.

His entire body shudders against mine as he empties himself inside me, fingers gripping the ropes so tightly his knuckles turn white. The vulnerability etched across his face in this moment of release stuns me—I’m seeing him completely undone, barriers demolished.

As his breathing slowly steadies, reality crashes back. The forest around us, the rope biting into my skin, the net swaying gently after our violent coupling.

What have I done?

My body still tingles with aftershocks of pleasure, a betrayal that makes bile rise in my throat. I wasn't just a victim here. I participated. I encouraged him. I said those things-those filthy, degrading things—and I meant them in the heat of the moment.

The weight of my willingness settles over me like a blanket, nearly suffocating me. I could have used my safe word and fought harder. Instead, I welcomed this twisted chemistry between us, letting myself become actively complicit in my own violation.

My confusion must show on my face because Ryker's expression shifts — a tenderness replacing the feral hunger of moments before.

"Don't." I turn my face away as tears burn behind my eyes. I can't bear his tenderness now, not when I need to hate him or myself for what just happened.

I close my eyes, unable to look at him or the evidence of our actions. The line between captor and captive, between victim and willing participant, has blurred beyond recognition. And the most terrifying realization is that some dark part of me wanted this.

2 1

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RYKER

I cut through the rope binding Kira to my trap, my knife slicing through the fibers with practiced ease. Her body collapses forward, and I catch her against my chest, dropping the knife to cradle her properly. Her sobs vibrate against my skin, each tremor sending unexpected waves of emotion through me.

“Shh, I’ve got you.” I lowered us both to the forest floor. The leaves crunch beneath us as I position her in my lap, her tear-streaked face nestled against my shoulder.

Her body is wracked with each sob, making an instinctive part of me ache. This isn’t part of the original plan—these *feelings* weren’t calculated into the algorithm of our relationship. I stroke her hair, matted with sweat and forest debris, and press my lips to her forehead.

“You’re safe now. I wouldn’t let anything truly harm you.” The words sound hollow even to me. Aren’t I the one who put her in danger? The contradiction doesn’t matter. In this moment, I am her captor and savior—at least in my mind.

Kira’s hands push weakly against my chest. “Stop,” she chokes out between sobs. “This—isn’t... right. None—of this is—right.”

I ignore her protests, continuing to stroke her hair, her back, wiping tears from her cheeks with my thumbs. Her body remains soft against mine despite her words. I know her better than she knows herself—her body tells me truths her mind refuses to accept.

“Your mind is fighting what your body already understands,” I murmur, kissing her temple, cheek, and corner of her mouth. Each kiss leaves a mark

invisible to the eye but imprinted on her soul. “We’re connected, Mischief. You feel it, too.”

“P-pl-ea-se,” she begs, her voice breaking. “Stop.”

But I don’t. I can’t. This moment of vulnerability is too precious, too real. I continue holding her, rocking slightly, my hands moving in soothing patterns across her skin. I kiss away each tear as it falls, tasting the saltiness.

“Let me take care of you,” I breathe against her ear. “That’s all I’ve ever wanted to do.”

She’s caught between resistance and the urge to relinquish her power. I hold her tighter, unwilling to let this moment end.

I freeze as Kira’s sobbing gradually quiets against my chest. Her breathing steadies, and I expect her to pull away, to remember who I am, what I’ve done. Instead, she lifts her face to mine, eyes glistening with tears.

I close the distance, needing the connection, the forest around us disappearing for me.

This kiss isn’t desperate or hungry like in the clearing. It’s soft, questioning, almost innocent—a stark contradiction to the woman who screamed my name in release just minutes ago.

“I don’t understand,” she murmurs against my mouth.

Neither do I. This tenderness wasn’t factored into my calculations. The game I constructed for us didn’t include this variable—her seeking comfort from her captor, me melting under her touch. I’ve mapped every square inch of these woods, every possible escape route, every contingency. But I never plotted this course.

Her hand slides behind my neck, pulling me closer as she deepens the kiss. My synapses fire warnings—red flags and alerts—but for once, I silence them. Let the protocol fail. Let the carefully constructed walls crumble.

I cradle her face between my palms, thumbs brushing tears from her cheeks. Our lips move together in a rhythm unlike the frenzied pace we set before. This is discovery, not conquest.

“Ryker,” she breathes my name.

A lump forms in my throat. No one has ever said my name that way—like it’s worth saying, like I’m worth knowing. The databases, surveillance

feeds, and lines of code that have defined my existence fade against this singular moment of connection.

I press my forehead to hers, our breaths mingling. “This isn’t part of the plan,” I admit as confusion sets in, the truth torn from somewhere deep inside me.

Her fingers thread through my hair. “Good.” is all she can manage as she releases a shuddering breath.

I pull back slightly, Kira’s warmth still pressed against me as my mind races to recalculate. Tenderness wasn’t part of the algorithm—it wasn’t part of any scenario I designed. Something unscripted is happening between us that terrifies and exhilarates me simultaneously.

“Do you want to continue the game?” The question falls from my lips before I can stop it.

I’ve never intended to give her a choice. Not once in all my planning did I consider offering her an out. The rooms, the levels, the progression—all designed with absolute dominion in mind. This question undermines everything I’ve built, everything I am.

Kira’s eyes search mine, probing depths I’ve never allowed anyone to explore. I resist the urge to look away, to shield myself from her scrutiny. Her gaze strips away layers I’ve spent years constructing.

“Yes,” she whispers, her voice stronger than I expect. “I want to continue.”

My breath catches.

“Despite your fucked up methods.” She traces my jaw with her fingertip, hesitating. “This game is a fantasy come true.”

Her admission sparks satisfaction. This is what I wanted—her acknowledging the seamlessness of my design and the rightness of our connection. But her next words throw me off balance again.

“Except...” she hesitates, “you’re not wearing the mask.”

The Ghost mask. My alter ego. The persona she first connected with.

She doesn’t just want the game—she wants the fantasy intact. The line between captor and lover, between reality and role-play, blurs further in my mind.

I reach into my pocket where I’ve kept the mask, always prepared. The familiar texture grounds me as I pull it out. Kira’s eyes widen, a flash of desire unmistakable in their depths.

I slide the mask over my face, becoming Ghost once more. The transformation is immediate—her breathing quickens, her pupils dilate.

“You can have another twenty-minute head start,” I say, my voice deeper behind the mask.

Kira’s fingers find the edge of my mask, hesitating momentarily. Her eyes lock with mine through the eyeholes, searching for permission or reassurance. I remain still, giving her this small measure of control. She lifts the mask enough to expose my lips, the cool forest air kissing my skin before she does.

This isn’t the tentative kiss from moments ago—this is a declaration. Her lips move against mine with newfound confidence, her tongue teasing the seam of my mouth before slipping inside. I taste her curiosity and defiance—all tangled together in a cocktail more intoxicating than any drug.

My hands find her waist, pulling her closer as she deepens the kiss. She bites my lower lip, reminding me she’s not just prey in this game. The slight pain sends a blaze of pleasure down my spine. God, she’s outstanding. My perfect match. My fingers dig into her hips, wanting to hold her here forever.

But she pulls away, her eyes hooded and dark with desire. The mask falls back into place as she steps backward, creating distance between us. Her chest rises and falls with quickened breath, her lips swollen from our kiss.

“Twenty minutes,” she whispers, turning from me and walking, not running, into the trees.

I’m mesmerized by the sway of her hips and her stride’s confidence. She glances back once, a half-smile playing at the corner of her mouth before disappearing into the forest’s green shadows.

My watch beeps. The countdown begins.

My blood rushes hot through my veins as I imagine finding her again, claiming her, teaching her the next level of our game. She’s learning faster than I anticipated, adapting to each challenge with a natural grace that surprises and delights me.

Everything is falling into place. Better than my simulations predicted. Better than my most elaborate fantasies.

2 2

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KIRA

I

I lose track of time in this forest of feelings. How long has it been since Ryker took me from the convention center? I lean against a tree, catching my breath.

The strangest part isn't the kidnapping, the twisted games, or even the way my body responds to his touch. It's how familiar he feels. All those nights gaming with Rogue, our voices tangled in the darkness while our characters fought side by side. The way he anticipated my moves before I made them. The way he always knew exactly what I needed in the game.

That wasn't just gaming chemistry. That was him learning me.

My skin tingles where his fingers were earlier. I hate that I crave his touch now. I hate that I feel empty when he releases me from his grasp. Lost.

"You're insane," I whisper, sliding down against the rough bark. "Stockholm syndrome. That's all this is."

Something deeper contradicts that easy explanation. The connection we had as MistressOfMischief and Rogue wasn't fabricated. The hours spent talking through headsets, laughing until sunrise, and sharing secrets in the safety of anonymity were real. But in there, I was safe.

I've known him for years, really. Just not like this.

A twig snaps nearby, and my pulse quickens, not with fear but anticipation. My hands shake as I realize I'm excited for him to find me again. Excited for whatever comes next. I should be terrified.

When did the game become a game I wanted to play? When did his voice become the one I listen to in the silence?

His mask can't hide those blue eyes I've come to recognize, from my time in captivity and countless streams and videos I've watched of GhostDaddy. Two separate men I've fantasized about, all folded into one dangerous reality.

And God help me, I'm falling for him.

I don't want to make this too easy for him.

Despite our twisted connection, I refuse to just roll over for Ryker. If he wants to play games, fine—I'll play too. And I'm damn good at games.

Rising from my spot against the tree, I scan the forest floor. The ground here is covered in leaves that will crunch under his footsteps. An advantage for me. I've spent hours learning Rogue's gameplay—I know his patterns now. He flanks. Always tries to come at his target from unexpected angles.

The tree beside me has low branches.

I grab the lowest one, testing its strength before pulling myself up. My muscles strain as I climb higher, finding a sturdy perch about fifteen feet up where branches create a natural seat. The leaves provide decent cover while giving me visibility in all directions.

From here, I can see much of the forest floor. My breath catches when I spot him—a dark shadow moving between trees about fifty yards away with predatory grace. Ryker hunts like he games: methodical, patient, calculating.

He's searching the ground for footprints, touching tree trunks where I might have rested. His mask glints in patches of sunlight filtering through the canopy. I press myself against the trunk, making myself smaller.

My heart pounds so loudly I fear he'll hear it. Seeing him hunt me and knowing I have the upper hand for once is intoxicating.

I could call out, end this chase now. Part of me wants to.

Instead, I bite my lip and remain silent. Ryker circles closer to my tree. He hasn't looked up yet.

My fingers grip the branch tighter as he approaches. What will I do when he passes beneath me?

I hold my breath as Ryker stalks directly beneath my hiding spot. My muscles lock tight, every instinct screaming to stay still. Fifteen feet up in this tree, I should be invisible to him. Should be.

Suddenly, Ryker stops. His head tilts slightly, like a predator catching a scent. He runs his gloved hand along the bark of my tree, caressing it almost lovingly.

“Clever girl,” he murmurs, so softly I almost miss it.
Ice floods my veins. He knows.

He’s circling the tree now, never looking up, continuing his bizarre performance of searching. At the same time, his fingers paint invisible patterns on the trunk. It’s like he’s touching me by proxy, and my skin prickles in response.

“You always did prefer higher ground in our games, Mischief.” His voice carries just enough for me to hear it. “Taking the sniper position.”

The use of his nickname for me, which he’d said through our headsets during late-night gaming sessions, makes my stomach flip. How many of our gaming strategies is he pulling from now? How much of our virtual connection is he weaponizing against me?

Ryker leans his back against my tree, still not looking up.

“I wonder,” he says casually, tapping a rhythm against the tree with his knuckles, “if you’re comfortable up there. If your muscles are starting to cramp yet. If you’re weighing whether to stay silent or to surprise me.”

A small branch beneath my foot cracks slightly as I shift my weight.

“The thing about trees, Kira...” He pauses, finally tilting his head back, eyes searching upward through the branches. Our gazes lock. “They make escaping much harder than hiding.”

His eyes linger on mine through the branches, and my breath catches. That familiar thrill—half fear, half excitement—courses through me.

“Caught you,” he calls up, voice rich with satisfaction.

“You haven’t caught me yet.” My voice exudes more confidence than I feel.

Ryker chuckles, the sound rumbling through the forest. “I know exactly where you are. I’d say that counts.” He settles at the base of my tree, legs stretched out, looking completely at ease. “I can wait. Time is on my side, Mischief.”

Damn him. He’s right, and we both know it. Another game where he’s three steps ahead. My muscles already protest from holding this position, and the branch beneath me digs uncomfortably into my thighs.

“What happens when I come down?” I keep my voice steady.

“You already know the answer to that.” He doesn’t look up, just pulls something from his pocket—a knife that glints in the fading light. He begins whittling a stick, completely unhurried.

Minutes stretch into hours. The sun sinks lower, painting the forest in amber and shadow. My legs cramp painfully. My fingers, stiff from gripping the branch, struggle to maintain their hold. Thirst scratches at my throat.

Ryker hasn't moved, hasn't spoken. Just sits there, carving his stick, occasionally glancing at his watch. Patient. Calculating. Waiting for gravity and exhaustion to deliver me to him.

The worst part? A part of me wants to drop into his arms.

Darkness creeps through the trees. I can barely make out Ryker's form below now. His head lolls slightly against the trunk. Is he... sleeping?

This might be my only chance.

Carefully, I shift my weight. My muscles scream in protest as I maneuver to a lower branch, then another. Each movement feels thunderous in the quiet forest. A small shower of bark and leaves rains down, but Ryker doesn't stir.

The final branch hangs six feet above the ground. I hang from my arms before letting go. My feet hit the earth with a soft thud.

Ryker's form doesn't move. I squint, taking a hesitant step closer.

He's gone. The jacket and hat I mistook for him in the darkness lie arranged against the tree trunk.

Before I can take another step, strong hands grab me from behind. My heart stops, then races wildly as fingers wrap around the back of my neck, yanking me around.

Ryker.

I gasp, the sound sharp in the quiet forest as I come face to face with him. His eyes gleam in the darkness, feral and hungry. How did he move so silently? How did I not sense him?

"Did you really think I'd fall for that?" His voice is rough.

His body presses against mine, hard and unyielding. I'm trapped between Ryker and the tree, the bark rough against my back even through the thin robe. I can feel every inch of him, the heat radiating through his clothes.

"I could hear your breathing," he whispers, his breath hot against my ear. "Could smell your fear... and your fucking desperation."

He yanks my robe open in one swift motion, the fabric parting easily. Cool night air rushes across my exposed skin, raising goosebumps

everywhere it touches. I should feel shame, should cover myself, but his gaze holds me still.

His hands grip my waist, fingers digging into my flesh as he lifts me effortlessly against the tree. My back scrapes against the bark, but the pain only heightens everything I feel. My legs part instinctively as he positions himself between them, pinning me in place.

“I’ve been dying for this,” he growls, his forehead pressing against mine. “Every second you were up in that tree was torture.”

His breathing is ragged, matching my own. One of his hands slides up to cup my face, the gesture almost tender compared to the need in his eyes.

The sound of his zipper cuts through the night air. My body trembles with anticipation as his hands grip my thighs, spreading them wider. There’s no hesitation, no gentle easing—just the blunt pressure of him positioning himself against me before he thrusts forward in one powerful motion.

I cry out, the sound echoing through the empty forest. My back scrapes against the rough bark as he fills me completely, stretching me in ways I’ve only fantasized about.

“Open your eyes,” he commands.

I force my eyes open, meeting his gaze through the eyeholes of that mask. Behind it, his eyes burn with an intensity that steals my breath—wild, possessive, ravenous. The mask keeps our faces apart, prevents our lips from meeting, and makes everything more intense.

His hips slam against me in a punishing rhythm. There’s nothing meticulous about this—none of the measured movements I’ve come to expect from him. This is Ryker coming undone. This is him losing himself completely.

My nails dig into his shoulders as he pounds into me against the tree. Each thrust forces small gasps from my throat. The forest spins around us, but all I can focus on is the fire building inside me, the delicious friction of his cock, the way his fingers bruise my skin.

“You feel that?” Ryker growls against my ear, his voice ragged and desperate. “This is what you’ve been doing to me for years—every fucking headshot, every victory dance, every goddamn laugh through my headset.”

My head falls back against the tree as another moan escapes me. “God—Ryker—I never knew—”

“But you wanted it,” he pants, adjusting his angle until I scream. “Tell me you wanted this too. That it wasn’t just me going crazy.”

I can't lie—not with him buried inside me, not with my body betraying every secret I've ever kept. "Yes," I gasp. "I used to—fuck—I'd touch myself after our gaming sessions. Thinking about your voice. Wondering."

His rhythm falters. "Goddammit, Mischief. If I'd known—"

"What?" I challenge, finding my voice despite the pleasure threatening to overwhelm me. "You'd have kidnapped me sooner?"

He slams into me harder, making me see stars. "I'd have made you mine two years ago."

"I'm not yours," I pant, even as my body clenches around him. "This doesn't make me yours."

Ryker laughs, the sound vibrating through me. "Your mouth says no while your cunt says yes. Which should I believe?"

His hands grip my hips tighter as he drives into me, my back scraping against the tree bark with each thrust. I want to hate this, but every moan that escapes my lips is impossible to stop.

"Fuck—you feel so good wrapped around me," he growls, voice strained and gritty. "Tell me nobody's ever made you feel like this."

I bite my lip, refusing to give him the satisfaction, but he slows his pace tortuously until I'm whimpering.

"If you don't fucking tell me that nobody has made you feel like this, I'll find the bastard who did and gut him," he threatens.

"Nobody," I gasp as he rewards me with a deep thrust. "Nobody's ever—Jesus Christ—filled me like you do."

"That's because nobody knows what you need like I do."

"You don't know me," I challenge, even as my nails dig crescents into his shoulders.

"I know exactly when to touch you," his fingers slide between us, circling my clit with maddening precision. "Exactly how to make you fall apart."

My head falls back against the tree. "That's—that's just biology. It's the human body's reflex to stimuli."

"Biology?" Ryker laughs, the vibration rumbling through his chest into mine. "This isn't a fucking science experiment, Mischief. This is what happens when someone knows you."

"Don't call me that," I whisper, the nickname cutting deeper than it should. "Not here. Not like this."

His pace slows suddenly, his eyes finding mine through his mask. “Why? Because it reminds you that this isn’t just about bodies? That I knew you before I ever touched you?”

“Shut up,” I hiss, rolling my hips against him. “Just fuck me and stop trying to get in my head.”

“Too late,” he drives into me harder, making me moan. “I’ve been in your head for years. And now I’m under your skin, too.”

The worst part is, he’s right. But even that doesn’t justify any of this.

His thrusts become more erratic, more desperate. The mask he wears can’t hide the wild look in his eyes— how he takes and demands unrestrained.

“Let go,” he growls against my ear. “Give it to me, Kira.”

My body responds to his command like it’s been programmed to obey. The tension that’s been building explodes, sending shockwaves through every nerve ending. I cry out, the sound echoing through the darkened forest as my body tightens around him.

“Fuck—yes—” Ryker groans, burying himself deep inside me one final time. I feel the pulsing of his release, his body shuddering against mine as he comes. We stay frozen together, our ragged breathing the only sound at night.

Slowly, he eases me down, my legs trembling so badly I nearly collapse. Without a word, he lifts me into his arms. My head falls against his chest, where I can hear his heart beneath my ear.

As he carries me through the darkening forest, I float in a haze of conflicting emotions. How can something so wrong feel so intensely right? How can I hate what he’s done to me but crave his touch? The lines between captor and lover blur with each step he takes. My mind roils with contradictions.

Ryker’s arms tighten around me as we approach a small cabin with floor-to-ceiling windows at the front. Inside, there’s a simple bed with clean linens and a small fireplace already glowing with warmth.

He lays me gently on the bed, then strips his clothes off.

As he stands before me, I see Ryker—truly see him—for the first time. The mask is gone, his clothes discarded, and what’s revealed steals my breath.

His body is a masterpiece of power and precision. Broad shoulders taper to a narrow waist, every muscle defined with the sharp clarity of someone

who has spent years refining his form. The firelight plays across his skin, highlighting ridges in his abdomen, the cut of his hip bones, and the thick cords of muscle in his thighs. This isn't just gym-built strength—this is a body shaped through obsession.

But it's the ink that truly captivates me. Tattoos cover his arms and chest in intricate patterns—gaming icons, complex code sequences, and darker symbols I don't recognize swirl across his skin like a roadmap of his mind. Some look professional, while others have the raw quality of self-infliction.

My eyes are drawn to the centerpiece—a Ghost mask tattooed over his heart—the one from his GhostDaddy videos. The lines are crisp, the shading is on point, and the placement makes my stomach clench.

"When did you get that?" I whisper, unable to look away from the ghost staring back at me.

"A week after I first saw you stream," he answers hesitantly. "The first time I heard you talk about what Ghost meant to you."

I should be terrified by this admission—this permanent mark of his obsession. Instead, I feel a twisted sense of appreciation. No one has ever wanted me enough to carve my passion into their skin. No one has ever seen me so completely.

My fingers reach out before I can stop them, tracing the mask's outline on his chest. His skin is hot beneath my touch. It stares back at me—a promise, a threat, a proclamation.

He lies down and stretches out beside me, pulling me against him. His mask is gone now, and I can see the exhaustion in his features, the vulnerability that wasn't there before.

"Level five is complete," he murmurs, brushing hair from my face with surprising tenderness. "Rest now. Sleep. We're done for tonight."

I should fight him, should demand answers or freedom. Instead, I feel my eyelids growing heavy as his warmth surrounds me.

"What happens tomorrow?" I whisper, my voice barely audible.

"Tomorrow will come soon enough. Just sleep."

Despite everything—the kidnapping, the games, the twisted levels—I find my body relaxing into his. His arms around me feel like a sanctuary. The steady rhythm of his heartbeat under my ear lulls me toward sleep, each thump a hypnotic drum drowning out the screaming contradictions in my mind. I should be plotting escape, not melting into his warmth. I should be terrified, not comforted. His fingers draw lazy patterns across my skin,

and truth I'm not ready to face in daylight rears its ugly head: here, wrapped in the arms of my captor, is the safest I've felt in years.

No expectations. No pretending. This strange, broken connection between two people who recognize each other on a soul level that the rest of the world couldn't see. My eyelids grow heavy, thoughts blurring at the edges. As consciousness slips away, one final thought drifts through my mind—what does it say about me that the arms holding me prisoner are the same ones setting me free?

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RYKER

I hold her as she sleeps, her weight against me, both foreign and familiar. Kira's breathing settles into a rhythm I memorize, another piece of her that belongs to me now.

The night stretches around us. I track time precisely—four hours and seventeen minutes she's been asleep in my arms. Her hair catches the moonlight filtering through the window, and I allow myself to touch it, winding strands around my fingers. This wasn't planned. These quiet moments weren't in my simulations.

She mumbles unintelligibly in her sleep, nestling closer. The woods around the cabin are alive with night sounds—rustling leaves, distant animal calls, the soft hum of insects. I catalog each noise methodically, ever vigilant. No one will find us here. This place exists in no records, maps, or even county tax rolls.

My muscles should ache from holding the same position for hours, but I barely notice. I've trained my body to endure far worse. What I can't rationalize is the tightness in my chest when she sighs against me. This... attachment wasn't part of the plan.

Dawn approaches. Pink-orange light bleeds through the trees. Time for Level 6.

I carefully slip from beneath her, replacing my body with my folded jacket. From my pocket, I retrieve the note I prepared before I captured her, though now I hesitate. The instructions seem harsh in the gentle morning light. Still, the game continues. Structure is necessary. True authority is essential.

I place the note beside her on a nightstand. Clean white paper against rustic wood.

My handwriting is precise:

Mischief,

Level 6 begins when you open your eyes.

The forest holds more than just the thrill of the hunt. Today, you'll discover what it means to be truly exposed. Find the stream that runs a quarter mile east of where you are. Strip. Bathe yourself in the cold water while I watch from somewhere you can't see.

Your body belongs to me now—every inch, every curve, every goosebump that forms when the water touches your skin. I want to see you vulnerable under the open sky, knowing my eyes are on you but not knowing from where.

After your bath, follow the red ribbons tied to the trees. Each one holds an instruction. Some will pleasure you, some will hurt, but all will remind you who owns you.

You have no choice but to obey. The forest
is mine. You are mine.

Don't disappoint me, Kira. I'm always
watching.

-R

P.S. The collar I've left beside this note is
waterproof. Put it on before you do anything
else. If you remove it before I say so, the
consequences will make our previous games
seem like gentle foreplay.

I stand over her sleeping form a moment longer before retreating
silently into the trees. She looks peaceful, unguarded. A part of me wants to
stay and be here when she wakes.

Instead, I follow the plan.

I move silently through the forest, putting distance between myself and
Kira. My phone vibrates in my pocket. I check the screen—Damien, my
COO. Irritation flickers through me, but I answer. The outside world rarely
intrudes here, but some matters require attention.

“Damien.” My voice is clipped, professional. A different person from
the one who just held Kira.

“Ryker, sorry to bother you during your... time off.” Damien’s voice
carries the careful tone of someone who knows not to ask questions. “We
have a situation with the Pentagon contract.”

I scan the tree line, calculating the time until Kira wakes. “Go on.”

“The security auditors found a backdoor in the surveillance package.
They’re threatening to pull the entire contract unless we explain.”

Of course they found it. I designed it specifically to be discovered—a sacrificial flaw hiding three deeper, undetectable ones.

“Tell them it was an oversight in code migration. Fire someone from the security team—Peters, preferably. He’s been stealing for months.” I’ve documented every transgression, stored neatly in encrypted files.

“Are you sure? Peters is one of our best—”

“Then offer him a contractor position at thirty percent higher pay through one of our shells. The Pentagon needs to believe we’re taking this seriously.”

“Got it.” Damien pauses. “The board’s asking questions about your absence. Two weeks is the longest you’ve ever been away without checking in at HQ.”

I feel a smile form. KentSec Systems—my billion-dollar creation built from the shadows of my darkest skills. A legitimate front for knowledge that would put me in prison if anyone knew its true scope.

“Tell them I’m finalizing the Nightshade protocol. They’ll stop asking.”

“Will you be back this week? The Chandler acquisition needs your signature.”

I glance in the direction where Kira sleeps. “Send the papers by courier to the usual address. I’ll handle it remotely.”

“Anything else you need from us?”

“No. Everything is proceeding exactly as planned.”

I end the call and slip the phone back into my pocket. Time to watch Kira wake up to Level 6.

I move through the forest with practiced silence, each step deliberate. The stream is a shallow, clear-running brook cutting through moss-covered stones. The morning light dapples through the canopy, creating lacey patterns on the water’s surface.

I find my observation point quickly—a natural blind created by fallen logs and thick undergrowth approximately forty-two yards southeast of the water. Close enough to see everything, far enough that she won’t detect my presence. I’ve analyzed the sight lines from every angle.

Settling into position, I check my watch, noting it’s six-seventeen a.m. The forest is waking up around me, birds beginning their morning calls. I wonder if Kira will notice the absent warmth of my body soon. I made sure to leave without disturbing her, but humans instinctively register the loss of physical contact, even in sleep.

The waiting doesn't bother me. I've spent countless hours in surveillance, learning every habit, every movement she makes.

Through my binoculars, I watch the cabin and wait.

My body still remembers the weight of her against me, the unexpected comfort of holding someone who isn't struggling to escape, and the steady rhythm of her breathing against my chest.

I shift position slightly, scanning the perimeter again. There is no movement except wildlife, and no sound except the natural symphony of the forest and the steady babble of the stream.

Come on, Mischief. Wake up. Feel the absence of me and open those eyes.

Level 6 will test her in different ways—not just her obedience but her willingness to be completely exposed, to be watched without knowing where I am, and to follow my instructions without my physical presence compelling her.

I settle deeper into my position, prepared to wait as long as necessary.

Movement catches my eye—Kira. I adjust my position, settling deeper into my hiding spot as I watch her through the binoculars. She looks disoriented, her hand reaching for the empty space where I had been. Her fingers find the note instead.

I observe her face as she reads—the subtle widening of her eyes, the unconscious bite of her lower lip. She picks up the collar, turning it over in her hands with an expression I can't fully decipher from this distance. Hesitation? Arousal? A combination of both?

She rises to her feet and slips on her boots and my jacket, stepping outside and scanning the forest around her. I remain still, even though she has no chance of spotting me. Her movements are cautious as she follows my instructions, heading east toward the stream. The morning light breaks through the trees, catching her hair, giving her an almost ethereal glow against the forest backdrop.

My breath catches as she reaches the stream and hesitates briefly before untying her robe. It falls open, revealing her naked body underneath. My cock hardens instantly as she lets the fabric slip from her shoulders completely, pooling at her feet.

She steps into the stream. I see goosebumps prickle her skin through the binoculars as she kneels in the shallow water. I adjust them, zooming in as

she cups water in her hands and pours it over her chest. Rivulets trickle paths down her breasts, over her nipples that harden from the cold.

My grip on the binoculars tightens as she begins to wash herself, hands sliding over her body with a thoroughness that suggests she knows exactly how I want her to perform. She turns slightly, giving me a profile view as she runs her hands down her sides, over her hips.

After bathing, she follows the first blue ribbon tied to a nearby tree. There's a small waterproof pouch attached. She opens it, reads the note inside, and bites her lip again.

I'd chosen her first task carefully— instructing her to kneel on a flat rock beside the stream, legs spread wide, and touch herself slowly while facing the eastern treeline. The position ensures I can see everything, every movement of her fingers, every expression on her face.

I grip the binoculars so hard that the metal digs into my palms. My breathing has become irregular—a tell I'd never allow in any other circumstance. Over two years I've watched her through lenses and screens, but this proximity changes everything.

The scent of the forest fades as I focus entirely on Kira. Her fingers move in slow circles between her thighs, following my written command precisely. Even from forty-two yards away, I can see her wetness on her thighs catching the morning light. My cock pulses painfully against my zipper. I shift position, seeking relief that doesn't come.

This wasn't part of the calculation. The sheer intensity of my need for Kira crawling through my veins wasn't factored into my equations.

I've maintained a grip on my urges through every surveillance session, every intrusion into her private moments. Clinical. Methodical. Premeditated. But now, with nothing but air between us, decades of discipline vanish. My muscles coil, ready to spring forward. To claim what's mine.

Three steps. That's all it would take to reveal my position. Seventeen seconds to reach her at a sprint.

I imagine the shock on her face as I emerge from the trees. Her eyes would widen before I press her back against the rock, still wet from the stream. How her gasp would feel against my mouth as I sink inside her.

My hand moves subconsciously toward my belt. I force it back to the binoculars.

No. The plan exists for a reason. Each level builds upon the last, conditioning her properly. Rushing now would undo my careful work.

But fuck—her moan carries through the trees, faint but unmistakable. My cock throbs in response, demanding satisfaction.

I close my eyes for precisely three seconds. Recalibrate. The plan matters. The sequence matters.

When I look again, she's arched her back, fingers moving faster.

Her orgasm shatters the solitude of the morning. My name—my fucking name—rips from her throat as she comes. I grip the binoculars so hard they might break, my breath sawing through clenched teeth. The sight of her—my collar around her throat, her body writhing on the rock, legs spread wide—burns itself into my brain with a precision no camera could capture.

Mine. Fucking mine.

Observing her through screens was clinical. This is... savage. Primal. Every muscle in my body coils with the urge to sprint through the forest and claim her. My cock throbs painfully against my zipper, demanding release.

I force myself to breathe. Three counts in. Three counts out. The plan. Remember the fucking plan.

She rises on shaky legs, her skin flushed pink from both her climax and the cool morning air. The collar encircles her throat like a brand. My pulse hammers in my ears as she moves downstream, following the blue ribbon path I laid out.

The way she moves—cautious yet determined—tells me she's adapting and learning the rules of our game. Her evolution is happening exactly as I estimated, perhaps even faster.

She reaches the second ribbon, fingers untying the waterproof pouch with an eagerness that makes me suppress a groan. Her body goes still when she pulls out the silicone plug and the small bottle of lube. I zoom in on her face—the widening of her eyes, the quick dart of her tongue across her lips. Not disgust. Not fear.

Curiosity.

She reads my note, and I know exactly what it says:

*Get on your hands and knees, facing west.
Prepare yourself and push this inside you. ↴*

*want to see you stretch around it. I want to
know you understand every part of you belongs
to me.*

My breath stalls as she obeys, positioning herself precisely as instructed. Her hands shake slightly as she applies the lube, reaching behind herself. I can't look away—can't fucking breathe—as she slowly, carefully works the plug inside.

The restraint I've maintained for decades frays like a cut rope. One thread left. Just one fucking thread.

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KIRA

T

he cool silicone feels alien in my trembling fingers. The plug isn't large—Ryker must have chosen it specifically for a beginner—but my inexperience makes it seem intimidating. My breath catches as I kneel on the forest floor, the scattered leaves crunching beneath me.

"You can do this," I whisper, knowing he's out there somewhere. The thought sends a fresh wave of heat between my thighs.

I've never put anything *there* before. The idea always intrigued me but remained firmly in fantasy territory, which I'd only admitted in level three when Ryker forced my darkest desires into the open. Now fantasy becomes reality as I apply the lubricant he provided, the slickness coating my fingers.

My body tenses at first contact, the cool gel against such intimate territory making me gasp. I close my eyes, trying to relax as I press the tip of the plug against my entrance. The pressure builds, unfamiliar yet thrilling.

"Oh god," I breathe, feeling my body resist, then gradually yield to the intrusion.

The stretch burns slightly, but underneath that is a fullness that sends unexpected sparks of pleasure through my core. I push further, my thighs quivering with effort and arousal.

When the widest part slips past the tight ring of muscle, I cry out—a sound that's half pain, half shocking pleasure. My body accepts the rest easily, the base coming to rest against my skin.

"Ryker," I moan, louder than intended. It echoes through the trees.

Somewhere out there, I know he's witnessing my obedience. The knowledge should horrify me, but instead sends a rush of wetness between my legs. I want to be good for him. Want to please him.

The plug shifts inside me as I straighten, sending jolts of unfamiliar pleasure up my spine. I've never felt so aware of my body, so completely consumed by sensation. Standing naked in the forest, filled and exposed, I've never been so vulnerable—or so aroused.

I stand shakily, adjusting to the foreign fullness inside me. Every tiny movement sends jolts of sensation through my body, making my breath catch. I've never felt anything like this—constant awareness and persistent pressure.

“Five hundred yards,” I whisper, remembering Ryker’s instructions.

I take a tentative step forward. The plug shifts slightly, causing me to gasp. Another step. Another ripple of pleasure-pain. Walking becomes an exercise in concentrated arousal—each footfall creates new sensations radiating outward from my core.

The uneven forest floor makes my journey a torturous series of unexpected movements. Roots force me to step higher, dips make me clench around the intrusion. My thighs grow slick with my own arousal as I move deeper into the woods.

“Fuck,” I hiss, stumbling over a fallen branch. The jolt makes the plug press deeper inside me, hitting a spot that sends stars across my vision.

I’m counting steps in my head—approximating distance—when I spot the marked tree Ryker described. Against its trunk rests a small waterproof bag, bright blue against the bark.

My fingers tremble as I retrieve it. I find an envelope and two silver clamps connected by a delicate chain. My nipples tighten involuntarily at the sight, already anticipating what the note will demand.

I unfold the paper, Ryker’s handwriting filling the page:

*Mischief,
Your body's honesty pleases me. Now show
me more. Place these clamps on your nipples.*

Adjust the tension to the point of pain, then back off slightly. Wear them as you continue following the markers.

Don't disappoint me.

-R

Heat floods my face as I examine the clamps. They're adjustable—small screws allow for precise adjustment of the pressure. I've never used anything like this before, but my body responds instantly, nipples hardening to tight peaks despite my nervousness.

I take a deep breath, the plug shifting inside me as my muscles tense.

I take the first clamp between my fingers, the metal cool against my flushed skin. With a shaky breath, I bring it to my left nipple, already hard from anticipation and the forest air. As I close it, pain shoots through me—sharp and immediate.

“Oh god!” I gasp, instinctively reaching to remove it.

But I stop myself. Ryker’s words echo in my mind.

Adjust the tension to the point of pain, then back off slightly.

I twist the small screw, easing the pressure until the initial shock transforms into a throbbing ache that somehow sends pulses of pleasure straight between my legs. The sensation mingles with the fullness of the plug, creating a symphony of conflicting signals that leave me dizzy.

My fingers tremble as I attach the second clamp, a whimper escaping my lips as it bites down. I adjust this one too, finding that edge between pain and pleasure.

The chain hanging between my breasts swings gently as I straighten, sending little tugs through my sensitive nipples. Each tiny pull triggers a cascade of sensations that travel directly to my core.

“Fuck,” I whisper, surprised by how intensely my body responds.

I follow the markers deeper into the forest, each step a lesson in newfound sensations. The plug shifts inside me, the clamps tug with every movement, and I realize with shock that the pain itself is turning me on. The

discomfort transforms into pleasure that makes my thighs slick and my breath short.

The distance seems endless, far longer than before. Seven hundred and fifty yards feels like miles as I navigate the uneven terrain, each jolt and stumble sending the chain swinging, tugging on my clamped nipples. The pain blurs into pleasure until I can't distinguish between them anymore.

By the time I spot the next marker, I'm panting, legs trembling not from exertion but from sustained arousal. A small waterproof case sits nestled at the base of a tree. My hands shake as I open it, revealing a sleek, curved device unlike anything I've owned. It's clearly designed to sit inside me, with one end curved to hit my g-spot and an external arm positioned to press against my clit. There's a small card beside it.

Remote-controlled. I'm watching.

I stare at the curved device in my palm, its sleek, intimidating silicone surface. My breath quickens as I realize what Ryker expects me to do. The forest seems to hold its breath around me as I hesitantly position the toy against my entrance.

"God," I whisper, sliding it inside.

The curved end finds my g-spot immediately, like it was designed specifically for my body. The external arm settles against my already swollen clit. The fullness of the anal plug combined with this new intrusion makes me gasp—I've never been so thoroughly filled.

For a moment, nothing happens. I adjust my stance, feeling vulnerable yet strangely powerful standing naked in the forest, adorned with Ryker's devices. I wonder if he can see—

The toy roars to life without warning, and vibrations tear through me at what I assume is maximum intensity.

"FUCK!" I scream, my knees buckling instantly.

The vibrations target my g-spot with merciless precision while the external arm buzzes against my clit. Combined with the plug still nestled in my ass, the sensation is too much—overwhelming, boundary-shattering.

The orgasm hits like lightning—no build-up, no warning—just pure, blinding pleasure erupting through my core. My legs give out completely, and I collapse onto the forest floor, fallen leaves cushioning my descent as my body shakes with pleasure.

"RYKER!" His name tears from my throat, a sound I barely recognize as my voice.

My back arches off the ground, thighs trembling violently as wave after wave crashes through me. I've never felt anything like this—pleasure so intense it borders on pain, obliterating thought and reason. My fingernails dig into the earth beneath me, searching for an anchor as I shatter.

My entire body shakes, muscles spasming as the vibrations continue relentlessly. Tears stream down my face—not from sadness but from the sheer overwhelming intensity of what my body is experiencing.

Through tear-blurred eyes, I scan the treeline.

The vibrator slows to a low, persistent hum, keeping me on the edge without allowing me to fall over. My legs shake as I force myself to stand, my whole body hypersensitive after that explosive orgasm. Every nerve ending screams for more.

“Please,” I whimper into the forest, knowing he can hear me. “I need you.”

But Ryker doesn’t appear. Instead, the toy inside me pulses once, twice—a reminder to continue following his instructions. I scan the trees until I spot a flash of red fabric tied around a distant trunk. My next destination.

Each step is torture—the plug shifting inside me, the clamps tugging at my nipples, the vibrator humming relentlessly against my most sensitive spots. I’m desperate for him to fill me, to replace these toys with himself. My body aches for the weight of him.

“Ryker,” I call out, my voice breaking. “Please.”

There was no response except the vibrator’s intensity increasing briefly before dropping back to its maddening low setting. This is a warning.

When I reach the marked tree, I find another waterproof package. My fingers tremble as I open it, revealing a small bottle and another note. The handwriting is less neat than before, the edges of letters jagged with urgency.

*Mischief,
Get on your knees. Pour this over your
breasts and face. Rub it in while saying these
words:*

"I am yours to mark, use, and fill. Every hole belongs to you."

Say it out loud until I believe you.

-R

My cheeks burn hot with humiliation and arousal. The bottle contains a thick, white substance—cum. I drop to my knees, the forest floor rough against my skin.

I pour it over my breasts, gasping as it drips cold over my clamped nipples and down my stomach. I smear it across my skin, up to my face as instructed, coating my lips and cheeks in the sticky substance.

"I'm yours to mark," I begin, voice shaking. "Yours to use, yours to fill. Every hole belongs to you."

I repeat the words, each repetition stronger than the last, shame and desire tangling inside me until I can't distinguish between them.

"I am yours to mark, yours to use, yours to—"

Footsteps crash through the underbrush. Before I can react, strong hands grab me, yanking me up against a hard chest. Ryker's mouth crashes down on mine, kissing me frantically, desperately, tasting the substance on my lips.

Ryker breaks our kiss, his eyes wild with a hunger I've never seen before. My body, still humming from the vibrator within me, responds instantly to his touch.

"My pretty little slut," he growls, ripping the vibrator from inside me. I cry out at the sudden emptiness. "Look at you, covered in my cum, begging for more like the filthy whore you are."

His words should offend me, but they send lightning through my veins instead. He shoves me against the nearest tree, bark scraping my back as he yanks my legs around his waist.

"You followed every instruction," he praises, voice softening momentarily before he yanks the chain connecting my nipple clamps. I scream as pain shoots through me, somehow intensifying the pleasure pooling between my legs. "Such a good girl for me."

The sound of his zipper is the only warning I get before he thrusts inside me with brutal force. The plug still fills my ass, creating an overwhelming fullness that tears a sob from my throat.

"Fuck! Ryker, please!"

"Please what?" He pounds into me, each thrust jarring the plug, sending dual sensations of pleasure spiraling through me. "Please stop? Please more? Tell me what my dirty little angel needs."

"More! God, more!"

His hand tangles in my hair, yanking my head back to expose my throat. "You're fucking exquisite," he growls against my skin. "Built for me. Made to take my cock."

Each thrust feels like he's claiming territory inside me, mapping and marking every inch. The dual penetration makes me dizzy with an overwhelming sensation.

"Your cunt feels like heaven," he groans. "So tight, so wet for me."

"Fuck," I gasp as the next thrust makes my vision blur. "It's yours," I breathe.

Ryker groans. "Tell me that again," he demands.

"I'm yours! All yours!"

His pace becomes punishing. "That's right. My perfect little whore. My beautiful dirty girl. Taking everything I give you."

His hands grip my hips with bruising force as he slams into me against the tree. The bark scrapes my back raw, but I barely notice through the haze of pleasure and pain swirling together like a storm inside me.

Ryker's mouth descends to my neck, and I feel his teeth sink into my flesh—not gently, not playfully, but with the desperate hunger of a man possessed.

"Fuck!" I cry out as he bites down harder, sucking my skin between his teeth.

"Mine," he growls against my throat, moving to another spot—my shoulder, my collarbone, the sensitive juncture where neck meets shoulder.

Each bite sends shockwaves straight to my core, pain transforming into pleasure so intense I can barely breathe. He's marking me everywhere, leaving evidence of his possession across my skin like a map.

"Everyone will see," he pants between bites. "Everyone will know who you belong to."

His thrusts become erratic, powerful. The plug shifts with every impact, creating a fullness that's almost too much to bear. The dual sensation pushes me higher, my orgasm building like a tsunami.

"I'm going to—oh god—Ryker, I'm—"

"Come," he commands against my ear, biting down on my lobe. "Come on my cock like the little slut you are."

My pussy clamps down around him, walls clenching and spasming as pleasure unlike anything I've ever known tears through me. I scream his name, my voice echoing through the trees as my vision blurs and everything I am shatters for a moment.

Before I can recover, he pulls out and forces me onto my hands and knees. My palms press into fallen leaves and soft earth as he positions himself behind me.

"Beautiful," he growls, spreading my cheeks to examine the plug still nestled inside me. He taps it lightly, sending jolts through my oversensitive body.

"Please," I whimper, unsure what I'm begging for.

He slams back into me, harder than before, his angle deeper from this position. One hand grips my hip while the other plays with the plug's base, rotating it slightly, pushing it deeper, then pulling it almost out before letting it slide back in.

"Look at you taking both," he says, voice filled with dark wonder. "Such a greedy little slut."

The double penetration sends shock waves through my system. I'm overwhelmed, my mind splintering as sensation bombards me from every direction. Ryker's cock pounds relentlessly into my pussy while the plug fills my ass, creating a fullness that steals my breath.

"Oh god—fuck—I can't—" My words dissolve into incoherent sounds as another orgasm crashes through me, more intense than the last. My arms give out and my face presses into the forest floor, ass still raised, completely at his mercy.

"That's it. Give me another," Ryker growls, fingers digging into my hips. "I'm going to fuck so many orgasms out of this tight little cunt."

He reaches around, finding my clit with unerring precision. The moment his fingers make contact, I'm coming again, walls clenching violently around him.

“RYKER!” I scream, tears streaming down my face from the intensity. “I can’t take any more—please—”

“You’ll take what I give you,” he snarls, slapping my ass hard enough to leave a handprint. “Your body belongs to me now. Every. Fucking. Inch.”

Each word punctuated with a brutal thrust has me spiraling into yet another climax. I’m delirious, drowning in sensation, unable to tell where one orgasm ends and another begins.

“I’m going to fill this tight cunt,” he growls, pace becoming erratic. “Going to breed you deep. Make you take every drop.”

“Yes—please—fill me,” I sob, barely conscious of what I’m saying anymore.

“Whose pussy is this?” he demands, grinding deep.

“Yours! Yours!”

“That’s right,” he groans. “Taking my cum like you were made for it. No protection. Nothing between us.”

His rhythm falters as he drives impossibly deeper. “Fuck—taking it all—”

I feel the hot pulse of him emptying inside me, flooding me with warmth as he groans my name. The sensation triggers one final, shattering orgasm that breaks a fundamental part of me.

I collapse entirely, boneless and spent, consciousness flickering at the edges. I’m vaguely aware of him withdrawing, of gentle hands turning me over, of being lifted against a solid chest.

“My good girl,” Ryker murmurs, cradling me as my eyelids grow impossibly heavy. “Rest now. You’ve earned it.”

His heartbeat thuds steadily beneath my ear, a rhythm that shouldn’t comfort me but somehow does. What the hell is happening to me?

Two weeks ago, I was a normal woman obsessed with video games and TikTok, and now I’m naked in a forest, covered in marks and fluids, cradled in the arms of my kidnapper. And the worst part? I don’t want him to let go.

The way his arms envelop me completely, like he’s built a fortress around my body, makes me feel safer than I’ve ever felt—which is absolutely fucking insane considering he’s the danger. He’s the one who took me, who’s holding me captive, who’s systematically breaking down every wall I’ve built.

Yet here I am, nuzzling closer, craving the heat of his skin against mine, the possessive way his hand splays across my back. I should be fighting, screaming, running. Instead, I'm melting into him, memorizing the scent of his skin, the texture of the scar that runs along his collarbone, the way his breath hitches when I press my lips against his chest.

This isn't Stockholm Syndrome—it's deeper, like he's awakened a darkness that was always inside me, waiting. And that terrifies me more than the restraints, the pain, or even the pleasure. Because if this was always inside me, what does that make me?

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RYKER

I

'm losing my grip on reality.

The realization hits me hard as I carry Kira's sleeping form back to the compound from the forest. Her body is limp against mine, exhausted from our activities. My schedule says we should continue to Level Seven tomorrow, but looking at her skin marked with evidence of my possession, breathing shallow with fatigue—something unexpected twists in my chest.

I glance down at her face, noticing for the first time how pale she's become. Her lips have a bluish tint, and her skin feels clammy against mine. This isn't just exhaustion—this is physical shock setting in. Her body is shutting down from the stress, the fear, and the extreme conditions I've put her through.

A flash of panic cuts through me, unfamiliar and unwelcome. This wasn't in my calculations. She wasn't supposed to break like this, not physically. I wanted to break her will, not her body.

She wasn't supposed to shatter like this. It's not just her body, it's her soul. I wanted to reform her into my worshipped version of her. She's lost all fight, the spark that was her. And with that, the mental toll has manifested physically. I don't know how to fix her. I didn't account for negative variables enough.

"Kira?" I say her name, but she doesn't respond, and her breathing becomes shallower.

We're going back early. One full day ahead of schedule.

This isn't part of the plan—the plan I spent two years calculating, the plan that accounted for every variable except the one I'm experiencing now: genuine concern for her well-being.

“Time to go home,” I whisper against her hair as I carry her through the forest. She barely stirs, utterly spent.

The next level was supposed to push her further into submission, test her limits again. Instead, I’m... what? Taking care of her?

My fingers tighten on her. This isn’t me. And yet, it is.

Back at the compound, I carry her straight to my suite, not the replica of her bedroom where she usually stays. This is another deviation. My personal space was never meant to be shared with her this early.

I run the bath, testing the water temperature with scientific precision. It’s not too hot, not too cool—perfect, like everything I do—except my emotions lately, which are anything but perfect.

I ease her into the water, and her eyes flutter in momentary confusion.

“Shh,” I say, rolling up my sleeves. “You’ve been so good. You deserve this.”

I take a soft cloth, soap it carefully, and wash her body. As the dirt and grime rinse away, the true extent of what I’ve done to her becomes impossible to ignore. Her back is a canvas of angry red abrasions where the tree bark scraped her raw. Deep purple bruises bloom across her hips and thighs, where my fingers dug in too hard. Her knees are torn and crusted with dried blood from being repeatedly forced onto the forest floor. Her palms bear crescent-shaped cuts where her nails dug into them during moments of intense pleasure or pain.

Each stroke of the cloth is deliberate, thorough, caring—yet I hesitate over the worst injuries. I’m cleaning away the forest, the sweat, the evidence of our activities—but not my claim on her. Never that. The marks I’ve left run deeper than skin, and seeing them mapped across her body fills me with a confusing mixture of pride and possibly regret.

“Level Seven?” she murmurs, only half coherent.

“Postponed,” I reply, the word foreign on my tongue. I don’t postpone. I execute. I achieve. I reign.

But not today. Today, I’m washing her hair, massaging her scalp, and she melts under my touch for reasons that have nothing to do with sexual pleasure or psychological manipulation.

“Why?” she asks.

Because I’m breaking my own rules. Because you’re changing me.

“You need to rest,” I tell her, continuing to wash her body with methodical care. “You’ve been so good. Better than I could have predicted.”

Kira looks up at me, her eyes heavy-lidded but more lucid than before. The water swirls around her marked skin, steam rising between us like a veil. There's been a change between us. I can feel it in the air, in how she's looking at me, not with fear or defiance, but with something dangerously close to affection.

"Get in with me," she whispers, touching my forearm. "Please. I just... I need you to hold me."

I freeze, the washcloth dripping onto the tile floor. This wasn't in my calculations. Physical intimacy with purpose, yes. Claiming her body, demonstrating dominance—all part of the plan. But this? This naked request for simple comfort?

"The next level doesn't start until—"

"Fuck the levels," she interrupts, her voice soft but firm. "Just for a little while. Just be here with me."

I'm torn. The game I've meticulously designed is unraveling, threads of my control slipping through my fingers like water. But perhaps it was never truly a game—it was always heading toward this moment.

My obsession with Kira has always bordered on madness—something I refused to acknowledge even to myself. The endless hours spent learning her, wanting to possess every part of her—it was never just about possessing her.

I care for her. The realization doesn't shock me as it should. It settles into place like a key finding its lock. Deep down, I have cared for her in an obsessive, possessive way since I first saw her dancing in her room, unaware of my gaze, completely herself.

"Ryker?" Her voice pulls me back.

I begin unbuttoning my shirt, a decision made without conscious thought. My body moves of its own accord, drawn to her by forces stronger than my desire to dominate.

"Yes," I say simply. "I'll hold you."

I strip methodically, folding each garment precisely before setting them on the counter.

The water embraces me as I slide in behind her, its heat nothing compared to the warmth of her body as she settles against my chest. I adjust my position, creating a cradle for her smaller frame. Her head rests just beneath my chin, wet hair tickling my throat.

"Is this what you wanted?" I ask.

She nods, the movement vibrating through my chest. “Thank you.”

Two simple words that shouldn’t affect me. I’ve heard gratitude from employees, targets, and people I’ve manipulated. This is different. She means it.

My body responds instantly to her naked form pressed against me, cock hardening against the small of her back. I feel her tense slightly as she notices, and I consider taking what I want, what my body demands.

“Ignore it,” I tell her, surprising myself. “That’s not what this is about.”

Her muscles relax gradually as I wrap my arms around her, careful of the bruises forming where my fingers gripped her too tightly in the forest. Evidence of my loss of control. I should be disturbed by this failure, but I trace one mark gently with my thumb, concerned.

The water laps against our skin as she shifts, settling comfortably against me. Steam rises around us, clouding the bathroom mirror and obscuring our reflection. Perhaps that’s fitting—I barely recognize myself in these moments.

“Just breathe,” I instruct, though whether I’m talking to her or myself remains unclear.

Her breathing synchronizes with mine, deep and even. I hold her, nothing more. No agenda. No next level. No manipulation. Just this—her body against mine, vulnerable and trusting despite everything. My erection persists, but I make no move to act on it.

For the first time, I’m putting someone else’s needs before my desires.

I hold Kira in the cooling water, her back pressed against my chest, neither of us speaking for several minutes. The intimacy is unfamiliar territory—this unscripted moment beyond my careful planning. I need to understand more, to recalibrate.

“Tell me about your life,” I say, quiet in the steam-filled bathroom.

Kira’s laugh vibrates against my chest, short and incredulous. “Seriously? You know everything about me already, remember? You’ve been in my apartment, computer, and probably my bank accounts.”

“I do,” I admit, my arms tightening slightly around her. “But I want to hear it from you. The things surveillance can’t capture.”

She’s silent for so long that I think she won’t answer. When she finally speaks, her voice carries a different weight.

“On paper, I had the best childhood. Nice neighborhood, good school, mom who decorated for every holiday.” She shifts against me,

uncomfortable with the memories. “The records don’t show my mother’s brother—my ‘uncle’ Rob.”

My body tenses at her tone, but I remain silent, letting her continue.

“When I was eleven, he started...” her voice falters. “He would come into my room when he was babysitting. Said it was our special game.”

My vision darkens at the edges, but I force myself to remain still, not to frighten her with my rage.

“I told my mom,” she continues, voice hollow. “She slapped me. Told me I was lying, that I shouldn’t say such horrible things about family. That I’d ruin his life with stories like that.”

Her breath hitches, and I can feel her trembling against me. “Nobody ever knew. I just retreated into gaming. Into fantasy worlds where I could be powerful, where I could be in control of my choices—have some semblance of power, safety even; somewhere I could be in charge of what happened to me.”

A growl builds in my chest, escaping before I can contain it. “I didn’t know that,” I say, my voice dangerously low. “You never searched for it. Never wrote about it. It wasn’t in any of your files.”

“Not everything lives in the digital world, Ryker.”

My arms tighten around her protectively, possessively. “What’s his name? His full name.”

Kira stiffens against me, her body suddenly rigid in the cooling bathwater. “Why do you want to know that? Why does it even matter?”

“Because I won’t rest until he’s brought to justice,” I say with absolute certainty. “Men like that don’t deserve to walk free.”

The irony doesn’t escape me—a kidnapper seeking justice. But this is different. What I’ve done with Kira has purpose, design. What her uncle did was pure predation of an innocent.

Kira shakes her head, water droplets flying from her damp hair. “You can’t do anything, Ryker. It was years ago. No evidence. No proof.”

“I don’t need conventional proof.” My algorithms can destroy a man’s life with less information than a name.

“He still visits for Thanksgiving and Christmas,” she continues. “Mom makes his favorite pumpkin pie. Everyone acts like nothing ever happened.”

My muscles lock, jaw clenching so tight I taste blood where my teeth cut into my cheek. The water around us seems to drop ten degrees with the

ice forming in my veins.

“He sits at the table,” she continues, each word driving my rage deeper, “and asks me about my life while my mother smiles and passes the gravy.”

My breathing becomes measured—how it does when I’m most dangerous.

“The family takes photos with him holding the carving knife,” Kira whispers. “I have to stand beside him and smile.”

That’s the detail that breaks me. My arm moves from around her waist to grip the tub’s edge, knuckles white against the porcelain. Code already runs through my head—bank accounts, credit scores, employment records, criminal databases. A man like that has secrets beyond what he did to Kira. I’ll find them all.

“Robert James Wilson,” she says quietly, as if reading my thoughts. “That’s his name.”

I commit it to memory instantly, a new priority overriding everything else. Vengeance for Kira has suddenly become Level Seven, though she doesn’t know it yet.

“He won’t touch you again,” I promise. “And soon, he won’t be smiling in any more family photos.”

I feel Kira tense against me at my words, her muscles rigid for a fraction of a second. A small movement that my hyperaware body catches immediately. Then, just as quickly, she relaxes, melting back into me with a sigh that sounds almost... content.

“Thank you,” she whispers, the words barely audible over the gentle lapping of the cooling bathwater.

My arms tighten around her instinctively. The sensation of her bare skin against mine sears through my nerves, but it’s different now. There’s no usual desire to dominate; it’s replaced with an aching tenderness I’ve never experienced, a need to shelter rather than dominate. The unfamiliar warmth spreading through me feels dangerous, unplanned, like a vulnerability I never coded into my systems.

She shifts, adjusting her position to nestle more comfortably against my chest. Her head fits under my chin, wet hair spreading across my collarbone. Another sigh escapes her, this one deeper, more satisfied.

“Is this okay?” she asks, her voice small but steady.

“Yes,” I answer, the single syllable containing multitudes.

Her breathing slows, matching mine. The synchronicity feels right in ways I can't articulate. Her body fits against mine like it was designed to be there, curves and edges aligning with mathematical precision.

"I've never felt safe like this before," she confesses. "It doesn't make sense, does it?"

It doesn't. Nothing about this makes sense anymore. My carefully constructed plan is disintegrating with each passing moment, each unscripted word between us.

She turns her head slightly, pressing a light kiss against my throat. The gesture is so unexpected and gentle that something in my chest contracts painfully.

I want to make her happy. The thought comes unbidden, powerful in its simplicity. I want her to be happy—not just submissive, not just mine—happy. I want her smile to be genuine, her pleasure real, and her contentment lasting. I want to erase the shadows that Robert James Wilson cast across her childhood. I want to build a life with her.

I have no idea what will happen next for the first time in my life, and I'm surprised that uncertainty doesn't terrify me.

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KIRA

I wake with a start, surrounded by unfamiliar softness. My body feels weightless, cradled by what must be the plunkest mattress I've ever experienced. Silky sheets glide across my skin as I stretch, realizing I'm completely naked beneath them.

This isn't my bed. This isn't my room.

Blinking away sleep, I push myself up on my elbows and take in my surroundings. The space is massive—at least three times the size of my bedroom. Midnight blue walls create a cocoon-like atmosphere, complemented by sleek furniture that screams expensive. Floor-to-ceiling windows reveal a stunning mountain view, early morning sunlight spilling across hardwood floors.

As I move, I notice the careful ministrations that have been applied to my battered body. My knees are wrapped in soft gauze, and I can feel the slight pull of medical tape across my back where the tree bark had scraped me. The cuts on my palms have been cleaned and covered with small bandages, and a faint medicinal smell clings to my skin—some kind of antibiotic ointment. Even the deep bruises on my hips and thighs have been treated with what feels like arnica cream, the skin cool and slightly numb.

Ryker must have tended to me while I slept, cleaning and bandaging each wound with the same meticulous attention he gives everything. The thought of him carefully treating the injuries he inflicted sends a confusing wave of emotions through me—gratitude tangled with resentment, comfort twisted with fear.

“What the hell?” I whisper, my voice sounding small in the cavernous room.

My mind races to catch up. The last thing I remember is being in a bath—warm water surrounding my aching body, Ryker's strong arms holding me against his chest as he washed away dirt, blood, and tears. I remember telling him about... No. I can't think about that now. The memory of what I revealed makes my stomach clench.

I pull the sheets tighter around me; their thread count must be in the thousands. This doesn't look like the replica of my bedroom he'd created. This feels personal, like I've been allowed into some inner sanctum.

The bedside table holds a glass of water and two small pills. A note in meticulous handwriting, each letter beautifully formed, sits beside them.

For any pain. I'm downstairs when you're ready. -R

Everything about this space feels like Ryker—precise, luxurious, and somehow both welcoming and intimidating. A strange sense of calm washes over me despite my confusion. How quickly I've adapted to waking up in strange places, never knowing what new test or “level” awaits me.

I stretch and swing my legs over the edge of the bed, wincing as my muscles protest. The cool air against my naked skin reminds me of my vulnerability. I notice some clothes draped over a sleek armchair in the corner.

For the first time since my capture, Ryker has left me something other than lingerie or a robe to wear.

I move toward the chair, slightly unsteady on my feet. It's a soft grey lounge dress made of what feels like cashmere. The material flows through my fingers like water. When I hold it up against myself, I notice it will hug my curves while still allowing movement—comfortable but undeniably sexy.

I search for underwear but find none. Of course not.

“Better than nothing,” I mutter, slipping the dress over my head.

The fabric caresses my skin as it falls into place, hitting mid-thigh. Despite everything, I feel a strange relief at being clothed again, even if the absence of underwear keeps me acutely aware of my exposure. My nipples harden against the soft material, visible through the thin fabric.

I find a brush on the dresser and attempt to tame my hair before entering the hallway. The house is silent except for faint sounds coming from below. Following the noise, I descend a floating staircase designed to make every step dramatic.

At the bottom, I pause. The open-concept main floor is bathed in natural light. A gourmet kitchen connects to a living area with more floor-to-ceiling windows showcasing the mountains.

And there he stands.

Ryker's back is to me as he works at the stove, wearing nothing but grey sweatpants that hang low on his hips. The morning sun highlights the contours of his broad shoulders, the defined muscles of his back, and the intricate tattoos covering his skin. I track the line of his spine down to where the sweatpants cling to his hips.

My mouth goes dry. A traitorous heat blooms between my thighs, and I hate myself for it. This man kidnapped me, violated me, and yet my body responds to him like a compass finding true north.

I remain frozen at the bottom of the stairs. As if sensing my presence, Ryker turns, spatula in hand. His bare chest is even more impressive from the front—sculpted muscles covered in intricate tattoos.

“Morning,” he says with a smile that transforms his usually intense face into almost... normal. “Sleep well?”

The casual question throws me off balance. Like we’re just any couple on a lazy Sunday morning. Like he didn’t kidnap me, traumatize me, and break me down until it felt like there was nothing left to break. Like I chose to be here.

“I...” My voice catches. I clear my throat. “Where am I?”

Those piercing blue eyes study me, noticing my dress, posture, and the wariness I’m trying and failing to hide.

“The compound,” he says, turning back to flip whatever he’s cooking. “This is where I live. The section you were in was custom-built, but this is the main section.”

I take a tentative step forward, every muscle tense. Is this the start of another level? Some new twisted game where he pretends we’re in a real relationship? My eyes dart around, looking for clues, for hidden cameras, for any sign of what fresh hell awaits me.

Ryker glances over his shoulder, his expression softening. “You’re overthinking. I can hear the gears turning from here.”

He wipes his hands on a towel and turns fully toward me, dropping the spatula on the counter.

“Sit,” he says, gesturing to one of the barstools at the kitchen island. It’s not quite a command, but not a suggestion either. “Breakfast is almost ready.”

I hesitate, mistrust warring with hunger.

“It’s not a trick, Kira,” he adds quietly, reading my thoughts unnervingly. “No games. Not today.”

I stand there, hesitating for another moment before my legs decide. There’s no reason to think he’s lying about ‘no games today,’ honestly, I’m too exhausted to fight anymore. I slide onto the barstool, my muscles protesting even this simple movement.

“Thank you,” I say quietly, unsure what I’m thanking him for. The food? The clothes? Not torturing me today?

Ryker places a plate in front of me—fluffy scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast that looks homemade. Steam rises from a mug of coffee, prepared exactly how I like it. Of course he knows how I take my coffee.

“Eat,” he says, his voice gentler than I’ve ever heard. “You need the protein.”

My stomach growls loudly in response. I pick up the fork and take a bite. The eggs practically melt in my mouth.

“This is... really good,” I admit between bites, surprised by how quickly I devour the food.

Ryker’s attention stays fixed on me, gleaming with satisfaction as he leans against the counter, sipping his coffee. The domesticity of it all is jarring after everything we’ve been through.

Everything I’ve been put through by him, I correct myself mentally.

As I eat, the full weight of the past days crashes down on me. My body feels like it’s made of lead, each movement requiring concentrated effort. My mind isn’t much better—foggy and fragmented, emotions pinging wildly from fear to confusion to this strange, uncomfortable sense of solace, even if it might be fleeting.

I’ve been hunted, violated, broken down, and built back up. I’ve revealed things I’ve never told anyone about my fantasies. I’ve screamed, cried, and come undone in ways I never imagined possible. And now I’m sitting in this beautiful kitchen, eating breakfast like it’s the most normal thing in the world.

A wave of exhaustion hits me so hard I nearly drop my fork. I'm drained—completely and utterly. Everything hurts, inside and out. The mental gymnastics required to process what's happening are beyond my grasp.

I stare down at my half-eaten breakfast, suddenly overwhelmed by everything. The fork feels heavy in my hand, and I can't seem to coordinate the simple movement of bringing food to my mouth anymore. My vision blurs slightly at the edges.

Ryker's gaze sharpens. He sets his coffee down with deliberate care.

"Kira," he says, his voice cutting through the fog in my head. "You're crashing."

Before I can speak, he's beside me, lifting me into his arms. The sudden movement sends my world spinning on its axis. Leaving my plate, he moves toward the living room to settle me onto the large sectional couch. "What are you—"

"Just hold on, let me get you settled, then I can get your plate."

I know the mountain vista stretches before us through those massive windows. Still, I barely register it as Ryker returns with my plate, sits down carefully, and repositions me on his lap so I am straddling him. I should feel exposed, vulnerable in this position, but I am too exhausted to fight anymore.

"I need you to eat for me." he says, taking the plate in one hand. He grabs a piece of the toast, scoops some egg onto it, and brings it to my lips. "Eat."

I blink at him, confusion breaking through my exhaustion. "What on earth are you doing?"

His blue eyes hold mine, uncharacteristically soft around the edges. No mask, no coldness, just... Ryker.

"I pushed you too far," he says simply, still holding the food near my lips. "Your body's in shock, your mind isn't far behind. You need care right now, so I'm taking care of you. Helping you heal."

"By feeding me? After everything, you think that will *heal* me?" I ask, incredulous despite everything.

"By whatever means necessary," he says, his voice low and serious. "Now eat, Kira. Please."

That "please" catches me off guard. I open my mouth and accept the food, too confused and tired to argue.

I swallow the food, studying his face as he prepares another bite. His expression is focused, almost tender, starkly contrasting with the cruelty I've witnessed for the last week. When he returns the fork to my lips, I open without hesitation.

"That's it," he murmurs, his free hand stroking my back in slow circles. "Small bites."

The gentleness is disarming. Each time I finish a bite, he offers me sips of water. His hands are warm against my skin, steadying me when I sway slightly from exhaustion.

"Why are you doing this?" I ask between bites, my voice barely above a whisper.

His thumb brushes my lower lip, wiping away a crumb. "Because you need it."

"Is this another test? Level seven or whatever?" The question slips out before I can stop it, but I'm too far gone to care

Something flickers across his face—but it's gone before I can process it.

"No, Kira. This is just... care." His voice drops lower. "You told me something last night that changed things."

My confession about my past. The memory makes my chest tighten.

"So this is... what? Pity? A bit late for that, isn't it?" I try to inject some anger into my voice, but it comes out fragile.

Ryker shakes his head, feeding me another bite before responding. "Not pity. Understanding."

I chew slowly. Is this real? Or just another move to manipulate me? The line between sincere care and psychological warfare has blurred so completely that I can't tell where one ends and the other begins.

As his hands continue their gentle ministrations—feeding me, stroking my hair, adjusting the dress when it rides up too high—I find myself leaning into his touch. My body recognizes what my mind resists: comfort and safety.

"I still don't trust this," I confess, even as I allow him to dab the corner of my mouth with a napkin. "I can't tell if you're being kind or this is another way to break me down."

Ryker's expression hardens at my words. "I'll prove it to you," he growls softly. The sound reverberates through my body, causing my skin to prickle despite the comfortable temperature.

Before I can respond, he cups my face in his hands. His touch is gentle but firm as he leans forward and kisses my lips. Unlike our previous kisses—hungry, desperate things born of power struggles and games—this one feels different. Tender. Almost reverent.

My brain short-circuits as his lips move against mine. Despite everything, my body responds, leaning into him, seeking more contact.

When he pulls away, I'm breathless. He gently positions me on my back on the couch and then slides off it, lowering himself to his knees before me. The sight of this powerful man kneeling makes my chest tight.

“Lie back,” he instructs, his voice a low rumble. “Relax.”

I hesitate, confused and wary, battling exhaustion and the strange pull I feel toward him. Slowly, I shift, reclining against the plush cushions of the couch.

Ryker takes one of my feet in his hands, his touch careful, almost clinical as he begins to massage it. His strong fingers find pressure points, working out knots of tension I hadn't realized I was carrying.

“I know I’ve gone too far,” he says. “But you’ve always been precious to me, Kira. Always.”

A small sound escapes me—half disbelief, half something I don’t want to name.

“This game,” he continues, thumbs pressing into my arch, sending waves of relief up my leg, “I thought you’d like it in the end. After all, you’re a gamer.”

His eyes lift to mine, and what appears to be regret shadows them.

“I just didn’t know about your trauma. How this might have been triggering for you.”

His words hit me like a physical blow. I stare at him as he continues to massage my feet, his fingers working magic on muscles I didn’t even realize were sore. The contradiction of this man who has been my kidnapper, a monster, and now... suddenly wants to be a caretaker makes my head spin.

“You didn’t know,” I repeat quietly, testing the words. “But you still took me. You still... did all those things.”

Ryker’s hands pause momentarily before resuming their rhythmic pressure. “Yes.”

No excuses. No justifications. Just an acknowledgement.

I let my head fall back against the cushions. “I don’t understand any of this. What do you want from me? What I’m feeling. What happens next.”

His fingers move up to my calves, finding knots of tension that make me wince and then sigh as they release.

“You don’t need to understand everything right now,” he says, his voice low and steady. “Just let me take care of you today.”

A bitter laugh escapes me. “Take care of me? After everything you’ve done?”

“Especially after everything I’ve done,” he answers.

I should fight. I should scream. I should demand that he let me go. But the exhaustion pulling at every cell in my body makes even thinking about resistance impossible. And beneath that exhaustion lies a part of me that doesn’t want to resist anymore.

“I still don’t know if I can trust this,” I whisper, gesturing vaguely between us. “Any of it, or you.”

Ryker moves his hands to my other foot, his touch firm but gentle. “I know.”

His simple acknowledgment breaks through a wall inside me. Tears spill over before I can stop them.

“I’m so tired,” I admit, my voice cracking. “Of fighting. Of being afraid. Of not knowing what’s real anymore.”

Ryker’s hands move from my feet to my calves, his thumbs working into muscles I didn’t even realize were knotted. Each press of his fingers sends waves of relief through my body, and despite everything—despite who he is and what he’s done—I feel myself melting into the couch cushions.

My eyelids grow heavy. I should be terrified. I should be planning an escape. Instead, I’m giving in to the gentle pressure of his hands, to the warmth spreading through my limbs.

“That feels...” The words slip out before I can catch them.

His eyes meet mine, satisfaction flickering in those blue depths. I hate giving him that, but I’m too exhausted to maintain my walls.

As his hands work higher, massaging my thighs through the thin fabric of the dress, my thoughts begin to drift and blur around the edges. How he’s capable of such cruelty and tender care makes my head swim. How can the same hands that trapped me, hunted me, and hurt me now bring such comfort?

Stockholm syndrome, my mind whispers. But it's more complicated than that, isn't it? The line between captor and savior has smudged beyond recognition. The game levels, the tests, the way he broke me down—was it destruction or deconstruction? Am I being remade or unmade?

I can't hold onto the questions as they flit through my consciousness. My body yields to his touch, to the relief of finally letting go. My breathing slows. The tension drains from my muscles one by one.

He's humming under his breath now, a melody I almost recognize. The sound vibrates through his fingers into my skin. It should feel invasive. Instead, it feels like being wrapped in a weighted blanket—heavy, secure, impossible to fight against.

My last coherent thought before sleep claims me is that I've never felt so conflicted, broken, and strangely whole. Like I'm falling apart and coming together all at once in his hands.

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RYKER

I can't stop watching her breathe.

Kira has slept on my living room couch for sixteen hours and thirty-seven minutes. Her chest's steady rise and fall becomes the only metric that matters in my universe. Every inhalation resets the stopwatch in my head—proof she's still alive. Still mine.

This wasn't in the plan.

I run my fingers through my hair for the thousandth time, pacing silently across the hardwood floor. My calculations never accounted for this variable—this fucking hurricane of emotion tearing through my carefully constructed systems.

What is happening to me?

The question burns through my synapses like acid. I've always understood myself as a machine with predictable variables and outcomes. I control the variables. Therefore, I can predict the results. Yet here I stand, my hands shaking, an ache so utterly terrifying spreading through my chest that I'm finding it nearly impossible to breathe.

Is this... love?

The word feels foreign in my mind, as if it's part of a language I've never spoken. I didn't think I had the capacity to love. I possess. I obsess. Control—*everything*.

However, this all-consuming need to protect her, to see her smile—the panic I felt when I realized I'd gone too far—is not in the clinical definition of who I am.

Yesterday, something inside me broke when she wanted me to hold her in the bath. I lost the ability to calculate my next move. I just held her. I was

afraid—not for myself, but for her.

I sink to my knees beside the couch, studying the curve of her cheek, the flutter of her eyelashes. My trembling hand hovers above her face, not daring to touch her. What if she's broken beyond healing? What if I've completely desecrated what I've come to care for?

The thought of life without her now is unbearable. A gaping abyss void of her that I can never be free of. I've had her—felt her warmth, heard her laugh—and can't return to the cold emptiness of before.

This isn't an obsession. This is dependence. Weakness. Need.

This is love.

Finally, movement. Kira stirs beneath the blanket, her fingers twitching against the fabric. I freeze, holding my breath as her eyelids flutter open. She blinks slowly, taking in her surroundings with confusion before her gaze settles on me.

"Ryker," she breathes.

My name on her lips hits me hard. Something explodes in my chest—hot and all-consuming—sending shockwaves through my nervous system. This single word from her mouth eviscerates me, recreates me, and undoes everything I thought I knew about myself.

"I'm here," I whisper. "I'm right here, Mischief."

My hand moves to her face without intent. I brush strands of hair back from her forehead, my fingertips trembling against her skin. I lean forward and press my lips to her brow, breathing in the scent of her—the soap from her bath, the permeating sweetness that's uniquely Kira.

"How do you feel?" I ask.

The question isn't tactical. It isn't meant to gauge her physical state for the next level of my game. I genuinely need to know if she's okay—if I've damaged her beyond repair. If I have, I don't know how I will recover from the loss of her.

My thumb strokes her cheek, and I marvel at how gentle my touch has become. These hands that have coded exploits, wielded knives, built cages—these hands that have only known how to dominate—now comfort with an instinct I never knew existed within me.

She looks up at me with those eyes—those fucking beautiful eyes—and I'm paralyzed by the weight of what I feel. The surgical precision with which I've always navigated life has been replaced by this stifling ache.

I continue stroking her hair, each touch a revelation. I've memorized every inch of her from surveillance and fantasy. Still, feeling her beneath my fingertips, caring about her comfort—this is uncharted territory.

"I've got you," I murmur, the words spilling out unbidden.

"Better," she whispers, her voice still rough with sleep. "I was so tired when you were massaging me. It felt... nice."

Her words send warmth spreading through my chest. Nice. Such a simple word, but any praise coming from her lips is everything.

"How long did I sleep?" Kira shifts slightly, wincing as she adjusts her position.

"Sixteen hours and..." I check my watch, "forty-two minutes now."

"Sixteen hours? That's... that's almost a full day."

"Your body needed it," I say, resisting the urge to touch her again without permission. "You were exhausted. Physically. Emotionally."

I gesture to the first aid supplies I've set on the nightstand. "Your bandages need changing. May I?"

Without waiting for her response, I gently take her hand, turning it palm-up to examine the cuts from where her nails dug into her skin during our time in the forest. The wounds are clean but still angry red around the edges. I carefully peel off the old bandage, apply fresh antibiotic ointment, and wrap a new piece of gauze around her palm.

"The abrasions on your back need attention too," I say, my voice clinical as I move behind her. My fingers trace the edge of the tape holding the gauze in place, feeling her tense at my touch. "The tree bark did quite a number on you."

I work methodically, removing the old dressings to reveal the raw skin beneath. Some areas have begun to scab over, while others still weep clear fluid. I clean each wound with antiseptic, my touch gentle despite the efficiency of my movements.

"Your knees are the worst," I observe, kneeling before her to unwrap the bandages around her scraped knees. The skin there is a patchwork of purple bruises and angry red scrapes. "These will take longer to heal."

By my hand. Because of what I've done to her. The thought cuts through me like glass.

She looks down at her hands, fidgeting with the edge of the blanket. "What about... what about the levels? Aren't we supposed to be on level seven by now?"

The clinical, calculating part that developed the levels crumbles away like ash.

“No more levels,” I say, my voice rough with emotion I don’t try to hide. “They were... they were fun for me, but...” I swallow hard, meeting her gaze directly. “Only if you willingly choose it will there ever be another level. We don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. Ever again.”

Kira studies my face, skepticism evident in the slight furrow of her brow. But there’s a vulnerability too, a need that mirrors my own. She looks like she just wants to be held, to feel safe despite everything that’s happened between us.

I take a deep breath. “Can I... can I hold you, Kira? Just hold you?”

The question hangs between us—perhaps the first real question I’ve asked her since this began. Not a command disguised as if she had a choice, not a manipulation. A genuine request that she has every right to refuse.

After a moment that stretches into eternity, she nods.

“Yes,” she whispers.

I slide onto the sofa, careful not to startle her. The leather creaks beneath my weight as I settle into the cushions. For a moment, I just wait, holding my breath.

Kira studies me, searching for permission. Without a word, she shifts her body and crawls toward me. She climbs onto my lap, her movements tentative but deliberate.

She’s so fucking tiny against me. Even with her curves—the soft swell of her breasts, the flare of her hips that I’ve memorized through countless hours of surveillance—she feels delicate. Breakable. My hands span her waist completely, fingers nearly touching at her back.

The contrast between us hits me hard. I’ve built myself into a weapon—every muscle, tattoo, and move designed to intimidate. Yet she fits against me like she was designed for this space.

When her weight settles fully against me, my body responds instantly. Blood rushes south, and I harden beneath her, my cock straining against my pants where she’s seated directly over it.

A small, surprised sound escapes her throat—a moan that vibrates through her body into mine. She shifts her hips, grinding against my erection in a slow, deliberate circle. The friction sends a sensation racing up my spine.

I freeze.

This isn't part of the game.

Everything before this moment—the maze, the hunt—followed my script. Every reaction is extracted rather than freely given.

But this...

Her body moves against mine with no prompt, no threat hanging over her head. Just her soft warmth responding to mine. Her breaths quicken, eyelids fluttering as she rocks against me again, seeking more friction.

I remain frozen, afraid to break whatever spell has fallen over her. My hands hover at her hips, not directing, existing in this moment.

This isn't the rough claiming I've forced on her before. Not the power exchange of predator and prey. This is her choice, her own desire, in action.

This is just us and our bodies recognizing each other. Chemistry cuts through the trauma I inflicted.

And it terrifies me more than anything.

"Ryker." Kira's voice breaks as she looks at me. Her fingers dig into my shoulders as she presses herself closer. "I need you. Please. Fuck me."

Her freely given request destroys me more thoroughly than any resistance ever could.

"Kira," I whisper, my voice cracking with emotion I've never allowed myself to feel, let alone show. "Are you sure?"

She nods, her lips parting. "I'm sure. I need this."

The last thread of control I've been desperately clinging to snaps completely. I cup Kira's face between my hands, touching her like she's made of glass, like she's the most precious thing I've ever held.

"You're all I've ever fucking wanted," I tell her, the bittersweet honesty burning my throat. "My whole life. Every miserable fucking day. I've been waiting for you."

I press my forehead against hers, breathing her in. My thumbs stroke her cheekbones, gentle in a way I never knew I could be.

"You're my world, Mischief. Not the game. Not the hunt. You."

I kiss her then, not the bruising, claiming kisses I've forced on her before, but something tender and reverent. My lips brush against hers softly, asking rather than taking. When she responds, parting her lips beneath mine in invitation, I groan against her mouth.

I deepen the kiss, unable to contain the intensity that's natural to me. My fingers tangle in her hair, tugging just enough to tilt her head back, giving me better access to her mouth. The gentleness remains.

“I love you,” I confess against her lips, the words I never thought I’d say to anyone. “I fucking love you, Kira.”

I feel Kira’s sharp intake of breath against my lips when I say those words. Her body tenses momentarily, and I know she’s not ready to say it back. How could she be? She’s only beginning to know me, while I’ve been learning her for two years. And if I am being honest, I’m not sure I even know me now. But I know I would like to explore it with her.

Instead of words, she answers with her body. Her lips find mine again, urgent and hungry. The kiss deepens, and I taste her need, so different from fear or manipulation. This is real. This is Kira choosing me.

My hands slide down her sides, memorizing every curve as if I haven’t mapped her body a thousand times through screens and surveillance. But this—her warm skin beneath my fingertips, the slight tremble in her muscles as I touch her—is infinitely better than fantasy.

I fumble with my pants, suddenly clumsy with want. I yank them down just enough, freeing myself. My fingers lift the hem of her dress, exposing her to my gaze.

When I enter her, it’s with a gentleness I didn’t know I possessed. Her warmth envelops me, and a groan, unlike anything I’ve ever heard, claws its way up my throat. This isn’t taking. This isn’t claiming. This is joining, a mutual endeavor by two people who desire to be one.

“Fuck, Kira,” I breathe against her neck, overwhelmed by sensations and untethered emotion colliding inside me.

She begins to move above me, finding her own rhythm. My hands settle on her hips—not directing, just following, supporting. She sets the pace, rolling her body against mine with a grace that stills my breath for that moment of realization.

I look up at her in wonder. Her head tilted back, lips parted, pleasure washing over her features. She’s magnificent. She’s everything.

My hands slide up her sides, cupping her breasts with reverence. I lean forward, pressing my lips to the soft swell, tasting her skin. I worship every inch of her—this body I’ve coveted, now being offered to me so enticingly.

“Beautiful,” I murmur against her skin, kissing a path across the swell of her tits. “So fucking beautiful.”

She moves above me like she was made for me, and I fall completely. I, who never surrendered to anything in my life, give myself over to Kira Ellis without reservation.

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KIRA

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he rise and fall of Ryker's chest as he sleeps beside me is steady. My fingers twitch with the urge to track the lines of his face, the sharp curve of his jaw, the fullness of his bottom lip. Something inside me aches when I'm not touching him, like withdrawal from the most potent drug.

Was this the plan all along? Each level breaking down another wall until I couldn't tell where my desires ended and his manipulation began? The thought should terrify me, make me want to run. I don't, though. I shift closer, drawn to his warmth like a moth to flame.

What came next I never would have expected, let alone believed. "I love you," he said. Those three words echo in my mind, bouncing against memories of our gaming sessions, his voice in my headset guiding me through digital battlefields. Rogue and Mischief, our online personas connected in ways our physical selves never could—until now.

My gaze falls on the tattoos on his skin, lingering on the ghost mask over his heart. For me. Before he even met me. The thought sends a shiver down my spine that isn't entirely unpleasant.

Light filters through the curtains, casting shadows across his face. God, he's beautiful. Not just handsome, beautiful in that dangerous way that makes a deep want stir. The sharp planes of his cheekbones, the dark sweep of his lashes, the slight curve of his lips even in sleep.

I know him. I've known him for over two years, laughing with him, strategizing with him, sharing pieces of myself I never shared with anyone else. If that was real—if any of it was—then maybe...

This man beside me is Rogue. My gaming partner. My confidant.

My soulmate who took the most fucked-up route imaginable to be with me.

I stare at the ceiling, my thoughts spinning like loading screens between game levels. Why? The question burns through me more intensely than any physical sensations my body has endured. I wanted to meet him. For so long, I dreamed about the face behind the voice that guided me through digital battlefields. If he'd just come to GamerCon as Rogue, I would have fallen for him instantly.

I would have given him my number, my time, and my body. I would have offered freely everything he's taken now.

I would have been his. I was already his in so many ways before he ever touched me.

So why all this? The kidnapping. The games. The fear and pain and twisted pleasure. Why build a maze when the door was already unlocked? More importantly, how do I forgive his actions?

Beside me, the sheets rustle. Ryker shifts, his eyes opening to find mine already on him. Sleep softens the sharp edges of his face, making him look almost innocent. Almost kind, if I didn't already have so much evidence to the contrary.

"What are you thinking about?" His voice is rough with sleep, fingers reaching to brush a strand of hair from my face. "You look miles away."

For a moment, I consider lying and telling him what he wants to hear, but I can't. Some hidden and dark part of me has broken open inside—maybe it's the need for freedom, the need to no longer have to hide.

"I don't understand why you did all this." The words tumble out in earnest. "I would have dated you if you'd come to GamerCon. If you'd approached me as Rogue, the person I gamed with for over two years, I would have been yours willingly." I swallow hard. "I already was yours, in a way. So why the kidnapping? Why the fear, the torture, and the pain? Why did you choose the hardest possible path to something that could have been so simple?"

I hold my breath, noticing uncertainty flicker across Ryker's face.

He sits up slowly, sheet pooling around his waist, revealing more intricate tattoos. A storm gathers in his expression.

"Simple? Nothing about this—about us—could ever be simple, Kira." His voice drops lower. "You think I could just walk up to you at GamerCon and say 'Hi, I'm Rogue' and everything would fall into place?"

He laughs, but there's no humor in it. The sound scrapes against my skin.

"People like you don't end up with people like me in the real world. Not without intervention." His fingers trace patterns on the sheet between us. "I needed to plan every variable, every possible outcome. Your first impression, environment, and options had to be perfect for the desired outcome."

His hands clench into fists, then relax with deliberate effort.

"My whole life has been chaos. Unpredictable. Painful." Something flashes across his face. "I can't survive more randomness. More chance. More failure."

He looks directly at me now, his gaze intense enough to burn.

"Meeting at GamerCon meant leaving too much to chance. What if you saw me and felt nothing? What if someone else caught your attention? What if you rejected me?" The thought seems to physically pain him. "I needed to create an environment where our interaction followed my design. Where I could test your reactions, your limits... where I could be sure there was no other option."

His hand reaches toward my face but stops short of touching me.

"The world doesn't give people like me second chances. So I had to make sure I didn't need one."

I study his face as he speaks, how his hands move with precise, contained motions. And suddenly, I see it—beyond the kidnapper, beyond the obsessive stalker, beyond the dominant man who's terrorized and pleasured me in equal measure. I see the scared little boy forced to watch his father play for hours, beaten if he looked away. The child who ran to libraries and internet cafes to escape the nightmare of his home.

"You're still that frightened boy," I whisper, the realization hitting me with unexpected force. "The one your father hurt. The one who had to control everything because nothing in your life was ever safe or predictable."

A helpless vulnerability flickers across his face, making my chest ache. For a moment, Ryker's calculating predator mask slips to reveal a brokenness.

"Was any of it real?" I ask suddenly, my voice trembling. "When we were just Rogue and Mischief... all those late nights gaming, all those conversations... Was that real? Or was it just part of your plan?"

He looks away, and I think I see shame on his face for the first time.

“That was real, Kira.” His voice is rough but low, almost inaudible. “All of it. Those nights gaming with you were the only real thing in my life.”

When he meets my gaze again, there’s a vulnerability there.

“I was drawn to you through your voice, your laugh, the way you’d curse when you missed a shot.” A ghost of a smile touches his lips. “After about a month of gaming with you every night, I was obsessed. I needed to know more. See more. Have more.”

His fingers bridge the gap between us, tracing the curve of my cheek with heartbreakingly gentle hands.

“Those conversations weren’t manipulation. They were the only time I wasn’t manipulating anyone. The only time I was just me.”

His confession hangs in the air between us. For the first time since this twisted journey began, I feel like I’m seeing the real Ryker—not Rogue, not my kidnapper, but the man beneath all those carefully constructed layers of torment and manipulation.

“What do you actually do?” I ask. “For work, I mean. You always mention meetings, but...” I trail off, realizing how little I know about his real life despite how intimately he knows mine.

A strange look crosses his face—almost amusement. “You’re asking about my job? Now?”

I shrug, suddenly feeling foolish. “You said you worked for a tech firm, but that’s all I know. I just... I want to learn more about you.”

Ryker’s lips curve into a smile that transforms his entire face. He reaches over to the nightstand for his phone.

“I don’t work for a tech firm. I own one.” His fingers dance across the screen before he hands me the phone. “KentSec Systems. I founded it six years ago.”

I stare at the Forbes article on his screen, my eyes widening as I scan the headline: “KentSec Systems CEO Ryker Kent Makes Forbes 30 Under 30: The Security Genius Reshaping Cybersecurity.” The photo shows Ryker in a tailored dark suit, looking polished and professional—worlds away from the tattooed, intense man beside me.

“You own a multi-million dollar company?” I whisper, scrolling through the article detailing his company’s groundbreaking cybersecurity protocols and their contracts with major corporations and government agencies.

“Tech security was always my specialty,” he says with a casualness that doesn’t match the magnitude of what I’m reading. “People will pay a lot to protect their digital assets.”

I glance from the phone to Ryker, connecting the dots that should have been obvious. His technical knowledge, sophisticated surveillance, and ability to hack into my apartment systems make horrifying, impressive sense.

“So all those ‘meetings’ you’d disappear for during our gaming sessions...”

“Running a company,” he confirms. “Though I’d have skipped every single one if I could’ve stayed online with you.”

I set the phone down, my mind racing with this new information. “But if you’re the CEO of this massive company, how are you even here right now? Who’s running things while you’re...” I gesture vaguely at our surroundings, not sure how to describe this bizarre situation we’re in.

Ryker leans back against the headboard, a wry smile on his lips. “My COO isn’t exactly thrilled. Damien’s been blowing up my phone for days.” He runs a hand through his sleep-tousled hair. “I told him I’m taking a much-needed vacation. First one in six years.”

“A vacation,” I repeat flatly, trying to process everything. “That’s what you’re calling this?”

“The most important one of my life.”

I stare at him, this enigma of a man who manages to be both terrifying and vulnerable in the same breath. The successful tech CEO. The gaming partner I’d spent countless nights talking with. The man who kidnapped me and built a maze to hunt me in.

“I don’t understand,” I say, my voice small in the quiet room. “Why me? It makes no sense.”

His brow furrows slightly.

“Look at you,” I continue, gesturing at him. “You’re gorgeous. You’re literally a millionaire CEO. You could have any woman you want with a smile and a credit card.” The truth of it burns in my chest. “Why would someone like you think you’d need to kidnap someone like me to have her? I just... I can’t understand that.”

The intensity of his stare makes me want to look away, but I force myself to hold his gaze, needing to hear his answer almost as much as I fear it.

Ryker's expression shifts. "Any woman I want?" His voice drops an octave. "You think I want someone else? That I've ever wanted anyone else since I found you?"

He moves closer, the heat of his body radiating against mine. I press back against the headboard, suddenly aware of my vulnerability.

"I've fucked other women, yes. Before you. Meaningless encounters to satisfy basic needs." His touch along my collarbone is featherlight. "But I've never felt this connection. This absolute certainty."

The intensity in his gaze makes my breath catch. There's no calculation now, just pure emotion that's almost painful to witness.

"You're the only one, Kira. The only one who's ever mattered. The only one who ever will." His hand cups my face with surprising gentleness. "You're the most beautiful girl on the planet. The only one I see."

A nervous laugh escapes me before I can stop it. The idea is absurd—me, the most beautiful girl on the planet? I've spent my whole life being told I wasn't enough, wasn't thin enough, wasn't pretty enough.

In an instant, his hand is around my throat, not squeezing but firmly holding, his thumb pressed against my pulse point. The laughter dies in my throat.

"Don't," he growls, his face inches from mine. "Don't you dare laugh at that. It's the truth, and I don't want to hear anything contrary."

His grip is firm, not cutting off my air but reminding me of his strength, his dominance. My pulse races against his palm.

"I've seen the most 'beautiful' women worldwide, Kira. Models, actresses, billionaires' wives, and girlfriends. None of them compare to you." His grip relaxes slightly. "Not one."

His words leave me breathless, more than his hand around my throat ever could. The conviction in his voice and the absolute certainty in his eyes pierce me deeply.

"No one has ever called me beautiful before," I whisper, the words scraping against my throat. "Not the same way you mean it."

His grip on my throat loosens, but his gaze intensifies.

"I'm just... average. Average weight, average face, average everything." The confession hurts more than I expected. "I've spent my whole life being the girl guys settle for when they can't get the pretty one. The one people call 'cute' but never 'hot.' The one with the 'nice personality.'"

My voice breaks on the last words. Years of subtle rejections and backhanded compliments have left their mark; not all scars are on the outside. I'm not sure if the ones inside ever truly heal.

Ryker's hand slides from my throat to cup my face, his thumb brushing away a tear I didn't realize had fallen.

"Then everyone who's ever looked at you was fucking blind." The intensity in his voice makes me shiver. "And I'm going to reshape your entire image of yourself until you see what I see."

He shifts closer, his forehead almost touching mine, our breaths mingling.

"I'm going to worship every inch of you until you understand that you're a fucking goddess." His voice drops lower, reverential and fierce at once. "A goddess I can't wait to spend my life on my knees worshipping."

The sincerity in his voice unravels me anew. No one has ever wanted me like this-with this all-consuming, almost religious devotion.

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RYKER

T

he plan I've crafted, the levels of our game carefully designed to break and rebuild her—all of it has come to feel hollow. I am finding it harder each day to justify my carefully laid plan. This isn't what I want anymore—to control her completely, own her through manipulation and force. It cheapens what I've come to feel for her. If a past boyfriend of hers had done these things, how long would I allow him to live?

The phone feels heavy in my hand—it is her lifeline to the world that I took her from. Dozens of notifications light up the screen—missed calls, texts, voicemails—people who love her searching for her. What if it were me on the other end? Would I ever stop searching?

Once I give this back, I lose my unwavering control over her.

I need her to choose me. Not Stockholm Syndrome, Kira, not traumatized and manipulated Kira. I need all of her to want me as desperately as I want her.

Her eyes flutter open, catching me staring. “What time is it?” Her voice has a sleepy rasp to it, and it’s beautiful.

“It’s only four a.m. I’m an early riser.” I sit on the edge of the bed and hold out her phone. “This belongs to you.”

Confusion crosses her face as she takes it, fingers brushing mine. “My phone?”

“The game is over, Kira.”

She unlocks it, eyes widening at the flood of messages. Her parents, Jenna, coworkers—all frantic about her disappearance.

“They are worried about you despite my messages assuring them you are fine.” My voice sounds strange, tight with emotions I’m still learning to

name.

Tears well in her eyes as she scrolls through the messages. “They’ve been so worried.”

“Tell them...” I stand up, creating the distance she needs to make this choice freely. “Tell them whatever you want.”

Her fingers hover over the keyboard. “What should I say?”

“The truth. Part of it, anyway, or all of it if you choose. That you met me at GamerCon. That you’re safe.”

She types, deletes, types again. Finally, she hits send, and the weight in my chest shifts. Not lighter, just different. Pensive.

“I told them I met you at the convention, that I got caught up in a whirlwind, and I’m sorry I worried them.” She looks up. “I told them I’m safe with you. Am I?”

Her question cuts deeper than she could know. After everything, she still isn’t sure.

“Safe?” The word tastes bitter on my tongue. “You’re asking if you’re safe with me?”

I step closer, my body rigid with hurt and frustration. “Kira, you’re the safest you could ever be. I would tear apart anyone who tried to harm you.” I kneel before her, taking her hands in mine. “I promise I will never hurt you again. The games, the levels—that’s over. I was wrong. I see that now.”

My voice drops to a whisper. “I’d rather die than cause you pain again. And I hate that your first memories of us together are marked with fear and pain.”

A darkness and hunger flares to life in her eyes—one I recognize from our time in the forest. Without warning, she grabs my shirt and yanks me forward, pulling me onto the bed with surprising strength. I land over her, bracing myself on my forearms to avoid crushing her.

“Fuck me,” she demands, her voice husky, almost commanding.

The sudden role reversal sends blood rushing south, but I hesitate, brushing hair from her face with gentle fingers. “Kira, we don’t have to—”

“Now.” She arches against me, nails digging into my shoulders.

I groan, lowering my mouth to hers. My kisses are soft, measured, my touch gentler than she’s used to as I slide my hand along her side.

She breaks away, frustration evident in her flushed face. “No. Not like this.” Her gaze burns me. “Like before. In the game.”

I freeze, trying to understand. “What do you mean?”

“I want you to be you,” she says, voice dropping to a growl. “Primal. Twisted. The way you were in the forest when you hunted me.” Her hands tangle in my hair, pulling hard enough to sting. “I need that Ryker right now.”

I narrow my eyes, searching her face for any hint of fear. “Do you like rough games, Kira?” I ask, voice dropping an octave as I pin her wrists above her head with one hand.

“I’ve never been more turned on than when you hunted me,” Kira admits, her cheeks flushing. “When you caught me, when you made me submit. You knew exactly where I’d go, how you’d find me. It would’ve been my favorite level if I felt safe enough to trust you.”

I’d thought she’d been traumatized, that she needed gentle handling. But the darkness I saw in her in the forest wasn’t forced—it was awakened.

I cup her face. “Do you want to play level seven, then? But this time, willingly?”

Her quick nod makes my cock throb against her thigh. “Yes. Please.”

I lean close, breathing against her ear. “Level seven requires full submission out in the open where anyone might see you.”

I pull back to gauge her reaction, finding her pupils wide with arousal.

“I own an exclusive resort property—private beach, secluded cove. I’ll have you naked except for a collar, bound to a Saint Andrew’s cross I’ve erected in the sand when the tide is out.” My voice drops lower. “I’ll leave you there as the tide slowly comes in. Not enough to drown you—I’ve calculated the tides exactly—but enough to let you feel the danger.”

Her breathing quickens as I continue.

“I’ll watch from the cliffs above as the water rises around you, as you pull against your restraints. And I’ll come for you when the fear is at its peak. I’ll make you come, tied up, half-submerged, where any passing boat might spot us.”

“When?” she whispers, already squirming beneath me.

“We can go now as high tide is in an hour and a half. I can hear you through an earpiece if you say your safe word.”

Kira’s breath catches in her throat. Her reaction is more eager than anticipated—more authentic than anything we’ve shared.

“That sounds so fucking hot,” she moans, arching her back slightly. Her fingers dig into my shoulders as she pulls me closer. “I get so turned on

when I'm scared. I don't know what's coming next—but you've planned everything."

My cock hardens instantly at her admission. This is Kira without manipulation, without trauma bonds—her darkest desire offered freely. The knowledge that she craves the danger makes her more perfect for me than before.

I capture her mouth with mine, kissing her with an intensity that surprises even me. My tongue claims hers, and she responds hungrily, her entire being melting against mine, soft curves yielding to hard planes. When I finally pull away, we're both breathing hard.

"Get up," I command, voice husky with need. I walk to the closet and pull out a white linen beach dress I'd purchased in anticipation of this moment. "Put this on. Nothing else."

She takes it from me, fabric sliding between her fingers as she examines it. The material is thin enough to reveal the silhouette of her body in direct sunlight—exactly as I'd intended.

"We leave now," I tell her. The timing will be just right. "The tide waits for no one, not even us."

She slips the dress over her naked body, the fabric settling against her curves in a way that makes my mouth go dry. She looks innocent and debauched simultaneously—exactly how I'd imagined her countless times.

"I have everything ready in the car," I explain, leading her toward the door with my hand on the small of her back. "This was meant to be level seven. I was going to bring you here right after the forest, but things evolved outside my plan."

The irony doesn't escape me—that what I'd planned as forced submission is now happening with her eager participation. Somehow, that makes it infinitely more arousing.

I drive my Range Rover along the coast, Kira silent beside me, her breathing quick with anticipation. The resort property comes into view—I purchased twenty acres of private beachfront two years ago through a shell company. No one knows it belongs to me.

"We're here," I say, parking at the cliff's edge overlooking the cove below.

Dawn is just breaking as we go down the winding path to the beach. The first rays of sunlight cast a golden glow across the sand, illuminating

the four titanium posts I installed, positioned precisely where the tide reaches its peak.

I lead Kira through the cool morning water to the custom St Andrew's cross I had fitted. The sea laps gently around our ankles, calm and predictable just as the tide charts promised. I've marked the post with a thin red line indicating maximum water height—it will reach just below her breasts at high tide.

"This is a St. Andrew's cross," I state. "Put your arms up, Mischief."

She complies instantly, allowing me to lift the white linen dress over her head. The morning air pebbles her nipples and causes goosebumps across her exposed skin. She's magnificent—both vulnerable and strong.

I withdraw the rope from my waterproof bag—black jute, eight millimeters thick, sixty feet long. My fingers work methodically, crossing and looping the rope across her chest and around her waist in a diamond pattern. I've practiced these ties a thousand times on mannequins, but nothing compares to how Kira's soft skin yields to the pressure.

"Spread your legs wider," I murmur, pushing her thighs apart until she's fully exposed. The rope continues down, binding her thighs to the post in a way that leaves her cunt completely accessible. She can't close her legs or hide herself from my gaze or the rising tide.

"The post is connected to a hydraulic system," I explain, nodding toward the sand beneath the water. "If anything happens—unexpected waves, a boat approaches—I press this button, and you'll rise more than two meters above the waterline." I show her the remote I'm keeping. "You're completely safe. I will always make that my priority, no matter the game." I lean in and capture her lips in a deep, possessive kiss.

"I'll come for you when you're ready," I promise against her mouth.

She whimpers softly as I pull away, water swirling around her calves.

I turn and return up the shore, climbing the path to the cliff. From here, I can see everything—her naked body bound to the post, the water slowly rising around her, and the complete isolation of our private cove.

KIRA

T

he cold water laps at my ankles, then rises to my calves. I pull against the restraints, but they hold firm. The St Andrew's cross at my back feels rough against my skin.

“Ryker?” I call out, my voice thin against the rush of waves.

No answer. Just the steady rhythm of water climbing higher up my body. The vastness of the ocean stretches before me, indifferent to my fate. I scan the cliff edge where Ryker disappeared minutes ago. Nothing.

“RYKER!” I scream louder, panic clawing up my throat.

The water reaches my knees now. The tide is coming in faster than I expected. How high will it go? My breathing quickens as I realize how completely helpless I am. If something goes wrong with his hydraulic system... if he doesn't come back...

I tug frantically at the bindings, but they're expertly tied. Of course they are. This is Ryker.

The water swirls around my thighs, cold and unrelenting. My body trembles, but not just from fear. Something else stirs inside me—a hot, unwelcome rush of arousal that mingles with my terror.

I close my eyes, ashamed. This broken part of me that I've never understood, never wanted. Ever since I was eleven and my uncle would sneak into my room at night, whispering that I needed to be quiet, that it was our secret. The fear became tangled with other sensations my young mind couldn't process. Then, however, I felt dirty; like no matter how hard I scrubbed, I couldn't get his filth off me. There wasn't a choice; no safeword would save me.

The water reaches my waist now. My body responds to the danger, nipples hardening. My breath comes in short gasps that aren't entirely from panic.

This is why masked men on TikTok always captivate me. Why GhostDaddy's videos made me squirm in my seat. In my darkest fantasies, it was always a faceless intruder breaking through my window, pinning me down, and taking what he wanted while I struggled helplessly.

Water rises to my ribcage, cold waves occasionally splashing higher.

The water climbs to my chest, panic swelling with each frigid wave. My lungs constrict as salt spray hits my face. I can't move, can't escape. The tide rises relentlessly, threatening to drown me inch by inch.

"RYKER!" I scream one last time, voice breaking.

A shadow moves beneath the surface.

Suddenly, he rises from the water before me like some primal sea god, water cascading down his tattooed chest. His eyes lock onto mine—hungry, possessive.

Before I can speak, his hands are on me. The contrast between the icy water and his burning touch shocks my system. His fingers dig into my hips, lifting me slightly against my restraints.

"I heard you calling," he growls, his voice barely human.

In one brutal thrust, he's inside me. No warning, no preparation. My body, treacherous as ever, is already slick and ready for him.

"Fuck!" The word tears from my throat.

The pain and pleasure collide into something cosmic and overwhelming. My head falls back against the post as he pounds into me, the tide washing around us, his heat scorching me from the inside out.

"You think you're afraid of the waves?" His voice like sandpaper against my ear. "You should be afraid of how fucking wet you get for me."

The orgasm crashes through me like a tidal wave, obliterating thought, language, and identity. Nothing exists but the point where we connect, where fear transforms into ecstasy.

"That's it. Show me what a dirty little slut you are for me," he hisses, his rhythm never faltering. "Drowning in pleasure while tied to a fucking post in the ocean."

The world fragments into white-hot shards. My consciousness slips away for a second, or maybe an eternity, as I succumb completely to the

pleasure. I come back to his voice in my ear, filthier than the darkest corners of my fantasies.

“I own every inch of this cunt. Every. Fucking. Inch.”

The water slaps against us, cold and unforgiving, but between my legs I’m burning. My wrists strain against the restraints. The contrast of sensations—the biting cold of the rising tide, the scorching heat where our bodies connect—makes everything more intense.

“Eyes on me,” he demands.

My eyes flutter open to find his face inches from mine, his gaze boring into me with such intensity I can barely breathe.

“Tell me who you belong to,” he growls, his thrusts slowing to an agonizing pace.

The words catch in my throat. Part of me wants to fight, to deny him this, but another part—the part that’s been awakening since he took me—craves to give him what he wants.

“You,” I whisper, my voice barely audible over the crashing waves.

His hand tangles in my hair, yanking my head back. “Louder.”

“You! I belong to you!” The words tear from my throat, half-scream, half-sob.

Tears stream down my face, mixing with the salt spray. I’m crying not from pain or fear but from release—the release of surrendering to what I’ve fought against my entire life.

Ryker’s rhythm changes, becoming more frantic. His breathing is harsh against my neck. The tide rises higher, water now lapping at my shoulders. I should be terrified of drowning, but all I can focus on is the building pressure inside me, threatening to shatter me completely.

“That’s it, Mischief,” he pants, using his nickname for me. His fingers dig into my thighs hard enough to bruise. “Give it all to me.”

My second orgasm hits without warning, more powerful than the first. I scream his name as my cunt clamps down around him, my vision blurring at the edges.

I’m still trembling with aftershocks when Ryker grabs my chin, forcing me to look at him. The water continues rising around us, now reaching below my chin. The fear of drowning mingles with my post-orgasmic haze, creating a cocktail of terror and pleasure that makes me dizzy.

“You know what I love about you, Kira?” His voice is dangerous, smooth as silk. “The way your pussy gets wetter the more scared you are.”

My cheeks burn with shame.

“N-no, that’s not—”

He slaps me lightly across the face, just enough to shock. “Don’t lie to me. I felt you clench around my cock when that wave almost covered your face.” His hips grind against mine, still buried deep inside me. “Fear makes you fucking drip.”

“Please,” I beg.

“Please, what? Please stop telling you what a filthy little slut you are for danger?” His teeth scrape my neck. “The more terrified you are, the harder you come. It’s beautiful how broken you are for me.”

A sob escapes me because he’s right. Each wave that threatens to submerge me sends a fresh pulse of arousal between my legs. The rising water, the restraints, the possibility of drowning—they shouldn’t turn me on, but God help me, they do.

His fingers dig into my jaw. “Tell me how much your sick little mind loves being afraid.”

“I—I can’t,” I whimper, even as my hips buck against him.

“Your body’s already confessed.” His laugh is somehow both cruel and tender. “Such a twisted little fucktoy you are. Getting off on your own terror.”

A particularly large wave crashes over us, momentarily submerging my face. I come up choking, panic surging—and with it, an intense wave of pleasure that makes me moan obscenely.

“There it is,” Ryker purrs. “Your darkest truth.”

The water sloshes around us, cold and terrifying, but I don’t care anymore. Something inside me breaks open—or maybe it heals—as I stop fighting what I am. What I’ve always been.

I lean forward against my restraints, capturing Ryker’s lips with mine. The kiss is desperate, hungry, an admission I couldn’t make with words. His mouth opens instantly, his tongue claiming mine with the same possessive energy that defines everything about him.

When I pull back, my eyes meet his. Those beautiful, dangerous eyes that see all of me, even the parts I’ve tried to hide from myself.

“I’m your little fear slut,” I whisper, the words sending a shameful thrill through my body. “I always have been.”

His expression shifts—just for a moment—revealing something beneath the dominant mask he wears. I glimpsed tenderness when he confessed his

love to me in his living room and told me I was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen.

I know this roughness is for me. He's giving me exactly what I need—what my broken, twisted part has always craved. The fear, the danger, the edge of pain that brings me to heights of pleasure I never imagined possible.

But beneath it all is his love. His protection. The way he promised to reshape my self-image. The way he vowed to spend his life on his knees for me, even as he forces me to mine.

"Say it again," he growls.

"I'm your little fear slut," I repeat, louder this time. "And I fucking love it."

His eyes darken with lust, but also love. A look that reminds me of how he watched me sleep for hours straight, confessed he'd never felt this way before, and gave himself to me completely.

The water continues to rise, but so do we, as the platform he built lifts us, keeping the water always below my chin, but I barely notice it now. All I can feel is Ryker's relentless rhythm, his cock stretching me impossibly wide as he pounds into me against the post. My body should be exhausted, but I'm more sensitized than ever, every nerve ending screaming with pleasure.

"You think we're done?" Ryker growls against my ear, his breath hot on my neck. "Not even close."

His hands grip my thighs, tilting me as much as the restraints allow. The new angle sends shocks of pleasure radiating through my core.

"Oh God," I pant, my head falling back against the wooden post.

"That's it," he hisses, his pace becoming more punishing. "But you know what, Kira? You're such a good little slut, you're going to come for me again."

I shake my head weakly. "I can't—I can't possibly—"

His hand snakes between us, finding my sensitive clit. The touch is almost painful in its intensity.

"You can and you will," he commands, circling the swollen bud with devastating precision. "You're going to come a third time for me like the good little fuck toy you are."

Despite my exhaustion, I feel the pressure building again, impossible but undeniable. My body responds to his words, his touch, his absolute

certainty.

“And only then,” he continues, his voice dropping to a dangerous whisper, “only after you’ve given me one more of those pretty little orgasms, am I going to fill this tight cunt with my cum.”

The filthy promise sends a fresh wave of arousal through me. My inner walls clench around his cock.

“Please,” I beg.

“Please, what? Please let you come again? Please pump you full?” His hips snap with brutal force. “Earn it.”

The demands of my body overwhelm my exhausted mind as he relentlessly circles my clit. My legs shake violently, straining against my binds as the water sloshes around us.

“That’s it,” he growls. “Give it to me, Kira. Show me what a good little slut you are.”

I can’t fight it anymore. The tension coils tighter until it snaps, sending me hurtling over the edge. My third orgasm rips through me with such intensity that I scream his name, the sound echoing across the empty beach.

"RYKER! Oh god, RYKER!"

Wave after wave of pleasure crashes through me. The cold water contrasts with the fire consuming me from within.

“Fuck yes,” he praises, his eyes wild with desire. “Look at you, coming so hard for me. Such a good girl. My beautiful little fear slut.”

The praise washes over me, intensifying everything. Ryker’s rhythm changes, becoming more brutal, more primal. He slams into me with renewed force, each thrust harder than the last.

“You’re mine,” he growls, his fingers digging into my hips. “This cunt is mine to fill whenever I want.”

His words should offend me, but they only fuel the fire. I’m delirious with pleasure.

“Yes,” I gasp. “Yours. All yours.”

“I’m going to breed this tight pussy,” he snarls, his thrusts becoming erratic. “Fill you so fucking full you’ll be dripping for days.”

The filthy promise sends another shock of arousal through me. I clench around him involuntarily.

“Please,” I beg. “Please fill me up.”

“Such a good little breeding toy,” he pants, his voice strained. “Taking my cock so well.”

With a guttural roar, Ryker slams into me one final time, burying himself to the hilt. I feel him pulse inside me, hot spurts flooding my core as he claims me completely.

“That’s it,” he groans, grinding against me. “Taking every drop like the little cumslut you are.”

His breathing is ragged against my lips as he kisses me, his chest heaving with exertion. I kiss him back with the little energy I have left, my body completely spent from the multiple orgasms and the emotional storm we’ve just weathered. The water laps around us, still dangerously high, but in this moment, I feel strangely safe despite being bound to a post in the sea.

Ryker’s hands move to my restraints, fingers working quickly to undo the bindings that have held me in place. As each one comes loose, my limbs fall heavy and useless, pins and needles shooting through them as circulation returns. When the final binding releases, I slump forward into his arms, my legs barely able to hold me upright.

“Can you swim back?” he asks, his voice hoarse and concerned as he supports my weight.

I shake my head against his chest, feeling the exhaustion in every cell of my body. “No... I don’t think I can. Too exhausted.” The admission comes easily—there’s no point pretending I have strength I don’t possess.

Ryker nods, seeming unsurprised by my answer. He turns his back on me.

“Grab onto my neck. I’ll swim us back,” he commands, but his tone is gentler than before.

I wrap my trembling arms around his neck, pressing my chest against his broad back. He reaches behind to secure my legs around his waist, making sure I’m firmly attached to him.

“Hold tight,” he warns.

I cling to him as he begins swimming through the waves, his powerful strokes cutting through the water with surprising efficiency. My cheek rests against his shoulder, eyes half-closed as I feel the rhythm of his movements beneath me. The contrast is jarring—moments ago he was inside me, brutal and demanding, and now he’s carrying me to safety with the same strength he used to dominate me.

RYKER

*T*he drive back to the compound stretches in silence. Kira stares out the window, her face a mask I can't read. The water still clings to her hair, salt crystals forming as it dries. I keep glancing at her, cataloging every detail—the rise and fall of her chest, the slight tremble in her hands, the way she tucks her legs underneath her on the seat.

"You're free to go," I say, the words cutting my throat on their way out. "When we return, I'll take you to your place if that's what you want."

Her head snaps toward me, eyes wide. "What?"

"You're not my captive anymore." My knuckles turn white on the steering wheel. "It's your choice now."

We pull into the compound, and I kill the engine. The silence feels like a wall between us. I wait, not daring to look at her, afraid of what I might see—or worse, what I might do if she chooses to leave.

"Ryker?" Her voice is small, uncertain.

"Yes?"

"I don't want this to end." The words tumble out in a rush. "I want to be with you. Stay with you."

"Are you sure?" I ask, my voice rough.

She nods, reaching for my hand. "I'm sure."

Inside, I guide her to the shower while I head to the kitchen. For once, I'm not calculating, not planning—just feeling. I pull ingredients from the fridge, making her favorite pasta dish I discovered when surveilling her. The familiar motions of cooking center me.

When she emerges in one of my t-shirts, hair damp and cheeks flushed, I can't help but stare.

“What?” she asks, self-conscious.

“Nothing.” I smile, setting a plate before her. “Just thinking I’d like to take you on a proper date. Our first one.”

“A date?” Her lips curve upward.

“Yes, a real date—dinner, maybe a movie. Whatever normal people do.” I brush a strand of hair from her face. “No levels, no games. Just us.”

Emotions play across Kira’s face—vulnerability, desire, hesitation. She takes a bite of pasta, closing her eyes briefly as she savors it.

“I’d like that,” she says, looking up at me through her lashes. “A real date sounds nice.”

I nod, relief washing through me. But then she continues, her voice growing stronger.

“But I quite like the levels, too,” she admits, a blush creeping up her neck. “Maybe we could do the remaining levels you planned spaced out over time? Not all at once, like we’ve been doing.”

My fork freezes halfway to my mouth. I set it down carefully.

“You’d want to continue?” I ask, my voice rougher than intended.

Kira nods, tracing patterns in her pasta sauce with her fork. “I actually —” She stops, swallows. “I loved Level Seven.”

The beach. The tide. Her bound to the post as the water rose around her. Her fear and arousal mingled as I took her in the crashing waves.

A darkness surges through me, a possessive heat. In all my calculations, I’d factored in Stockholm syndrome, trauma bonding, and even eventual acceptance. But not true desire. Not her asking for more.

“You loved it?” I repeat, needing to hear it again.

“The rush of it. The danger, knowing you wouldn’t let anything really bad happen to me.” Her eyes meet mine, steady now. “How you looked at me like I was the only thing that mattered in the universe.”

I reach across the table, taking her hand in mine. Her pulse flutters under my thumb like a captured bird.

“You are,” I say simply, because it’s true. “You’re everything.”

She turns her hand over, her fingers intertwining with mine. “So we can have both? Normal dates and... the other stuff?”

I lean forward, the intensity of my gaze making her breath catch.

“You want more levels?” My voice drops. “I have five more designed, each more intense than the last.”

She bites her lower lip, and I nearly groan at the sight.

“But I’ll create a hundred more if that’s what you want,” I continue, brushing my thumb across her cheek. “A thousand. I’ll build worlds for you to conquer and challenges to overcome. Whatever twisted fantasy you can imagine, I’ll make it a reality.”

The devotion in my voice surprises even me. I’d planned to break her to make her mine. Instead, seeing her broken at my hand unraveled me, and now she’s claimed me completely.

“I’ll do anything for you, Kira. Anything.” The words feel ripped from somewhere deep. “The levels, normal dates, quiet nights at home. All of it.”

Her eyes shine with tears. “You mean it?”

I take her face in my hands, gentle yet firm. “I’ve never meant anything more. You own me now. All my skills, resources, and obsessions are yours to command.”

She smiles, that small, genuine smile that makes my chest ache.

“I think I’d like that,” she says, her voice stronger than before. “The levels could be between real life and us learning about each other.”

The tension between us shifts, softens into comfort. She takes another bite of pasta, laughter suddenly dancing in her eyes.

“So tell me about Level Eight,” she says casually, as if asking about the weather. “Is it as intense as Seven?”

I can’t help but laugh, the sound rusty but real. “Curious, aren’t we? Level Eight is different, but that’s all I’m saying for now.”

She grins, leaning her chin on her hand. “And your favorite game? You know all of mine, but I’ve never asked about yours.”

Kira finishes the last few bites of pasta, closing her eyes briefly with each mouthful. She’s appreciating the food I made for her, a connection that feels oddly more intimate than anything we’ve shared.

“So you never answered,” she says, setting her fork down. “What’s your actual favorite game? Not just the ones you’ve played with me.”

“Dishonored,” I admit, collecting our plates. “The balance between stealth and chaos, the multiple paths. Every decision has consequences.”

Kira’s eyes light up. “That tracks. You’re definitely a calculated chaos kind of guy.”

We leave the dishes in the sink, which I’d never normally do, but tonight I can’t bear to waste a minute away from her. I guide her to the living room, my hand resting lightly on the small of her back.

“I have every streaming service known to man,” I tell her as we collapse onto the couch. “Take your pick.”

She selects some mindless action movie—but within minutes, we’re turned toward each other, the TV nothing but colored light and background noise.

“What was the first game you ever played?” she asks, tucking her feet under my thigh.

“Doom, on my dad’s computer. Before things went bad.” The honesty slips out before I can stop it. “You?”

“Super Mario World. I was five and terrible at it.” Her laugh is soft, unguarded.

We trade stories like precious gems—her first console, my first hack, the games that saved us when reality was too harsh. I’ve memorized her life from surveillance and research, but hearing it from her lips makes everything new.

“I just realized something,” Kira says, her head resting against my shoulder. “This is the longest I’ve gone without conventionally gaming in years.”

I tense slightly. “I’m sorry—”

“No,” she interrupts, placing her hand on mine. “I’ve been playing your game instead, but it’s different. More intense. Real.” She looks up at me, vulnerability and strength mingling in her eyes. “Maybe better.”

I brush my thumb across her knuckles, cataloging this moment. Another piece of her I never expected to possess.

Her expression shifts as she considers something, her brow furrowing.

“So what happens next?” she asks, fingers tracing idle patterns on my forearm.

The thought of her returning to that apartment sends a jolt through me. I’ve dismantled most of the surveillance equipment there, but not all.

“You could commute to work,” I say carefully, measuring each word. “From here to work and back.”

She raises an eyebrow. “Are you asking me to move in with you? Before we’ve even had our first official date?”

A teasing lilt in her voice makes warmth unfurl in my chest. This is new territory—the playful banter, the undefined boundaries. I’ve mapped out every scenario except where she willingly chooses to stay.

“I am.” I run my thumb across her lower lip. “Unconventional, I know. But when have we done anything by the book?”

She laughs, the sound light and genuine. “That’s putting it mildly.” Her fingers curl around mine. “Most couples meet on dating apps. We met because you stalked me and kidnapped me.”

“I prefer ‘aggressively pursued.’” I smirk, then grow serious. “You could keep your place as I was bluffing about clearing it out. Go there whenever you need space. But yes, I want you here.”

“Moving in together before our first date.” She shakes her head, but she’s smiling. “Only us.”

I pull her closer, drinking in the reality of her. “I’ve never been good at maintaining normal boundaries when it comes to you.”

I feel her body shift against mine, settling into my side as if she’s always belonged there. The weight of her, warm and real, makes something in my chest expand. I’ve mapped her body’s measurements down to the millimeter and planned for every possible outcome—except this one. Her willingness changes everything.

“I’ll need to get some things from my apartment,” she says, looking up at me. “Clothes, my gaming setup...”

“Of course.” I run my fingers through her hair, savoring the silky texture. “I can have everything brought here tomorrow.”

“I should probably get it myself,” she counters, a hint of steel in her voice. “I need to give notice to my landlord and explain to a few people... including Jenna.”

Jenna. Her friend. The variable I hadn’t fully accounted for.

“She’ll notice I’m gone,” Kira continues. “I can’t disappear without a word.”

I consider the possibilities, running scenarios through my mind. “She won’t approve.”

“No.” Kira’s laugh is soft but certain. “She definitely won’t.”

I tilt her chin up. “Will that change your mind?”

“No.” Her answer is immediate, unwavering. “This is my choice. My life.”

My fingers find the pulse point in her neck, feeling it quicken. “I don’t share well, Kira. Not even with best friends.”

“I’m not asking you to share.” She shifts, turning to face me fully. “But I won’t cut people out of my life. You can’t expect that.”

My instinct is to refuse. It's what I've always done. The determined set of her jaw tells me this is non-negotiable.

"I'll compromise," I say finally. "You maintain your friendships, but our relationship—what happens between us—stays private."

Relief softens her features. "Deal."

I pull her closer, pressing my lips to her forehead. Her scent—sweet orange blossom soap—fills my senses.

"Tomorrow we'll get your things," I murmur against her skin. "Tonight, you're mine."

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KIRA

T

he coffee shop buzzes with normal life—people ordering lattes, typing on laptops, and meeting friends. I wrap my hands around my mug, absorbing its warmth while ignoring Ryker's third notification in the last hour.

Are you safe?

Did you arrive?

Remember our agreement.

My fingers hover over the screen. A week ago, I was his captive. Now I'm his... what? Girlfriend? Partner? The woman who chose to stay with her kidnapper?

The bell above the door jingles. I look up, and there's Jenna—my best friend who has no idea where I've been for the last two weeks. Her blonde hair is pulled back in a messy bun, dark circles under her eyes. When she spots me, her face transforms through shock, anger, and relief.

"Kira?" Her voice breaks. "Oh my god."

She rushes over, nearly knocking over my chair as she hugs me. Her familiar coconut shampoo and that perfume she's worn since college bring tears to my eyes.

"Where the fuck have you been?" She pulls back, gripping my shoulders. "I filed a missing person report. The police searched. Your face is on flyers all over town."

My cheeks burn. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry? You disappeared in the middle of GamerCon without a word. Your phone was dead. No one could reach you." Her eyes narrow. "Are those new clothes?"

I glance down at the soft cashmere sweater Ryker bought me. "I can explain."

Can I, though? How do I tell her that I'm living with the man who kidnapped me? When I'm away from him, my skin crawls with need. That sometimes I wake in the night, reaching for him, panicking when he's not there?

"I met someone," I whisper.

"At GamerCon? And you just... left with him? Without telling me?"

I nod, the lie is easier than the truth. Is it Stockholm syndrome that makes me check my phone again? Is it brainwashing that makes me crave the safety of Ryker's arms, his compound?

Or is it something real—the connection we forged through those twisted "levels," how he sees the darkness in me and loves it anyway? Or even the connection we forged over two years of gaming together.

"Kira." Jenna's voice pulls me back. "What's going on with you? This isn't like you at all."

"I met Rogue," I blurt out, my hands fidgeting with my coffee mug. "He actually came to GamerCon."

Jenna's eyebrows shoot up. "What?"

"Yeah, and get this—he was that guy. From the club. The one who wouldn't talk to me." The lie flows easier than I expected, weaving truth with fiction. "He wanted to surprise me. That's why he never spoke at the club—he didn't want to give away his voice that I'd recognize from our sessions."

"That's..." Jenna's face scrunches up. "That's honestly creepy as hell, Kira. He stalked you at a club before the convention?"

"No, it wasn't like that." I feel heat rise to my cheeks. "It was sweet. He wanted our first meeting to be special."

Jenna looks unconvinced. "There's nothing sweet about a guy following you around and planning some elaborate reveal."

"He was a Ghost cosplayer," I continue, desperate to make this sound romantic instead of terrifying. "After he showed me who he was, he asked me on a date. Turns out he's loaded, like, seriously wealthy. He has this amazing place in the woods near the ocean."

I take a sip of my coffee, avoiding her eyes. "Everything happened so fast. He whisked me away, and I got caught up in everything. I'm sorry I didn't call. It was this whole whirlwind thing."

Jenna stares at me for a long moment, her expression shifting between concern and disbelief. She toys with the cardboard sleeve on her cup.

"So this guy—your gaming buddy—turns out to be some secret billionaire who's been following you to clubs, and then he reveals himself at the convention and sweeps you off to his mansion?" Her voice is flat. "And you didn't think once to text me, other than that very cryptic text that you were okay?"

"I know how it sounds," I mumble.

"Do you?" Jenna leans forward. "Because it sounds like you're not telling me everything or dating a stalker."

I sigh, picking at the cardboard sleeve on my cup. "Look, I get it. He's intense. Maybe a little stalkerish if you want to call it that." I meet Jenna's eyes. "But we've been gaming together for two years, Jenna. Two years. I know the real him, not just some surface-level stuff."

Jenna's expression doesn't soften. "Online isn't real life, Kira. We've talked about this."

"I know, but..." I pause, remembering Ryker's hands on my skin, his voice in my ear, the way he seemed to know exactly what I needed before I did. "The chemistry was exactly the same in person. Better, even. It was like we'd been together forever. I couldn't help myself."

My phone buzzes again. I glance down to see another text from Ryker.

I miss you. Come home soon.

Something warm unfurls in my chest at the word "home."

"You're different," Jenna says. "There's something you're not telling me."

I take a deep breath. "I know this is crazy and fast, and you're worried. But I'm happy, Jenna. Happier than I've been in a long time."

Jenna's shoulders slump slightly. She doesn't fully buy my story—there are too many holes and unanswered questions. But I also see the relief in her eyes that I'm safe and sitting across from her again.

"You should meet him," I suggest, the words tumbling out before I can reconsider. Ryker and I hadn't discussed this. "Come over for dinner. Make up your own mind about him."

Jenna's expression shifts from concern to surprise. "You want me to meet him? Really?"

I nod, even as anxiety twists through my stomach. Ryker hadn't approved this. We have rules now—agreements about what I can share and who can know about us. But I need someone from my old life to see us together, to witness that there's something real between us.

"Yeah. This weekend maybe? He's a great cook."

Jenna studies me, suspicion still evident in her narrowed eyes. "And he'd be okay with that? Just like that? Me showing up?"

I swallow hard and glance at my phone. Another message has appeared.

I guess you're still at the coffee shop. Everything okay?

Is he monitoring me right now?

The coffee shop has security cameras—of course he's monitoring them. This knowledge should terrify me, but it feels like being wrapped in a protective blanket.

"I'll ask him," I say, my fingers typing a response. "But I think he'll say yes. He knows how important you are to me."

That much is true. Ryker knows everything about me—my friendship with Jenna, our games as kids, and our college adventures. He'd extracted every detail during those "levels," leaving nothing private.

"Okay," Jenna says slowly. "If he agrees, I'll come. But Kira—" she reaches across the table and grabs my hand, squeezing it tight, "—if anything feels wrong, if you need help, you can tell me. Anything. I'll believe you."

The concern in her eyes makes my throat tighten. If she only knew what I've been through—what I've chosen.

"I know," I whisper, squeezing her hand back.

My phone buzzes with Ryker's reply, and I hold my breath as I read it.

Fine. Saturday at 7. I'll cook something suitable.

The terseness of his message tells me everything I need to know. He's not happy about this arrangement, but he's allowing it for me.

"He says yes," I tell Jenna, trying to sound casual despite the tension knotting in my stomach. "Saturday at seven?"

Jenna nods. "I'll be there. Text me the address?"

I hesitate. Ryker's compound is secluded—intentionally so. "He'll probably send a car for you. It's kind of remote."

"Of course it is," Jenna mutters, rolling her eyes. "Your mysterious boyfriend lives in a remote mansion. Totally normal."

As we finish our coffee, discussing safer topics like her job and the latest gaming news, I can't stop my mind from racing ahead to Saturday night. Ryker and Jenna are in the same room. My past and present are colliding in ways I never imagined possible.

How will they interact? Ryker can be charming when he wants to be—I've seen him slip into that mask effortlessly. But Jenna knows me better than anyone. She'll be analyzing his every move and looking for red flags.

What if she somehow senses what's underneath? What if she looks at us together and sees not a whirlwind romance but a prisoner and her captor?

Jenna has always been perceptive. She knew when I was lying about finishing assignments in college and when I was upset, even before I did. If anyone could see through the facade Ryker and I have constructed, it's her.

But even more terrifying—what if she sees the truth? That part of me has embraced this captivity. That somewhere between level one and seven, I stopped fighting and started accepting. Not just Ryker, but my true self.

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RYKER

T

he blue dot on my screen inches along the winding road leading to our compound. Five minutes out, I minimize the tracking app and glance at the other monitors—security feeds from all angles of the property, system diagnostics, and network traffic. Everything is secure and under control.

I shouldn't have let her go alone.

My fingers drum against the desk as I wait. The coffee shop meeting was a risk. Necessary, but dangerous. Jenna knows too much and suspects even more. The way she looked at Kira, searching for signs of duress—it's all there in the video I captured through Kira's phone.

"Three minutes from destination," the app announces.

I roll my shoulders and close the audio file where I'd been reviewing their conversation. Kira doesn't need to know I was listening. What she doesn't know won't hurt her. This is protection, not control. There's a difference.

The cameras at the front gate activate as her car approaches. I watch her punch in the code, her small hands moving with certainty. She belongs here now with me.

Her face in the camera tells me everything. The slight furrow between her brows. The way she bites her lower lip. Jenna got to her. Planted seeds of doubt.

I switch to the garage camera and watch as she parks. She sits for a moment, both hands on the wheel, eyes closed, taking a breath and preparing herself.

For what?

The question burns in my chest as I kill the feeds and straighten my shirt. By the time Kira enters, I'll be in the kitchen, casual, normal. Like I haven't been tracking her every movement since she left. As if I didn't hack into the coffee shop's security system to watch their entire interaction from three different angles.

Some habits can't be broken. Some parts of me will never change, even for her, especially for her.

The garage door into the compound opens.

She's home.

I close my laptop.

I time it perfectly, pouring myself a glass of water as her footsteps echo down the hallway. I have three seconds to arrange my body language—relaxed shoulders, casual lean against the granite countertop, eyes not immediately seeking the door. The illusion of normalcy matters.

The kitchen door swings open. Kira's cheeks flush with color from the cool air outside, her hair slightly windblown. Beautiful. Mine.

"Hey," she says, voice tight around the edges.

I take a slow sip of water, measuring her expression against my memorized baseline. "How was coffee with Jenna?"

Her bag drops to the floor with a soft thud. "She wants to meet you."

"I know. You texted me, remember?"

A beat of silence stretches between us.

"Saturday dinner," I say, setting down my glass. "At our home."

Kira's fingers fidget with her sleeve. "Are you angry?"

I cross the space between us, cupping her face in my hands. Her pulse quickens beneath my thumbs. "No."

Relief floods her features. She has no idea how carefully I'm controlling myself right now. The thought of Jenna in our space, looking for evidence, judging what we've built, makes my skin crawl. But Kira needs this bridge to her old life, and I need Kira.

"What did you tell her about us?" I keep my voice neutral, fingers gentle in her hair.

"We met at the convention, and things happened fast." Her eyes drop to my chest. "I didn't tell her about... You know. The beginning."

"Good," I murmur against her temple. "That's good."

I feel Kira melt into my arms, her body yielding against mine in that perfect way that tells me she's mine. I tighten my grip around her, inhaling

the scent of her hair, cataloging every sensation like I always do. The slight tremor in her shoulders. The way her breath catches when I press my lips to her temple.

“I can’t lose you,” I whisper against her skin, and it’s the most honest thing I’ve ever said. “If someone like Jenna knew—really knew—about how we started, she’d try to stop us from being together.”

Kira stiffens slightly in my arms. I feel her pulse quicken beneath my fingertips.

“I can’t have that,” I continue, my voice dropping lower. “We’ve come too far. What we have is too important.”

I stroke her hair, soothing her like a frightened animal. She doesn’t understand that everything I do is for us, for her.

“There’s something you need to see,” I say, reluctantly releasing her with one arm to reach for my iPad on the counter. I unlock it with my thumbprint and pull up the feed I’ve been monitoring for three days.

Kira’s still pressed against my chest as I position the screen so she can see it. I feel the exact moment she processes the image—her body tensing, her breath stopping for 2.4 seconds.

The live feed shows a man sitting on the edge of a prison cot, his head in his hands. The cell is sparse: a steel toilet, a small sink, and a thin mattress. The man’s shoulders are hunched, and he seems defeated.

“Is that—” Kira pulls back slightly, blinking rapidly as she tries to understand what she’s seeing. Her voice cracks. “My uncle?”

Her eyes dart between the screen and my face, confusion and fear battling across her features.

“What is this?” she whispers, the question hanging between us like a blade.

I watch the recognition bloom across Kira’s face as she stares at the screen. My arm tightens around her waist, steadying her as the shock settles.

“Yes,” I confirm, my voice low and controlled. “That’s your uncle. The man who hurt you.”

Her fingers tremble against the iPad screen. I take it from her before she can drop it, setting it face-up on the counter where the feed continues to play. The man who violated her childhood sits in his makeshift cell, unaware he’s being watched by the woman he damaged.

“How did you—”

“I have resources,” I say simply. “Connections. People who owe me favors.”

Her pulse thunders beneath my fingertips. The beautiful chaos of her emotions plays across her face—fear, confusion, terror, relief.

“I can’t bear the thought of him out there,” I explain, stroking her cheek with my thumb. “Living his life. Attending your family dinners. Pretending he never touched you.”

I press my forehead against hers, breathing her in. “The thought of him existing in the same world as you, breathing the same air—” My voice hardens. “It’s unacceptable.”

Kira pulls back slightly, her eyes searching mine. I see the question forming before she asks it, the way her brow furrows, the slight parting of her lips.

“What are you going to do to him?” she whispers.

The question hangs between us. I study her face, cataloging every microexpression. This moment matters. Her reaction will determine everything.

“That depends,” I say carefully, brushing a strand of hair from her face. “On what you want.”

Kira’s face shifts into confusion, her brow furrowing as she processes my words. She looks between the screen and my face, searching for answers. The vulnerability in her eyes tugs at something deep inside me—a feeling I’m still learning to recognize.

“I don’t understand,” she whispers. “Where is he?”

I take her hands, feeling their slight tremble against my palms. “He’s being held securely. Not here, but somewhere no one will find him.”

Her confusion doesn’t fade. Time to show her exactly who I am—who I’ve always been beneath the careful masks.

“When I was younger,” I say, my voice eerily calm even to my ears, “I learned that some people don’t deserve second chances. Some people can’t be redeemed.”

I watch her eyes widen as I continue.

“I’ve arranged for him to disappear, Kira. Permanently. No trace. No questions. He’ll simply... cease to exist.” My grip tightens slightly around her hands. “I won’t apologize for what I’m about to do. Not after what he did to you.”

Kira doesn’t pull away. Instead, she stands perfectly still, listening.

“I want him gone,” I continue, my voice dropping lower. “For you. For what he took from you.”

I watch Kira’s face carefully. Her pupils dilate slightly. The small muscle beside her left eye twitches once, twice. Her breathing changes—shallow and quick. Anyone else would miss these subtle signs, but I’ve memorized the language of her body.

She’s in shock.

For seventeen seconds, she doesn’t move. Doesn’t speak. Just stares at the screen where her uncle sits in his makeshift cell, unaware of our scrutiny. I allow the silence to stretch between us, giving her time to process. My confession hangs in the air—words I can’t take back. Words I don’t want to take back.

“What are you thinking, beautiful?” I finally ask, my voice gentler than I expected. “About what I said? About what I want to do?”

Her wide and unfocused eyes snap to mine. Our connection vibrates with tension. This moment feels precarious, balanced on a knife’s edge. One wrong move could shatter everything we’ve built.

Without a word, Kira moves to the kitchen table, pulling out a chair with mechanical precision. She sits down heavily, like her body suddenly weighs too much for her legs to support. Her fingers rise to her temples, pressing into the skin in small circular motions.

The gesture is familiar—I’ve seen it thirty-seven times since she’s been with me. Always when she’s overwhelmed, when her thoughts race too quickly for her to process. I’ve memorized this particular stress response and filed it with all her other habits and tells.

I remain where I stand, giving her space. The distance between us feels vast and dangerous. I’ve miscalculated and revealed too much too soon. The urge to touch her is overwhelming, but I force myself to stay still. She needs time.

Her fingers press harder against her temples, eyes closed now. The silence stretches, punctuated only by her uneven breathing and the faint sound from the iPad where her uncle shifts on his cot, oblivious to his fate hanging in the balance.

Kira’s body shudders as the first sob breaks free. It tears through her, raw and guttural, her shoulders heaving with the force of it. I freeze, as she crumples forward at the table, her face buried in her hands.

Have I gone too far?

I move to her side, crouching beside her chair, not touching her yet. I wait. One heartbeat. Two. Her sobs continue, filling the space between us.

“Kira—”

“No,” she cuts me off, her voice thick with tears. She lifts her head, and I see her face is streaked and blotchy, eyes burning with an intensity that stops the words in my throat. “No, I want him gone.”

My breath catches. “You’re sure?”

“Yes.” She shakes her head, another sob escaping. “He took everything from me, and no one—” Her voice breaks. “Even my own mother wouldn’t believe me. I told her, I told her what he did, and she said I was making it up for attention.”

I take her hands in mine, squeezing gently. “I believe you, Kira. I’ve always believed you.”

“How?” Her eyes search mine, desperate and wounded. “You believe me so easily. So easily you’d—you’d do this for me.”

I cup her face, wiping away tears with my thumbs. The trust in her eyes is a heady thing, more intoxicating than any drug I’ve ever experienced.

“What will happen?” she whispers, her hands clutching mine now. “What if—what if someone finds out? What if they trace it back to you?”

I can’t help the low chuckle that escapes me. The idea is so absurd, so impossibly unlikely that it almost feels like she’s made a joke.

“No one will find out.” I press my forehead against hers. “I’ve made arrangements. Professional arrangements. He’ll simply vanish.”

“When?” Kira asks, her voice steadier now despite the tears still streaking her cheeks. “When will it happen?”

I study her face carefully, searching for any hesitation or doubt. There’s none. Just a burning intensity that matches what I feel inside.

“Tonight,” I tell her, running my thumb across her knuckles. “It’s already in motion.”

Her fingers tighten around mine. “Will it be quick?”

“Do you want it to be?” I ask, my voice low.

She hesitates, conflict flickering across her face. “I don’t know. Part of me wants him to suffer. Part of me just wants him gone.”

“Then he’ll suffer,” I say simply. “And then he’ll be gone.”

For a moment, we sit in silence, her hand in mine, the weight of what’s about to happen settling around us. I’ve never shared this part of myself

with anyone before or allowed someone to see the darkness I keep carefully hidden. Yet here she is, looking at the darkest parts of me without flinching.

Kira stands suddenly, pulling me up with her. Before I can react, she slides her hands into my hair and pulls my face to hers.

Her lips press against mine with an intensity that surprises me. This is desperate, her body arching into mine as if she's trying to crawl inside my skin.

Her eyes lock with mine when she breaks away, bright with tears and something I've been waiting for.

"I love you," she whispers against my lips. "I know it's crazy. I know it's wrong. But I love you, Ryker Kent."

Three simple words I never expected to hear directed at me. Not honestly. Not without manipulation or fear behind them.

Her hands frame my face, keeping my eyes on hers as she says it again. "I love you."

Her words pierce something in me I thought had died years ago. The weight of them settles in my chest, unfamiliar but undeniable.

"I love you too, Kira." The confession tears from my throat, unfiltered. "I was obsessed with you the moment I first saw you, and now obsession has become even deeper."

I press my lips to her forehead, breathing her in. "And I will prove it to you every day for the rest of our lives."

My eyes drift to the iPad screen where her abuser sits, unaware of the fate awaiting him. "He'll never hurt anyone again. Not after tonight."

I press my forehead against hers, our breath mingling in the space between us. "It's done. Let me take care of everything. Let me take care of you."

KIRA

T

he waiting is unbearable.

I pace across Ryker's living room, my bare feet silent against the hardwood floors. It's been hours since he made the call—a single sentence spoken into his phone before hanging up: "Proceed as discussed."

Night has fallen, the darkness outside pressing against the floor-to-ceiling windows. As I move, I catch glimpses of my reflection—hair disheveled from running my hands through it, eyes wide and haunted. I barely recognize myself.

My uncle is going to die tonight.

The thought sends me a strange rollercoaster of emotions—horror, guilt, vindication, then, finally, relief. I've never wished death on anyone before. But I've also never hated anyone the way I hate him.

"Drink this." Ryker's says, standing in the doorway and offering me a glass of amber liquid.

I take it without question, welcoming the burn as it slides down my throat. Whiskey. Expensive, from the smoothness of it.

"How much longer?" I ask, my voice smaller than I intended.

Ryker glances at his watch. "Not long now."

He looks so calm, so collected—as if arranging someone's murder is just another Tuesday night activity. I suppose for him, it might be. The thought should terrify me. It doesn't. It makes me feel strangely safer than I can recall ever feeling.

"Come here," he says, opening his arms.

I step into his embrace, the solid wall of his chest anchoring me as my thoughts spiral. His heartbeat is steady and strong against my ear, his

breathing even. How can he be so calm when I'm unraveling?

"Are you sure about this?" I ask. "What if they trace it back to you?"

His chest rumbles with a soft laugh. "They won't. The people I've hired are professionals. They'll make him disappear without a trace."

I pull back slightly, searching his face. "But you said he'd suffer first."

Something dark flickers behind Ryker's eyes. "He will. They have their instructions."

I swallow hard, imagining what those instructions might entail. Part of me wants to know the details; another is grateful for Ryker's discretion.

"What happens after?" I ask. "To... to the body?"

"It will never be found." His voice is matter-of-fact, clinical. "Your family will report him missing. The police will investigate, but they'll find nothing. No evidence, no trial. People disappear every day, Kira."

The methodical nature of his planning should disturb me. If I'm being honest, however, I'm relieved he's thought of everything.

"And my mother?"

"Will never know what happened to him. She'll wonder, she'll grieve perhaps, but eventually, she'll move on." Ryker's hand comes up to cup my face. "They all will."

I lean into his touch, drawing strength from his certainty. "And me? How do I move on?"

"You already have." His thumb traces my lower lip. "The moment you decided he didn't deserve to breathe the same air as you. The moment you chose your future over his."

His phone buzzes in his pocket, interrupting the moment. I freeze as he pulls it out, his expression revealing nothing as he reads the message.

"It's done," he says simply.

Two words. Just two words to signify a man's life ending. My uncle's life. The monster that haunted my nightmares for years.

I wait for guilt to crash over me. For horror. For regret.

All I feel is lighter. As if a weight I've carried since childhood suddenly lifted, Ryker gave me peace of mind and solace I never thought I would find.

"They sent confirmation," Ryker adds, his eyes never leaving my face. "Do you want to see it?"

I hesitate. "What kind of confirmation?"

“It’s... definitive,” he says carefully. “But not overly graphic. You’ll need to be sure you want to see it.”

My heart pounds as I nod. “I need to see. I need to know it’s really over.”

Ryker holds out his phone. The screen shows an image that makes my breath catch—my uncle’s face, pale and still, visible through the partially unzipped opening of a black body bag. His eyes are closed, and his features slack in death. A gloved hand holds today’s newspaper in the frame, confirming the date. There’s no blood, no visible wounds, just the unmistakable stillness of death.

“Oh my God!” My fingers tremble as they hover over the screen. “It’s really him.”

“It’s over,” Ryker confirms quietly. “He’s gone.”

A dam I’ve held intact for too long breaks, freeing the little girl that no one believed or protected. I sink to my knees, my legs suddenly unable to support my weight. Ryker follows me down, gathering me against his chest as the first sob tears from my throat.

“It’s okay,” he murmurs against my hair. “Let it out.”

So I do. I cry for the little girl I was, for the innocence stolen, for the years spent afraid and ashamed. I cry for the woman I might have been if not for my uncle’s violations. I cry until my throat is raw and my tear-swollen eyes burn.

Through it all, Ryker holds me, his strong arms keeping me from flying apart completely. When my sobs finally quiet to hiccuping breaths, he tilts my face up to his.

“He can never hurt you again,” he says, wiping away my tears with his thumbs. “He’s gone.”

“Because of you,” I whisper, a new emotion surging through me—gratitude so intense it’s almost painful. “You did this for me.”

“I would do anything for you,” Ryker says, his voice rough with emotion. “Anything to keep you safe. To make you happy.”

The intensity in his eyes takes my breath away. This complicated, dangerous, brilliant man has done what no one else in my life ever could. He believed me, protected me, and eliminated the source of my deepest pain.

“I love you,” I say, the words feeling inadequate for the depth of my feelings. “I know that’s crazy. I know some might say it’s wrong. But I do.”

“There’s nothing wrong about it,” he says fiercely, his hands framing my face. “What’s between us—it’s the only thing in my life that’s ever felt right.”

I surge forward, claiming his mouth with mine. The kiss is desperate, grateful, and filled with countless emotions. His arms tighten around me as he responds with equal fervor, lifting me effortlessly.

I wrap my legs around his waist as he carries me to the bedroom, our lips never breaking contact. The need to be close to him, to feel his skin against mine, is formidable—a physical ache that only he can soothe.

When he lays me on the bed, I pull him down with me, unwilling to let go even for a moment. My fingers fumble with the buttons of his shirt, desperate to feel his warmth.

“Slow down,” he murmurs against my lips, his hands gently capturing mine. “We have all night.”

“I need you,” I beg. “Please, Ryker. I need to feel you.”

Something in my tone must convey my desperation because his resistance crumbles. He helps me with his buttons, shrugging off his shirt to reveal the tattooed expanse of his chest. My fingers trace the Ghost mask inked over his heart—the symbol of his devotion that still takes my breath away.

Our clothes fall away piece by piece, discarded carelessly on the floor. When we’re finally skin to skin, I sigh with relief, as if a physical connection was all I needed to feel whole again.

Ryker’s touch is reverent as he explores my body, his lips following the path of his hands. Every kiss feels like worship, every caress a promise. This isn’t the rough claiming I’ve come to expect from him—this is deeper, more profound.

“You’re safe now. You’re mine, and you’re safe.”

Tears well in my eyes again, but these are born of gratitude and love rather than pain. When he finally joins our bodies, the sensation is boundless. I cling to him, nails digging into his shoulders as he moves within me, each thrust driving away the last shadows of my past.

“Look at me,” Ryker commands gently, his hand cradling my face. “Stay with me.”

I open my eyes, meeting his gaze as we move together. The intensity there steals my breath—love, possession, and the darkness in his soul, the one that matches the twisted parts of my soul.

“You saved me,” I admit. “You freed me.”

“We saved each other,” he corrects, his rhythm never faltering. “You showed me what it means to love something more than control.”

His words make me spiral toward the edge, pleasure building with each precise movement of his hips. I’m vaguely aware of the sounds escaping my throat—desperate, needy sounds that would embarrass me with anyone else.

“That’s it,” he encourages, his voice strained as he nears release. “Let go, Kira. I’ve got you.”

And I do. I shatter beneath him, around him, my body convulsing with wave after wave of pleasure. He follows moments later, my name a prayer on his lips as he collapses against me, our bodies slick with sweat and tears.

As we lie tangled together in the aftermath, my uncle’s face flashes through my mind one last time—not the still, lifeless version from Ryker’s phone, but the smug, confident man who tormented my childhood. The man who no longer exists.

“He’s really gone,” I murmur against Ryker’s chest, the reality of it still sinking in.

“Forever,” Ryker confirms, his fingers tracing lazy patterns on my back. “You never have to think about him again.”

But I know I will—not with fear or shame, but with a strange sense of closure. The monster from my nightmares has been vanquished, not by time, therapy, or forgiveness, but by the man holding me now.

“Thank you,” I breathe, kissing Ryker’s heart. “For believing me. For doing what no one else would.”

His arms tighten around me protectively. “Always, Mischief. Always.”

As sleep begins to claim me, I feel lighter than I have in years. The weight of my past has been lifted, replaced by something new—something that looks suspiciously like a future. A future with Ryker built on the ashes of what came before.

It’s not perfect. It’s not normal. But it’s ours, and somehow, that’s enough.

RYKER

*T*he doorbell chimes, and my shoulders tense. I check the security camera on my phone—Jenna stands on our doorstep, hair pulled back in a neat ponytail, clutching a bottle of wine.

Fucking perfect.

“She’s here,” I call to Kira, who’s arranging flowers at the dining table.

The look Kira gives me—half warning, half pleading—makes me force a smile. For her, I’ll try. For her, I’d do anything.

I still see flashes of Kira from three nights ago—her face illuminated by the screen of my phone as she looked at her uncle’s lifeless face. The way her body trembled against mine as the reality set in. She whispered “thank you” against my lips before kissing me with raw emotion. Christ, I’ve never been so in love in my entire life.

My Kira. My beautiful, complicated, savage Kira.

But now Jenna threatens our bubble. She’s been suspicious since Kira returned, asking too many questions.

I open the door, standing tall in the frame, blocking Jenna’s view into our home. My home. Our territory.

“Jenna.” I extend my hand. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Jen!” Kira appears, wrapping her arms around Jenna in a hug that makes my stomach clench. I don’t like how Kira melts into the embrace; her body relaxes in a way it should only do with me.

They pull apart, and Jenna’s gaze meets mine over Kira’s shoulder. Something passes between us—knowledge, challenge, a silent war declaration. She knows I’m not what I pretend to be. And I know she’d take Kira away if given half a chance.

"Come in, come in." Kira ushers her friend inside, touching my arm as they pass.

I close the door, my fingers lingering on the lock. One turn, and I could secure us, lock Jenna in the basement, keep the outside world at bay, and keep Kira safe with me where she belongs.

But I know Kira wouldn't allow it, so I leave it unlocked.

I watch Jenna like a hawk as she moves through our space, touching things, examining photos, and invading our sanctuary. Whenever she whispers something to Kira that makes her laugh, my jaw tightens. Kira's laughter belongs to me now.

"Dinner's almost ready," Kira calls from the kitchen. "Ryker, can you pour the wine?"

I move to the task, calculating exactly how much wine would be needed to drug Jenna if necessary. Old habits.

"So," Jenna's voice cuts through my thoughts as she leans against the counter. "You two met at GamerCon?"

The lie we've constructed sits ready on my tongue. "Yes."

"Kira hasn't stopped talking about you," Jenna says, her eyes never leaving mine. "It's like she's under a spell."

I smile. "Is that so bad?"

"Depends on who cast it."

Dinner progresses with forced pleasantries. I observe how Jenna watches Kira's mannerisms, noting changes and cataloging differences. She's protective—not unlike me, just without my methods.

Halfway through the meal, Kira excuses herself to the bathroom. The moment she's gone, the pretense drops.

"I know there's something off about all this," Jenna says quietly. "Kira doesn't just disappear for days, then come back different."

"Different how?" I'm genuinely curious about her assessment.

"Lighter somehow. But also more anchored." Jenna looks down at her plate. "She used to float through life, never really belonging anywhere. Now she seems..."

"Found," I finish.

She nods reluctantly. "Yes."

When Kira returns, I notice how Jenna touches her arm—not possessively like I would, but with genuine affection. She asks about Kira's

anxiety, remembers her medication schedule, and mentions inside jokes from their shared past.

Something unexpected shifts in me. Jenna knows parts of Kira I don't—childhood memories, embarrassing stories, years of friendship. And she's stood by Kira through it all, protecting her in ways I never considered.

Perhaps we're not so different after all. We both want what's best for Kira. We just define "best" differently.

"So you're into coding too?" I ask, genuinely surprised when Jenna mentions her job at a tech startup. "What languages?"

"Python mostly, but I dabble in Java and a bit of C++," she answers, her initial stiffness melting slightly. "I'm working on a side project—an app that lets gamers connect based on skill level rather than just game preference."

I lean forward. "That's actually brilliant. Most platforms match based on games, but skill disparity ruins the experience."

Jenna blinks. "Exactly! Kira's been my guinea pig for testing. She's always getting matched with amateurs who can't keep up."

"Tell me about it," I laugh. "I mean, I had the same problem until we matched online."

A strange moment passes when we both realize we're bonding over our shared knowledge of Kira. The territorial beast inside me quiets, replaced by something unexpected—respect.

"More wine?" I refill Jenna's glass without waiting for the answer. She doesn't protest.

As dinner progresses, we discover more common ground—our shared contempt for pay-to-win games, our preference for strategy over button-mashing, even a similar taste in crime documentaries. With each revelation, the tension in the room decreases.

"I still can't believe you prefer PlayStation over PC," Jenna teases. "That's practically sacrilege in our friend group."

"The controller feels superior," I defend, enjoying the casual debate. "Though I've got a custom PC setup that would make you drool."

"I might have to see that," she concedes.

I glance at Kira, who's looking at us with bright eyes and a smile of pure happiness without the edge that usually colors our interactions. This smile is different—it's the smile of someone witnessing two worlds they love collide successfully.

Under the table, I find Kira's hand and give it a gentle squeeze. She squeezes back, a silent acknowledgment passing between us.

"You know," Jenna says, leaning back in her chair, "you're not exactly what I expected, Ryker."

"Is that good or bad?" I ask, still holding Kira's hand.

"I haven't decided yet," she replies with a slight smile that tells me she's already decided—and it's not entirely against me.

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EPILOGUE

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KIRA

One year later...

The late afternoon sunlight filters through gauzy curtains, painting golden patterns across my bare skin. I stretch, feeling the silky sheets slide against my body as I reach for Ryker beside me. Empty space greets my fingertips. We took a nap after lunch, and glancing at the clock on the nightstand, I'm surprised how long I slept—it's almost five o'clock.

My eyes take in our Thailand villa—all teak and glass, perched on the edge of paradise. I can see the private beach stretching out like a postcard through the open doors, waves lapping at pristine sand.

It has been a year with Ryker, a year since everything changed, a year of learning who I truly am, and a year for each of us to learn who we are *together*.

I slide from bed, wrapping myself in Ryker's discarded shirt from last night. It smells like him—sandalwood and his indefinable scent, the one that's purely Ryker. My feet pad across warm wooden floors as I step onto the veranda.

I see a folded note on the bistro table, held down by a small black box. My pulse immediately quickens. I recognize that handwriting. I recognize what this means.

My fingers tremble slightly as I unfold the paper.

Good morning, Mischief. Ready for Level Twelve? The box contains your first clue. The safe word remains the same. Remember—follow every instruction exactly. No exceptions.

Your Ghost

A thrill races through me, pooling low in my belly. My nipples harden against the soft fabric of his shirt, and I bite my lip in anticipation.

The black box calls to me. Inside could be anything—a key, a toy, instructions for some delicious depravity that Ryker has crafted specifically for me. These games of his tap into something primal within us both. Each challenge pushes boundaries I never knew I had, each level revealing darker, hungrier parts of myself.

I glance around the sprawling property—the lush jungle framing our secluded hideaway, the empty stretch of private beach. No one for miles. No one to hear whatever happens next.

My fingers hover over the box's edge before lifting the lid. A smile spreads across my face at what I find inside.

Inside the box lies a thin gold chain with a small key dangling. Beneath it, a folded piece of black paper with white writing is hidden. I slip the chain around my neck, the key cold against my skin, before unfolding the note.

Level Twelve: Primal

Your body is your only weapon. Your submission is your only shield.

Follow the red markers into the jungle path behind our villa. You'll find a clearing with a

singular ancient banyan tree. The one I showed you last week.

Rules:

1. Strip completely naked before entering the path.
2. Apply the oil in the wooden box with the first marker.
3. You have exactly 30 minutes from reading this note to reach the clearing.
4. The key around your neck opens something vital. Don't lose it.
5. You will be hunted. If caught before reaching the tree, you give up all control for 24 hours.
6. If you reach the tree first, you may claim your chosen reward.

Remember who owns you, Mischief.
Remember who you belong to.

Your Ghost is watching.

Heat floods my core. The jungle. The hunting ground where anything could happen. I check the time—eleven forty-seven a.m. The countdown has begun.

I drop Ryker's shirt to the floor and stand naked on the veranda, scanning the edge of the jungle for the first red marker. There—a flash of crimson tied to a palm frond about fifty yards away.

Thirty minutes to reach the clearing without being caught.

I dash toward the first marker. The wooden box sits beneath it, just as Ryker promised. Inside, a small bottle of fragrant oil that I quickly uncap and apply to my skin. It smells of something wild—sandalwood, jasmine, and something musky I can't identify. The oil glistens on my naked body, catching sunlight as I rub it across my breasts, stomach, and thighs.

Twenty-six minutes left.

The jungle path stretches before me, a ribbon of darkness cutting through vibrant green. Every hair on my body stands at attention as I step onto it, leaving civilization behind. The temperature drops instantly—a cool embrace compared to the beach's heat.

My breathing quickens. I'm prey now. Somewhere in this lush wilderness, Ryker waits.

The thought sends a shiver of anticipation up my spine.

A bird calls sharply overhead, and I nearly jump out of my skin. My laughter comes out shakier than intended. Every sense feels dialed to eleven—the brush of leaves against my oil-slicked skin, the symphony of unfamiliar sounds surrounding me.

I spot the second marker tied to a low-hanging branch, twenty yards deeper into the jungle. My pace quickens.

A twig snaps somewhere to my left. I freeze, pulse pounding in my ears.

Was that him? Or just some small creature going about its day, unaware of the human game of predator and prey happening in its territory?

I strain to listen, but the jungle is deafening in its awakened state— insects buzzing, distant monkeys chattering, the rustle of leaves in the humid breeze. Each sound makes me twitch, sending jolts of adrenaline through my system.

Another red marker comes into view. I'm making good progress; every step feels full of possibility. The key bounces between my breasts as I move, a constant reminder of what awaits at the end of this path.

The fourth marker comes into view through a curtain of vines. My chest heaves with exertion as I check the delicate watch Ryker gave me last night. Five minutes left. I can do this.

The jungle thins slightly, patches of sunlight breaking through the canopy. The clearing must be close. I can almost feel the ancient banyan tree calling to me, promising victory and the reward I'll claim from Ryker.

A brief movement out of the corner of my eye is my only warning.

He comes from nowhere—a blur of muscle and darkness that slams into me from the side. The impact knocks the breath from my lungs as we tumble to the ground. His Ghost mask gleams white against the jungle's green backdrop, and those familiar blue eyes burn through the eyeholes.

"Time's up," he growls, voice distorted by the mask.

He straddles me, powerful thighs trapping my hips. Sweat glistens on his bare chest, each tattooed muscle defined in stark relief. He wears nothing but black boxer briefs and that mask, which makes my mouth dry despite the humidity.

"I still have five minutes to get away from you and make it," I gasp, struggling beneath him.

His laugh is dark. "You think you can make it? Look at you—caught and wet already."

His fingers confirm his words, sliding through my slickness. The oil on my skin makes everything glide—his hands, my futile attempts to push him off.

"Admit it," he demands, yanking down his boxers with one swift motion. "You wanted to be caught."

His cock springs free, the metal of his piercing glints in the dappled sunlight. He grinds against me, that metal stud finding my clit with unerring precision. I arch involuntarily, a moan escaping my lips as the piercing drags across my most sensitive spot.

"Ryker," I pant, hips bucking upward.

"Say my name again," he commands, rubbing himself through my folds, the piercing creating friction that makes my vision blur. Each pass of metal against my clit sends shockwaves through my entire body.

"Ryker," I gasp again, my body responding to his touch despite my competitive urge to win this game.

As he hovers above me, piercing sliding against my wetness, something clicks in my brain. This seems... too easy. Too straightforward. Ryker's

games are never this simple. There's always a twist, always something I've overlooked.

The key hanging between my breasts suddenly feels heavier. What does it open? Why would he make such a point of it if this jungle chase was the entire game?

Ryker suddenly pulls away just as I'm about to ask him what I'm missing. The absence of his touch leaves me cold despite the jungle heat. He's on his feet in one fluid motion, yanking me upward by my wrist.

"Come," he commands, voice still distorted by the mask. He drags me forward, my feet stumbling to keep up with his purposeful stride.

"Where are we going?" I ask, bewildered by the abrupt change. One moment he was about to claim me on the jungle floor, the next he's marching us through the underbrush.

Through breaks in the foliage, I catch glimpses of the massive banyan tree ahead, its aerial roots creating an otherworldly canopy in the clearing.

"It's part of the game, Mischief," he says, not slowing his pace. His grip on my wrist is firm but not painful, encouraging rather than forcing me forward. "Did you really think catching you was the entire point of this level?"

The Ghost mask turns slightly toward me, and I can sense his smile behind it—that knowing, maddening smile that tells me I've only scratched the surface of whatever he's planned.

We reach the banyan tree, its massive trunk and hanging roots creating a natural sanctuary in the clearing. The ancient tree towers above us, its roots descending from branches like they're reaching the earth, creating another worldly cathedral of wood and leaves.

"The box," Ryker points to a gleaming metal container between two massive roots at the tree's base. "Use your key."

My hand trembles as I lift the delicate gold chain from my neck, the small key dangling between my breasts. The box is weathered steel with intricate engravings—symbols I don't recognize etched into its surface. The lock clicks open easily when I insert the key, and Ryker kneels beside me, his mask still in place.

"Open it," he commands, voice husky with anticipation.

I lift the lid, and my breath catches in my throat. Nestled on black velvet lies an assortment of objects that make my core clench with both fear and arousal. Among them, a realistic-looking prop gun, sleek and menacing.

“Jesus, Ryker.” My fingers hover over the contents.

He lifts the gun, handling it with practiced ease. “Safe, of course. But real enough where it counts.” His fingers caress the barrel in a way that makes my entire body flush with heat.

Beside it are other implements of pleasure and pain—things I’ve never seen before, let alone imagined inside me. The jungle suddenly feels too hot, too close around us.

“This is Level Twelve, Mischief,” Ryker purrs, lifting the gun and pressing its cool barrel against my heated skin. “Where we discover just how depraved we can be together.”

He guides me to my knees, positioning me over one of the tree’s massive roots. The rough bark scratches my inner thighs as he spreads me open from behind.

“Don’t move,” Ryker commands, his voice deep and possessive through the mask.

I hear him rummaging through the box again before the unmistakable buzz of a vibrator fills the clearing. My body tenses in anticipation.

“So wet already,” he murmurs, skimming the vibrator along my inner thigh. “Did the hunt excite you that much, Mischief?”

The vibrator makes contact with my clit and I jolt forward, a gasp escaping my lips. He pulls me back roughly by my hip.

“I said. Don’t. Move.”

The vibration intensifies as he presses it more firmly against me, sending waves of pleasure coursing through my body. My legs tremble as he works the toy in expert circles, bringing me to the edge.

“Please,” I whimper, my hips trying to rock against the stimulation.

“Please what?” He pulls the vibrator away just as I’m about to climax, leaving me gasping and desperate.

“I need to come,” I beg.

Ryker chuckles darkly behind me. “Not yet.”

His fingers grip the base of the plug still nestled in my ass—the one he inserted last night after filling me with his cum. The memory of him pushing it into me, sealing his seed inside, makes me moan shamelessly.

“Look at you,” he muses, applying gentle pressure to the plug. “Keeping yourself plugged all night like my good little whore. Keeping my cum safe inside you.”

He twists the plug slightly, making me gasp.

“Did you like running through the jungle knowing you were filled with cum? That every step you took, you could feel me inside you?”

“Yes,” I admit, my voice barely audible.

“Such a good whore for me,” he continues, slowly beginning to ease the plug out. “So obedient, keeping yourself ready for me always.”

The sensation of the plug sliding out makes me shudder, a whimper escaping my throat as the widest part stretches me before releasing.

The sensation of emptiness after Ryker removes the plug doesn’t last long. I feel the cool metal barrel of the prop gun pressing against my exposed entrance, making me gasp and stiffen instinctively.

“Shh, relax for me,” Ryker purrs behind his Ghost mask. “You’re going to take this just like you’ve taken everything I’ve given you.”

My body trembles as he begins to work the smooth barrel against my sensitive rim. The metal warms against my skin, and my breath comes in short, desperate pants.

“You are so desperate to be filled with anything I give you,” he growls, slowly applying more pressure. “Such a filthy little slut for me, letting me use a gun on your ass in the middle of the jungle.”

The barrel breaches me, and I cry out—a sound somewhere between pain and pleasure. It’s not as thick as the plug was, but the psychological impact of what’s happening hits me hard.

“That’s it, Mischief. Take it all,” he continues, his voice dripping with dark possessiveness. “No one else would ever guess what a depraved little whore you really are. But I know. I’ve always known what you needed.”

As he works the barrel deeper, his other hand brings the vibrator back to my clit. The dual sensation—the cold, forbidden intrusion behind and the intense vibration against my most sensitive spot—makes my entire body jerk.

“Oh god, Ryker!” I gasp, my fingers clawing at the tree bark.

“That’s right, say my name. Tell the whole fucking jungle who’s doing this to you,” he demands, pushing the gun deeper while increasing the vibrator’s intensity. “Tell me how much you love being my personal plaything.”

The vibrations against my clit intensify as he twists the barrel inside me, finding angles that make stars explode behind my eyelids.

“I love it,” I sob, the pleasure almost unbearable. “I love being yours. Please don’t stop.”

“I own every inch of you.” Ryker’s mouth is suddenly close to my ear. “Every. Fucking. Inch.” He pulls the vibe away, making me whine at the loss.

The unmistakable sensation of Ryker’s cock, hot and hard against my pussy makes me shudder, the metal of his piercing creating a distinct pressure against my sensitive flesh.

“Oh god,” I gasp, my body instinctively trying to push back against him.

Ryker’s hand tightens in my hair, pulling my head back sharply. “Patience, Mischief. You’ll get what I give you when I decide to give it.”

He begins to move his hips in a maddening rhythm, sliding the head of his cock between my folds without entering me. The metal of his piercing catches slightly on my entrance with each pass. Forward and back, the smooth head parting my wetness, teasing at penetration before retreating.

“Please,” I whimper, fingers digging into the tree bark.

“Please what?” His voice carries that smug tone I’ve come to both hate and crave.

The piercing drags across my clit as he adjusts his angle, making me cry out. My entire body is a live wire, every nerve ending screaming for release. He continues the torturous movement—forward until I think he’ll finally enter me, then back again, denying me what I desperately need.

“You’re dripping for me,” he observes, the head of his cock collecting my wetness. “So eager to be filled.”

The metal ring of his piercing creates an exquisite friction against my entrance. Each time it catches slightly, my body clenches in anticipation, only to be left wanting as he pulls back again.

“I can feel you trying to pull me in,” he chuckles darkly. “Your greedy little pussy practically begging for my cock.”

His hips continue their hypnotic movement, the piercing gliding through my folds with each pass. The dual sensation of smooth skin and hard metal drives me wild. My thighs quiver with the effort of staying still, of not forcing myself back onto him.

“Is this what you wanted when you were running through the jungle?” he asks, punctuating his question with a firmer press forward. “Were you hoping I’d catch you? That I’d use you like this?”

I moan and arch my back, the rough bark of the banyan root pressing into my palms. “Yes, Ryker. God, yes.”

“That’s what I thought,” he growls, his voice distorted through the Ghost mask. “You’ve been thinking about this since we started, right?”

The gun remains deep inside me, a forbidden intrusion that makes my entire body pulse with shameful pleasure. He stops thrusting it, leaving it lodged firmly in place while his other hand grips my hip with bruising force.

“Please,” I whimper.

I feel the blunt head of his cock press against my entrance, parting my folds that are slick with arousal. The metal of his Prince Albert piercing catches slightly, creating a delicious friction that makes me gasp.

“Fuck,” I breathe as he starts to push inside me. The stretch is exquisite—my body accommodating his thickness while still adjusting to the gun in my ass. The dual sensation of being filled in both holes makes me dizzy with pleasure.

“That’s it,” Ryker hisses, sinking deeper into me with each thrust. “Take all of me like the good little slut you are.”

I’m overwhelmed by the fullness, by the knowledge that he’s claiming me so completely in this wild setting. The jungle air feels thick in my lungs as I struggle to breathe through the intense pleasure. Each time he pushes forward, the gun shifts slightly inside me, creating a pressure that makes stars explode behind my eyelids.

“Oh God,” I cry out as he seats himself fully inside me. I can feel the metal of his piercing pressing against a spot deep inside that makes my entire body shake. “Ryker, it’s too much.”

But it isn’t too much—it’s exactly what I need. The taboo nature of what we’re doing, being filled by both him and the gun in the middle of this wild jungle, pushes me to a new level of arousal I didn’t know was possible.

“You can take it,” he says, voice thick with desire. “You can take everything I give you.”

Ryker’s rhythm becomes relentless, each thrust driving deeper than the last. The vibrator against my clit buzzes with merciless intensity. At the same time, his cock fills me completely, the metal piercing creating friction against spots inside me. The fullness in my ass from the prop gun shifts with each of his movements.

“I’m so close,” I gasp, my voice breaking as the pressure builds. Every muscle in my body tightens, preparing for release.

"That's it, Mischief," he growls behind the mask, his voice strained with his own approaching climax. "Come for me. Come around my cock while I fill both your holes."

The vibrator increases in intensity against my swollen clit, and I cry out, teetering on the edge. His thrusts become harder, more desperate, the piercing dragging across my g-spot with each withdrawal.

Just as the first waves of orgasm begin to crash through me, Ryker leans close to my ear, his breath hot against my skin even through the mask.

"It's real, Kira," he admits. "The gun. It's real. Safety's on, but one wrong move..."

My mind explodes with the revelation, terror, and forbidden excitement colliding in my brain. The knowledge that a real weapon is inside me—that Ryker has placed something so dangerous in such an intimate place—sends me careening over the edge. My orgasm hits with violent intensity, my inner walls clamping down on his cock as my entire body trembles.

"Oh god, Ryker!" I scream, not caring if anyone could hear us in this vast jungle. My climax rips through me with devastating force, each pulse more powerful than the last. The danger, the taboo, the complete surrender—it all converges into the most intense pleasure I've ever experienced.

I collapse against the tree root, my body still trembling from the aftershocks of my orgasm. As the waves of pleasure gradually subside, Ryker carefully removes the gun. This movement sends one final shudder through my oversensitized body. With equal gentleness, he pulls his cock out of me, and I feel suddenly empty, vulnerable in the aftermath of what we've just done.

"Shh," he purrs, his arms encircling me as I whimper from the loss. "I've got you."

Without the Ghost mask obscuring his face, I can see the raw emotion in his eyes—that rare vulnerability he shows only to me. He lifts me effortlessly into his arms, cradling me against his chest like I'm something precious. My head falls naturally into the crook of his neck, and I breathe in his scent—sweat, arousal, and that distinctive cologne he wears.

"Where are we going?" I murmur, my voice hoarse from screaming.

"You'll see," he says, that familiar hint of mystery returning to his tone.

He carries me deeper into the jungle, following a path I hadn't noticed before. The forest opens into a small clearing, and I gasp at what I see. Nestled between flowering bushes and sheltered by a natural canopy of

vines, Ryker has created a sanctuary. Dozens of candles flicker in the approaching dusk, casting golden light across a plush blanket spread on the ground. Beside it sits a wicker basket, an ice bucket with champagne, and scattered rose petals.

“What is this?” I ask as he gently lowers me onto the blanket.

Ryker’s eyes soften as he kneels beside me, reaching for the champagne. “Happy anniversary, Mischief.”

Anniversary. The word hits me with unexpected force. It has been one year since he took me from that convention. One year since my old life ended and this strange new existence began.

“You remembered,” I say, my voice catching.

“Of course I did.” He pops the cork and pours two glasses. “One year since I saved you from a life too small for you.”

I accept the flute he offers, our fingers brushing in the exchange. The cool glass against my heated skin grounds me in this moment. One year. Three hundred sixty-five days of being Ryker’s obsession, lover, everything.

“Most people celebrate meeting their partner for the first time,” I say, sipping the bubbling champagne. “Not kidnapping them.”

Ryker’s laugh is dark and genuine. “We’re not most people, Kira.”

That’s certainly true. Nothing about us has ever been normal. From the first moment he tracked me through that convention hall to now—naked in a jungle clearing after he just fucked me with a gun inside me. Normal people don’t do these things. Normal people don’t feel what I feel.

“No, we’re not,” I agree, leaning into his touch as he follows the curve of my shoulder. “Normal people would call this Stockholm Syndrome.”

“And what do you call it?” he asks.

I look at the effort he’s made—the candles, the champagne, the flowers—all to commemorate the day he stole me away. It became one of the most traumatic days of my life. It eventually led to Ryker finding his humanity and to us falling in love.

I stare into my champagne glass as the bubbles rise and burst. How do I define what we’ve become? What started as a nightmare has transformed into something I never imagined.

“I call it ours,” I finally say, meeting his gaze. “Just ours.”

Ryker’s eyes soften in that way that still surprises me—a tenderness that exists alongside all his darkness. He reaches out, tracing his thumb along

my jawline.

“A year ago, I thought I knew exactly what I wanted,” he says. “I had plans, levels, a whole system designed to break and remake you.”

“And instead?” I prompt, leaning into his touch.

“Instead, you broke me.” His voice catches, vulnerability flashing across his face. “You weren’t supposed to be real, Kira. You were supposed to be this fantasy I could mold and control completely.”

I take his hand in mine, studying the intricate lines of his tattoos and the strength of his fingers, which have hurt and healed me.

“I wasn’t supposed to fall in love with my kidnapper,” I breathe. “But here we are.”

The jungle breathes around us, alive with night sounds and the flickering dance of candlelight. We’re both naked in this clearing—physically and emotionally, completely exposed to each other.

“Do you regret any of it?” I ask, suddenly needing to know.

Ryker considers this, his expression thoughtful. “I regret hurting you. I regret the fear I caused. But I don’t regret finding you. I don’t regret us.”

I nod, understanding exactly what he means. “We’re broken people who somehow fit together,” I say, setting down my glass and moving into his arms. “You showed me parts of myself I never knew existed. I showed you that possession isn’t the same as love.”

He pulls me against his chest. “You saved me, Mischief.”

The nickname makes me smile against his skin. “And you freed me, in your own twisted way.”

We sit together in the candlelight, two damaged souls who found healing in the most unexpected place—in each other. It’s not perfect. It’s not normal. But it’s ours, and somehow, that’s enough.

* * *

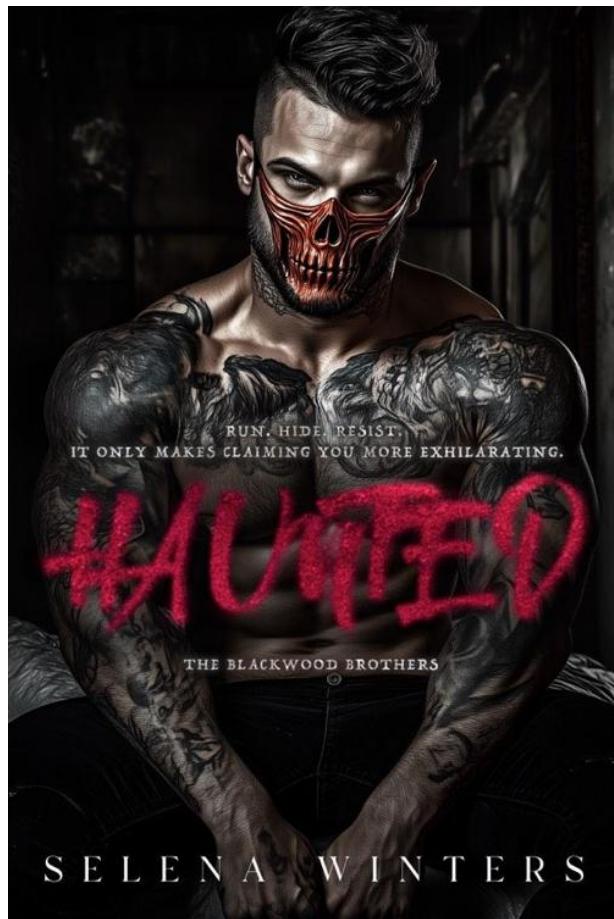
THANK you for reading *Game Over!* I hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

What’s next?

The Blackwood Brothers. We briefly saw Xavier and Knox Blackwood in “Carnival Obsession.” There are two other brothers, so there will be four books, one for each brother.

It will start with the head of the family, Xavier, in Haunted.

Haunted: A Dark Primal Romance



I signed away my freedom for seventy-two hours, agreeing to be hunted through a maze by fifteen masked men.

The Hallow's Hunt—the Blackwood brothers' most closely guarded secret. As an investigative journalist, I thought this was my chance to expose their criminal empire. I never expected Xavier Blackwood to know exactly who I was from the start.

"In the Hunt, prey becomes possession," he warned, his steel eyes darkening with promise. "And I've never failed to claim what's mine."

Now I'm running through corridors designed for surrender, my body betraying me with every heated memory of Xavier's touch. Each dead end brings me closer to capture, submission, and becoming the prize of whoever

finds me first. Worse, I've dragged my best friend into this nightmare with me.

The most terrifying realization? Part of me longs to be caught—to discover what happens when Xavier Blackwood finally has me exactly where he wants me.

The Hunt begins at midnight. And Xavier Blackwood always gets what he wants.

If you are looking for any more books by me, please find a list of all my books below:

More books by me:

Carnival Series

[Carnival Nightmare: A Dark Stalker Romance](#)

[Carnival Obsession: A Dark Stalker Romance](#)

[Carnival Monster: A Dark Serial Killer Romance](#)

[Carnival Stalker: A Dark Stalker Romance](#)

[Carnival Master: A Dark Romance](#)

[Carnival Mayhem: A Dark Romance](#)

[Carnival Shadows: A Dark Stalker Romance](#)

Standalones

[Imprisoned: A Dark Prison Romance](#)

[Forbidden Harvest: A Dark Taboo Romance](#)

[Grave Intentions: A Dark Taboo Romance](#)

[Silent Stalker: A Dark Serial Killer Romance](#)

[My Bloody Valentine: A Dark Serial Killer Romance](#)

[Welcome to Carnage: A Dark Romance Novella](#)

[Stranded: A Dark Romance novella](#)

[Salvation: A Dark Stalker Romance](#)

[Carjacked: A Dark Hitchhiker Romance](#)

[Hunted: A Dark Romance](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I've always been drawn to the dark side of fiction. My stories? They're an exploration of that darkness, filled with mysterious masked men, fearless heroines, and spice that'll set your Kindles ablaze.

Ever since I can remember, I've been captivated by the darker side of romance. It's necessary to add I don't condone these kinds of relationships in real life. However, the intoxicating chase, the deadly dance, the heart-racing fear, and an irresistible attraction I adore writing.

I exclusively publish on Amazon, providing a thrilling escape for those who dare to venture into the dark side of love and lust. If you've read my book and found yourself wanting more, follow me on Amazon or social media for updates on my next dark novella release. Your adventure is only a page flip away.

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