



ELLE CHARDOU

KILLING TIME

THE TIES THAT BIND TRILOGY

Bonus Edition Includes Killing Heartache!



Killing Time

The Bonus Collection

The Ties That Bind Trilogy



Elle Chardou

OceanofPDF.com

Killing Time, A Novel
Killing Heartache, A Novelette
The Bonus Collection
The Ties That Bind Trilogy
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Dedication

This is dedicated to my girls: Roisin and Brigette, my sister Nikki, Laura, Jessica, Tamra and Stephanie. Thank you so much and remember, women are capable of so many wonderful gifts, including the power to heal and the power to inspire one another when everything seems so dire. You women are my rock and the wind beneath my wings.

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Prologue



IT HAD BEEN FIVE LONG days since she'd been in the cage, down in the dungeon. Her eyes were covered with a leather blindfold and there was no way to see through the thick yet soft material. This wasn't the first time she'd gone through one of these sensory deprivation exercises but they always freaked her the fuck out.

She sat in the dungeon and although it was contained enough and the door at the top of the stairs was locked, she'd been placed in a cage. Her hands were free but she was deprived of even the smallest amount of pleasure as she wore an uncomfortable chastity belt with two metal dildos attached inside. One was planted firmly up her anus while the other one surged in her wet, aching sex.

Her clitoris could not be touched in any way as it was covered by a metal plate. Her master told her these punishments were to teach her how to behave in their relationship. She believed him but sometimes, she pissed him off purposely just to be sent down to the dungeon and locked in the tight, confined space of the cage too.

Many in the vanilla world would never truly understand real BDSM thanks to crappy mommy porn books which explored a fairy tale version of a world which simply did not exist for those who were truly part of the community. They weren't all sick, twisted sadists and masochists with parent and background issues.

She considered herself perfectly normal as she had a very fulfilling job where she spent most of her time half naked anyway therefore modesty was not an issue. Once she left that job and came home, she was in a complete

and utterly fulfilling relationship which consisted of total power exchange or TPE as it was known to those in the community.

At home, she was merely a slave and the receptacle of her master's pleasure. Nothing he craved or desired was taboo and she would grant him any wish he wanted. Although, technically, a slave, she wasn't really treated like one and that pleased her very deeply. He liked the sound of slave and master though in fact they had more of a dominant-submissive relationship.

She did not have to eat on the floor beside her master as he preferred them to take their meals together. She also did not do any housework and although they spent way too much time at one of the many locations of Club X-Tasy, her master didn't believe in participating in orgies, at least not any where she would be forced to participate. He did go to them as was his right and something he put together at least twice per month to keep his customers happy but she was never on the menu.

She almost laughed at the absurdity of it all when she thought about the dungeon and how she'd gotten herself sent there in the first place. She'd just arrived home from a photo shoot on location and she was bone tired. Her master greeted her at the front door after his manservant, Albert, answered the door. His staff was completely aware of what went on between them but they acted as if it was perfectly normal and in a way, it was—they were two consenting adults after all.

He wanted her to undress as soon as Albert shut the door and kneel before him naked. She'd wanted to comply but something inside her rebelled and she quickly figured it out. She didn't want to submit on her own that night; she'd wanted him to beat her into submission and that is exactly what happened. He'd grabbed her by the arm and frog-marched her through the grand foyer with all of its pale marble floorings and straight to the dungeon.

The place where he beat her was completely soundproof and looked very much like an ancient dungeon except it was manmade and the place wasn't the least bit dark or damp. The lights were painfully bright and the whole place had mirrors instead of walls. There was an inbuilt closet which opened with the touch of one of the mirrors and inside was a sadist's wet dream.

There were different lubes of all flavors, colors and varieties. Some to enhance pleasure while others brought pain; condoms though they no longer used them very often unless he decided to take her in her anus and

she had not undergone a proper fast or colon cleansing. Those could get messy and everything was there to prevent the space from ever becoming unhygienic.

There were dildos and butt plugs, all made of high-end metals and glass which were easy to clean and easier to use. The dungeon had its own mini-kitchen with a fridge and dishwasher for cleaning the toys they used without degrading the material. Where her master had bought the cleansing solution which was one hundred percent safe and would not cause any skin infections or irritate her most intimate parts was beyond her.

He grabbed all the necessary equipment he would need: fur-lined ankle cuffs, supercuffs for her wrists, the blindfold and a glass ball gag, that although seemed dangerous, was the best money could buy. He didn't expect her to run and knew she wouldn't.

"Undress," he commanded in a voice a mixture dark chocolate and velvety sweetness.

She slipped her tight ivory cashmere sweater off and undid her expensive jeans before rolling them down her legs to her ankles. She slipped off the five-inch high-heel Christian Louboutin booties she'd been wearing and then slid her jeans off the rest of the way.

"That's enough. I'll take over from there."

Something about his voice wasn't right but she couldn't place what was different really. She would never understand him, not really because he truly did have the personality of a borderline sociopath.

Sometimes, he was the sweetest lover in the world and although he was a firm master, he never failed to please her. Other times, a completely sadistic part of his personality would take over and he seemed to do things to hurt her just because he could.

"Turn around," he commanded.

She acquiesced and did as she was told. The fumbling of his own clothes being removed told her she would be punished indeed and although she was quite tired, the juices between her sex began to flow and she felt herself turned on to the point where her body no longer was an object under her control.

He walked up behind her and pressed his engorged manhood against the small of her back. She was quite tall, almost 5'9", but he was over 6'3" so the intimidation factor was there now that she'd removed her shoes which had put them almost on equal footing.

He cuffed her arms behind her back and next did her ankles. Then he slipped the blindfold over her eyes and the ball gag in her mouth.

The taste of it felt cold against her tongue and she realized only too late he had applied some sort of anesthetic which made her throat go numb. He walked her over to a padded leather mat, similar to those used at gyms but a lot more comfortable, and she knelt at his command. He pushed her against the punishment bench as she could not brace herself due to her arms being cuffed behind her back.

“I don’t want you to say anything—well, actually you can’t so let me clarify myself. I don’t want a word out of you. No grunts, cries or tears of pain. I want you to take your punishment without a word. For every time you do not comply, I will add another ten lashes, do you understand?”

She nodded her head and steeled herself to be quiet. They had only been together for two years but sometimes, it felt like a lifetime. In that time he had trained her well and she decided she was quite the pain whore. She loved the feel of the whip on her ass and she loved the scarlet impressions it made.

They had a safe word, one she never used because it was pointless. He allowed her the freedom she needed to be herself and to do a career she loved but at home, she was his. Even when they weren’t around one another, she never forgot who she belonged to and when he called her sometimes when she was gone and he asked her to talk dirty to him, she knew she wasn’t allowed to touch herself unless he told her she could.

The thwack of the paddle jolted her from happier memories and she realized with dread he was using a studded paddle. It was meant to hurt, meant to harm, meant to cause pain and meant to draw blood.

The tears began to rain down her face and her throat felt numb as she tried to swallow the excess phlegm but nothing relieved her. She allowed her mind to wander to a time before she did not have this discipline in her life and realized how completely helpless and hopeless she’d been.

Thwack!

Her life, once which had been so controlled and carefully planned out turned into a host of auditions and rejections, partying too hard and not getting enough rest or taking care of herself.

Thwack!

Coffee and cigarettes were her food groups of choice and when ever she binged, her favorites were heroin and cocaine instead of food.

Thwack!

Food and alcohol were the enemies. Too many calories and she could never gain weight, not if she ever wanted to make it in her chosen profession where the commodity she sold was her body.

Thwack!

Then she'd met him and he'd introduced her to his powerful friends, some who had connections in her chosen field of business. In the early days, he wasn't as careful with her as he was now and she'd been to an orgy where her only position was to service the men and women in attendance.

Thwack!

He'd seen something intelligent in her eyes and knew she wasn't what she appeared to be to the world. All she needed was discipline and the right master.

Thwack!

The blood began to ooze from the marks and slowly made its way down her ass cheeks and legs. She knew they would hurt like a bitch but eventually, they would heal.

Thwack!

Perhaps she should have just done what he'd wanted her to do. The pain was fun but not being allowed to sit down comfortably after a week was not.

Thwack!

"*Oh, God, please let this be over soon,*" she thought though she didn't believe in God or the Devil; Heaven or Hell. Her life was her own and she would live it however she damn well pleased.

Thwack!

She bit down on the slippery glass ball prevent herself from crying out as it had to end sooner rather than later. Afterwards, she congratulated herself for the steel resolve she'd shown successfully completing the task. He set the paddle down though he'd barely broken into a sweat; his breath was steady and soft as she heard the rustle of a condom wrapper opening.

He leaned behind her and opened the soft orbs of her ass before he rimmed her anus with his tongue deliberately and with angry strokes. He tried to probe her insides with his tongue before he withdrew his mouth, and his fingers, covered in lube, eased in and out.

It was the tingly and burning kind of lube which would make it impossible for her to enjoy anal sex with him but that was the precise

reason he'd used it in the first place.

He placed the head of his cock at her opening and pushed through. She was well practiced in anal intercourse and relaxed her muscles to allow him full access.

"That's right you little slut, I know you love it in your shit hole, don't you?"

She nodded silently with fervor as her whole body shook with an intense pleasure.

"Don't you dare fucking come on me, bitch."

She allowed him to control the sex as he slipped his cock in and out, slowly at first before he began to fuck her long, hard and mechanically. He wanted her to derive as little pleasure as possible out of their tryst and she understood this better than anyone.

He continued to thrust into her over and over again until he pressed, balls deep in her asshole and came with a loud spasm of pleasure.

He withdrew from her sore hole, stood and tossed the condom in a nearby wastebasket before he walked over to her again and applied antibiotic ointment on the cuts and bruises liberally decorating her ass cheeks.

His touch wasn't gentle but rough and that along with the stinging from the lubricant he used caused her great discomfort but she wouldn't dare show it. If she hinted at how uncomfortable she was, he would give her another ten spanks with that paddle just because he could and there wasn't a damn thing she could do about it.

He finished the task and breathed deeply behind her. As satisfying as he found the whole act of humiliating her, she knew he couldn't possibly be done. Not yet. He was a master of pain, a complete sadist when in the right mood and it was definitely the state of mind he held that night. Sometimes he wore it like a badge of honor and perhaps in a way, he did consider it to be one.

She knew his childhood had been terribly ordinary. He had never been abused, his parents' had nothing but money and they doted on their sons. His parents' were still happily married after thirty-four years of togetherness, and he had a devoted cousin who came by and they spent much time together. In fact, she was also in the scene and although she bottomed out regularly she could be a real domineering and sadistic bitch herself. A bi-sexual, she preferred to bottom out for men and dominate

women. He would never let her do that at the club but they'd had a few play sessions and she'd been at the receiving end of his cousin's dominant personality. Eating another's woman pussy and rimming her was not exactly her idea of a good time but what could she do if her master commanded her to do it?

"Lay the fuck down and spread your legs," he commanded.

She did as she was told and spread her legs outward like a highly trained dancer. She couldn't physically part her legs as her ankles were cuffed but she could definitely open them wide enough.

She noticed he held a fairly large metal butt plug and he inserted it into her ass without much effort. She wasn't loose back there in any way but she also knew how to relax her muscles to ease the pain of large objects being inserted in there. The more frightened she became, the harder it was for her physically so she stopped seeing those large objects as something to fear and instead something to be embraced because if she could conquer her fear then pain would be easy.

Physical pain was so much easier to take than psychological pain and for years, she'd found herself in a place she couldn't really name. She'd never experienced psychological trauma as a child or teenager so she could only deduce it'd manifested itself from the one episode of rape by a photographer. The incident happened earlier in her career and she'd told her master about it because she felt he needed to know that although she'd been damaged at one time, she wasn't damaged goods or a pain junkie due to a dysfunctional childhood.

That photographer had met a certain death a week after she revealed what he'd done to her to her master. The papers mentioned something about a drug overdose. She knew the photographer was bisexual and as her master could and would top both male and females, deduced he'd helped him along with his "overdose" though he would never disclose that to her and she'd never asked either.

His fingers parted the lips of her sex before an elegant index finger circled over her clit in smooth movement. She tried to gasp but all the ball gag would allow her was a small stifled moan.

He slid two fingers into her soaking sex and began to finger fuck her gently while his thumb continued to trace her clit. She lifted her hips toward his fingers and he slammed her torso down to the mat.

“Bad girl. Remember, I control this. I can make you come or I can take you to the brink and deny your orgasm. What do you think? Should I make you wait, my little oversexed slut.”

She nodded her head because that is what he wanted her to do and she instinctively knew it.

“Good girl. Now, I am going to fuck you and if you come, you’ll be very sorry. Do you understand?”

She nodded again with much vigor.

He slipped himself between her long slender parted legs and pressed his cock into her with force. She moaned at the touch and feel of that long, thick muscle of pure pleasure and remembered she couldn’t even attempt to come so it would be best to drift away to a fantasy world where no one could touch her, not even him, and the feel of his flesh inside hers was just a dream.

She awoke and realized she’d been dreaming again of that last night where he had used her before placing her in the cage. The fifth day of her punishment regime. She spent her days, evenings and nights in the cage except for scheduled breaks when his stern housekeeper, Helga, would come to fetch her. She would be allowed to use the toilet, shower and then placed her back in the cage with her chastity belt and a small meal for sustenance. No one ever spoke to her and she was not allowed to speak as the ball gag was only taken out when she washed and then quickly put back into its rightful place.

This would be her last day as he’d never punished her for more than five days in a row. He would fetch her first thing the next morning and she would promise to be on her best behavior before he would fuck her long and leisurely. He would allow her to come after five days of orgasm denial and it would be the best fucking feeling on earth.

The chastity belt was starting to get on her nerves as it had a device which had two objects inserted into each hole and she derived absolutely no pleasure from them. It was a mechanism surely designed by that bastard, Marquis de Sade himself, if there ever was one.

She grabbed her iPod, the one small pleasure he did allow her to have in the cage with her, and placed the earbuds inside her ears. She found the music of Thirty Seconds to Mars thrilling—they were her favorite band and Jared Leto was so fucking hot. Her master reminded her of him with his dark hair and crystal blue eyes. They could be siblings as he bore a true

resemblance to the sexy rock star. Plus, it seemed like Mr. Leto also wasn't adverse to a bit of bondage and domination if the uncut video, "Hurricane", revealed anything about his true personality.

She allowed herself to drift through *This is War* but by the time *A Beautiful Lie* began playing, she awoke again and felt the presence of someone at the cage door. She loved the album; it was her favorite and although her heart began to thump against her chest, she went back and forth between thinking about the album and what this person wanted to do to her.

The leather mask was ripped violently from her eyes and she stared at the blurred tall figure in black leather. She didn't know if the person was a man or a woman as he or she was completely androgynous with their features covered by one of those hideous full-head leather masks. She instinctively knew it wasn't her master or his brother but other than that, it could have been anyone.

The mystery person reached out and swiped at her neck. Her eyesight was blurry and no matter how hard she rubbed at her eyes, it wouldn't clear up, however at the swipe, she'd instantly tried to avoid it and banged her head against the cage. Her head hurt but not as much as her neck and what was that warm, sticky wet stuff pouring down to decorate her naked breasts like a layer of scarlet paint?

She glanced down to see blood, *her blood*, and she tried to scream but it wasn't the ball gag that stopped her this time. Her throat was sliced open, her jugular had been nicked and the blood continued to pour though she tried to hold both hands to her neck in an attempt to stop the flow of the precious life fluid from her body.

Time seemed to slow down and she eventually lay down on the floor while she listened to "Was it a Dream?" as the blood continued to flow from the wound.

There wasn't a bright light or angels beckoning her to Heaven; she felt extremely lethargic instead and closed her eyes while the fatal slice in her neck burned into her skin with an all consuming fire. It took her less than ten minutes to die and she felt every agonizing moment of that time period. "Savior" was the final song she heard as the last dying breath escaped from her body before her eyes glazed, open and inert forever.

Part One
Shock & Awe



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Chapter One



I HATED THESE PARTIES BUT in my line of work, they were not only a requirement but a necessity if one wanted to stay relevant and up to date on what was going on in the industry.

Unfortunately, Ray Charles wasn't blind enough to see what was and wasn't happening to print media and journalism. We were on our knees in the death throws and nothing could save us. If video had killed the radio star then internet had killed the star reporter, full fucking stop.

It was another charity event, hosted by my cable news network, CNW and I despised almost everyone in the room. We didn't really give a shit about providing clean water to Africans in some country no one could find on the map. Everyone in that room was hobnobbing because it had come down the pike they were going to lay off five reporters and no one wanted to be one of them.

I loved my job but I couldn't do it sufficiently at Cable News World. It considered itself "fair" and "honest" but seemed to be chasing Fox News' coattails and that was never a good thing. Fact checking had gone out of the window and if another news network reported it, it was good enough to end up on CNW, even if it turned out to be a rumor or better yet, untrue.

That wasn't why I had majored in Journalism and managed to get a double Masters degree in the subject at both Sciences Po, a *grandes écoles*—or the French equivalent of an Ivy League university—in Paris and Columbia University in New York City. It wasn't the reason why I was one of the most respected and upcoming investigative news reporters after

Soledad O'Brien. I always fact checked and I loved stories that took me into dangerous situations a la Christiane Amanpour.

Of course, I was considered the success of the family while my poor sister, Trésor, definitely caught hell for being a catalogue and runway model. My parents never gave a shit when she graduated from the *Newport News* catalogue to the much more prestigious *Victoria's Secret*—to them it was all the same. She was an intelligent young woman who was wasting her life as a clothes horse. They'd cared even less when she told us about how she had been asked to appear at Paris Fashion Week by *the* Jean Paul Gaultier. It should have been impressive. My mother was American but my father was French and we'd been raised primarily in France though we'd grown up speaking both French and English therefore we both lacked the "sexy" French accent. They could care less. Jean Paul Gaultier, Target—didn't matter as she was still wasting the opportunity to get a real job instead of acting like a skinny airhead gracing the catwalks or showing off her gorgeous body on the swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

If I was the exotic one with my dark wavy hair, olive skin and green-gray eyes, Trésor was every waking man's fantasy. Tall and lithe, she had the most beautiful skin the color of ripe peaches with just enough cream, pale green eyes and chestnut hair she could blonde out or darken and she was still beautiful.

I tried not to think about her much because it wouldn't grace me with a phone call from her and I saw more of her on the cover of and in various magazines than I did in person.

Grayson Compston, my fiancé, sat beside me and smiled as I met his gaze.

"Jesus, Aurélie, you have got to snap out of it. Every time I bring you to one of these, your eyes glaze over. It's not *that* bad, is it?"

He was sweet and good looking if not a bit arrogant. 6'1", one hundred and ninety pounds with the body of Adonis and the face of a catalogue model, he was perfect. Honey blond hair, clear ice blue eyes which could hold so much warmth but most of the time remained either neutral or cold.

Grayson was also the son of Eldridge Compston, owner of CNW and a host of popular magazines sold at newsstands across the country and world. One of the only WASP families in the media market, they belonged to all the right country clubs, knew every ex-President and were hard core Republicans though their family was more of the fiscally conservative type

who wanted low taxes and didn't give a shit about ideology. I'd had some very fun debates with Grayson's father and found the man charming if not abrasive.

I patted his hand as he was one who did not care for public acts of affection. "I'm sorry, dear. I was just thinking about my...sister."

Grayson's blue eyes changed from annoyed to his idea of sympathy. His eyebrows drew together and his mouth whitened as he pressed his lips together. "Sweetheart, I'm so sorry. I didn't want to say anything because I knew you would bring it up...when the timing was right of course."

I raised a perfectly manicured eyebrow. "What are you talking about?"

He attempted a genuine look of sympathy now and all that did was manage to piss me off. "You mean you don't know?"

"Know what, Gray?" I inquired in a slightly cool tone.

"It's on CNW now. Beautiful supermodel found in the home of BDSM club owner, Rory Krieger. He's relatively low profile and no one knows much about him but apparently he owns one of the most exclusive clubs here in New York."

My heart thudded in my chest and I tried to control my breathing. "So, what? Are we talking like a *Fifty Shades* type of thing? What is he? The Christian Grey of the BDSM community?"

Grayson's annoyance returned with a vengeance. "You and I both know those books weren't a fair representation of the BDSM community. Look, I didn't want to tell you but Jay and Kaysa are into that kind of *thing*."

Jason was Gray's older brother and Kaysa was his beautiful, icy Swedish-German wife. "What do you mean when you say they are into that kind of thing?"

"Listen, Kaysa was an extreme submissive and in a relationship with someone else when he fell in love with her. They have this strange slave-master relationship where they act all vanilla and in love in public but in private, it gets really bizarre. She sits at his fucking feet when they have dinner, bare-assed—as in not a stitch on and all their servants know and act like nothing is going on. You know that gold ropy choker-chain she wears? That isn't decoration—it's a fucking dog collar around her neck and when they go to Club X-Tasy, he adds a leash and makes her walk around the club naked attached to said leash. So, no, we aren't talking about a *Fifty fucking Shades* thing and I would think you would have more class than to make jokes about your own sister's fucking death!"

The champagne flute in my hand slipped and dropped to the floor where it shattered. I suddenly heard the rush of blood to my ears and the beating of my own heart. I stood and looked around but too many people were staring at me and they tossed me strange looks as if I had lost it. They all knew and yet I didn't?

Did my parents' know about the death of their youngest daughter?

Grayson said it was all over the news.

I tried to keep it together but I felt like a rubber band stretched too tightly and any moment I would snap and have a real nervous breakdown along with an anxiety attack for good measure. Oh yeah, I was going to lose it any moment.

My feet seemed to carry me outside and I stood outside the awning of Tavern on the Green. I'd promised Grayson I would quit but I had never been happier to have an emergency Camel Crush in my handbag. I lit up and took a deep inhale before exhaling and allowing the nicotine to flow through my veins.

I wanted to taste something but I couldn't detect the flavor of the cigarette or smell the carcinogenic smoke. My whole body felt numb. It had to be a mistake. My sister couldn't be dead and why the hell was her death on CNW before we, the family, had been notified?

I immediately pulled out my cell phone and voice dialed my parents' home. They lived in France and there was a six hour time difference. I was waking them up at the ungodly hour of two in the morning.

Never-the-less, my mother answered the phone, "Aurélie? What's wrong?"

"How did you know it was me?" My voice sounded thick with saliva and unshed tears.

"Well, you're the only one we know with a two-one-two number who actually calls us. Trésor has so many different mobiles, the numbers never seem to be the same. One moment, she is calling from Germany, the next Los Angeles, and the next time from somewhere in Paris. We don't know what she has involved herself in but it's likely to get her killed," my mother explained with a failed parent's resignation.

They thought they were the reason why she behaved in the manner she did. Or had as she was dead and would never be able to tell us anything about her lifestyle.

The tears came and tumbled down my cheeks as I tried to close my eyes and stop the heaviness in my chest. My head pounded with the aid of one too many Cosmopolitans and a nicotine rush. I was officially starting to fall apart.

“Maman, Trésor is dead.”

“What did you just say?”

“*Ma sœur est morte*. Your youngest daughter is dead!” I exclaimed though my voice hardly raised an octave.

“*Mon Dieu*. Oh, Aurélie, say it isn’t so. Do they know what happened?”

“I don’t know anything right now. I just wanted to talk to you because they are broadcasting her death all over CNW and we weren’t informed yet. Grayson told me at one of these charity events no less. He said they found her in the house of Rory Krieger. I don’t know who that is...” I trailed off as I felt a pair of hands touch my shoulders and give a slight squeeze.

I looked down at the cigarette in my hand and threw it to the pavement. “Rory Krieger? As in Johann and Lorelei’s son?”

“Who? I don’t remember them.”

“They own a plentiful share in one of the most successful German automobile companies in the world. Heinrich’s great-great grandfather founded KWB Automobile Group but they use the initials KAG.”

“Oh, *that* Krieger family.” I felt like a fool and my face burned with embarrassment. “Do you and Papa know them?”

“A bit. They frequent the same social circles we do. They are decent people despite the dubious Nazi past in both their families. Anyway, their son, he owns a string of nightclubs for people who are into bondage. You know, the usual type: sadists, masochists, slaves, masters, subs and doms. I’m surprised you haven’t done an investigative story on him yet.”

Okay, this was a bit surreal. One minute my mother and I were discussing my sister’s death and the next, we were talking about my career? I didn’t like where this was going one bit.

“I haven’t yet but I will now. Listen, I’m going to get Gray to drop me off at the police precinct that is investigating Trésor’s murder. I’ll try to track down the detectives and get some info. As soon as I know more, I will call you tomorrow at a decent hour, okay?”

“All right, sweetheart. And Aurélie?”

“Yes, Maman?”

“It wasn’t your fault. I know we always thought you two should be closer as you were sisters but you are in no way responsible for what your sister decided to do. Am I making myself clear?”

I nodded though I knew she couldn’t see me through the phone. “Yes, I understand that but perhaps if my career wasn’t the only thing I seemed to care about, she would have been comfortable talking to me about what was going on in her life. How do you live a life like that? Model by day and kink by night? I may not know anything about Rory Krieger but when I am through, he’ll wish he’d never been born.”

“*Je t’aime*. Be safe and do me a favor: don’t take on the Krieger family. It will only destroy you in the end. Just...let it go. What ever happened, I’m sure there were no signs of foul play and everything, including Trésor’s death, is entirely her fault.”

I was a lot of things but I wouldn’t allow my sister’s reputation to be sullied by our own mother. Before I could retort, there was a click and I stared at my Android phone. My mother had ended the call.

Chapter Two



GRAYSON WAS MORE THAN HAPPY to take me to the nineteenth Precinct where we were immediately greeted by Officers' O'Reilly and Wozniak. Although Detectives, they both appeared in their late twenties or early thirties, were fit with tall, lean muscular builds. They both smelled like money, though perhaps that came from working in a neighborhood where nothing but wealth existed and little else.

"Miss..." Detective Wozniak trailed off with gentle gray-blue eyes.

"Segler-DeMarche," I stated in a soft voice.

"If you and your fiancé could please follow us to our office, we can talk about your sister's file in more detail."

I nodded as Gray slid an arm around my waist and we followed them into a large space that resembled an interrogation room more than it did an office. A dark haired gentleman sat with his back to us at the large table and it wasn't until Gray and I were seated across from him did I get a good look at him.

He was extremely good looking with model-looks, a purposely cultivated five o'clock shadow that made him appear edgy and slightly dangerous, immaculately dressed and a natural air of the ultra wealthy. Not one of a self-made man but someone who'd been born with a silver spoon in his mouth yet was intelligent enough to carve out his own destiny and empire. He hadn't even made a pretense of bringing a high-priced attorney because he knew he didn't need one.

"This is Rory Krieger, your sister's...lover. He wanted to be here when we showed you the photos from the scene of the accident."

“Wait a minute? What do you mean the ‘scene of the accident’?” I repeated like a goddamn parrot. “I thought my sister’s death was considered suspicious circumstances,” I murmured.

O’Reilly and Wozniak glared at one another before they turned toward me. “No. Your sister’s death has been ruled a suicide, Ms. Segler-DeMarche. The scalpel was found in her hand. Her legs were bound in ankle cuffs but her wrists were free of any restraints. We don’t know where she procured the scalpel but we are following it up as a possible lead. From the arterial spray and the way the slice was administered, we are ninety percent sure it was self-inflicted. We have to wait for the autopsy to come back but we are almost *positive* it is going to agree with our findings.”

I stared from the two detectives and my gaze rested on her “lover” as they called this sadistic looking son of a bitch.

He was tall and lean, I could tell that even though he was seated. His skin, the color of alabaster, confirmed he lived most of his life at night as opposed during the day. His hair was dark brown with natural black cherry striations of color and his eyes, they were penetrating and icy blue mixed with pale green. They were an usual eye color but that only added to the allure of his face which had a straight, masculine nose, perfect cheekbones and slightly full pink lips perfect for kissing and other naughty habits he no doubt indulged in with the kind of kink and perversity he was into.

“Did you do it?” I questioned in an accusatory manner. I couldn’t help it though neither Detective said anything.

His clear blue-green eyes faced mine without a flicker of guilt. They were so penetrating, I found myself looking away shortly after I’d asked the question. “Did I do what? Murder my submissive? Why would I do that when Trésor and I had been together for two years? I loved her very much.”

I laughed out loud. I was beyond tired and the combination mixed with a feeling of being drunk almost created an out of body experience. “You wouldn’t know the first thing about love you sick fuck. You beat my sister and had her locked in a fucking cage when the police found her body. What was she *doing* in there?”

Rory studied his perfectly manicured nails before his eyes met mine again. “It was a form of punishment. I can assure you Trésor and I had a perfectly healthy TPE. I never used her as a pet and she was never involved in any pony shows. Yes, I did whip her with a paddle because it’s what doms do to subs when they have misbehaved. I also put her in the cage but

tonight was her last night. She wore a chastity belt that was affixed with two dildos—one for each hole and she was not allowed to derive any sexual pleasure from the experience because her clitoris was covered with an iron plate built into the device.

“I assure you I am not sick and our relationship was completely consensual. Perhaps you don’t understand the BDSM community but she was treated better than many, many subs. I never shared her with my friends, she did not attend any orgies except as a voyeur and she was allowed to have her own career. Though we practice TPE, it was not a twenty-four seven deal. We had our vanilla moments but she craved the pain I inflicted upon her because in her mind’s eye, pleasure and pain are—I’m sorry, *were*—the same.”

“Excuse me, sir, if I am a bit confused because personally, I’m just a meat and veg man myself and don’t really get into kinky sex but you mentioned...uh, T...P...E? What does that mean?” Wozniak inquired as he wrote furiously in a little notebook he had on the conference table.

I would have asked the question myself but I was seething. “What’s he doing here anyway? I thought you wanted to talk to me about my sister’s death?”

O’Neill cleared his throat and glared at me with killer hazel-brown eyes. “Perhaps you weren’t aware, Ms. Segler-DeMarche, but your sister had a will and she listed Mr. Krieger as her next-of-kin. She had money, bonds, and jewelry which she bequeathed to you—”

“TPE stands for total power exchange, Detective,” Rory interrupted with a cruel streak running through his even toned voice. “As for what she has given to her sister, I have control over her assets and you can be assured I will gladly hand them over to you.”

This monster glared at me now with his crystal blue-green eyes and I wanted to rise from that table and rip his throat out. “I don’t want you to give me anything. I would rather deal with the attorney who drew up her will.”

Rory laughed at my assessment before he shook his head and looked at my fiancé with pity. “Your sister’s attorney was my attorney so you would still have to put up with me.”

We stared each other down and I still wanted to wipe that smug look off his face. The tension in the room was so thick it could be cut with a butter knife.

Wozniak picked up his notebook and placed a thick manila folder on top of it. He proceeded to open it though my gaze was half-locked on that open folder and half on the intense gaze of Mr. Krieger.

“Ms. Segler-DeMarche,” Wozniak began, “your sister was found in the basement of Mr. Krieger’s Park Avenue penthouse at approximately ten this morning. Her throat had been slit and Mr. Krieger was the gentleman who found her body. There were no signs of a struggle as Ms. DeMarche had been dead for approximately six hours, give or take, according to the forensic investigators. Her body was already in an advanced state of rigor mortis due to the warm temperature of the basement.

“There was just the one fatal injury, the slice around her throat, but her body also showed signs of sexual assault. There was semen found in her vagina and traces of a flavored water-based lubricant in her anus. Mr. Krieger has already given us a blood sample and has assured the semen will come back as a genetic match for his own.

“There were no signs of forced entry and at the time of your sister’s death, Mr. Krieger was on a transatlantic flight back to New York from Munich where his parents’ reside. He was not only seen on the plane by various witnesses but he has also provided us receipts from both Munich Airport and JFK, where his flight landed, along with his boarding passes. He is not a suspect and as the housekeeper, a Ms. Helga Creutzen, had stepped out during your sister’s murder, she is not a suspect either.”

My heart began to sink at the thought of what all of this meant. Perhaps my sister had killed herself but it just didn’t make any goddamn sense. She was happy, wasn’t she? She lived her life the way she wanted to and seemed to have the best of both worlds—drop dead gorgeous model by day and kinky submissive at night—so why would she take a scalpel and slice her own throat?

I didn’t realize my hands were shaking until I observed them on the metal table. I snatched them away and held them in my lap. I bit my lip and looked down. There was nothing else left to say. I didn’t want to see the photos the police were so eager to show me. I couldn’t remember Trésor that way.

An arm wrapped around my shoulders and I glanced at Gray. His face was a mask of pity but it wasn’t genuine. He’d never really loved anyone; I doubted he truly loved me but I made a nice piece of arm candy and I was intelligent so that was considered a nice bonus.

My voice cracked when I opened my mouth to ask a question but something about the way Mr. Krieger continued to stare at me felt incredibly disarming and not in a good way. I wanted to hate this man who must have been involved with my sister's death but he was very good looking and possessed a certain *je ne sais quoi*...for a freak.

"I think it is time I took my fiancée home. It's been a long night and no doubt this news has really affected her." Gray handed a starched white business card to Mr. Krieger. "Have your attorney contact ours and we can go over setting up a time and date to have someone pick up Ms. DeMarche's items she left for her sister, is that okay with you?"

Rory's look of anguish—complete and genuine in his case which made my conflicted feelings about him soften though only slightly—changed. His face transformed into a mask of extremely controlled anger as one of his elegant dark eyebrows arched arrogantly.

"I'm afraid that isn't possible. The moment I found out about Trésor, I called my real estate agent and placed the apartment on the market. I can't live there anymore and my personal effects have already been moved from the residence. We have prospective clients coming by to see the place tomorrow so I would have to accompany Ms. Segler-DeMarche back there tonight. She can fetch her sister's belongings and I will have my driver deliver her to your home," he explained in a cold detached manner.

"Where are you staying?" I inquired though it was none of my business.

"The Waldorf Astoria as my family has a permanent suite there at their disposal."

Naturally, I thought.

Gray leaned over and whispered in my ear, "I'm not comfortable with you going off with him. I've heard things about him from my brother and he isn't to be trusted."

"You heard the police," I whispered back. "He wasn't in the country when Trésor was murdered. Her stuff is all I have, goddamn it. I will be back before you know it."

He smiled, his blue eyes glazed over as if he were thinking about other issues. "Hurry back."

Gray kissed my cheek, stood and left the room without a word.

The large impersonal box known as O'Neill and Wozniak's office seemed to close in around me and I suddenly felt claustrophobic and disoriented. My breathing had sped up slightly and I didn't really like being

here trapped with these three men, regardless whether two of them were NYPD Detectives or not.

O'Neill leaned over and gave me his business card. "If you have any questions or concerns, please give us a call at that number. In the meantime, we will try to get this taken care of as quietly and discretely as possible. Your sister's body will be returned to the family when the medical examiner has ruled out any issues of foul play."

"I thought...you said it was a cut and dry suicide."

"The inquiry was made by me," Rory said out loud. I could hear a faint trace of a German accent beneath his impeccable English. "Trésor wasn't suicidal and I still don't buy she killed herself. She would have never done anything without my permission. She was committed to me."

I laughed though it sounded inappropriate. "Did it ever occur to you perhaps suicide was the only way she thought she could get away from you?"

He smiled back but his expression matched his voice of pure ice. "I won't try to explain a lifestyle to you that you will never understand living in your ultra vanilla world where everyone fucks with the lights out in missionary position...and the most adventurous sexual endeavor you've probably allowed yourself was giving your fiancé a blow job while you ran your finger up and down his perineum. For some of us, a life like that won't do. Hell, it's a fate worse than death."

My face burned; I knew from the neck up, my crimson complexion acknowledged feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment, and I hated him at that particular moment.

He'd read me, read my fucking love life like an open book as if he had my journal open in front of him.

My sex life with Gray was basic and boring but in our own way, we were fond of one another and willing to make a life together though there wasn't any real love there. We were a power couple in the making. I was an ambitious reporter with ties to a very old French family who could trace a partial amount of my lineage back to the aristocracy that wasn't beheaded. Grayson, a man who came from one of the oldest American families in existence, had a bright future ahead of him and someone any woman would be proud to show off to her friends and family. They could trace their journey over on the Mayflower from Scotland on his father's side and his

mother was a mixture of French, German and Welsh, though both sides of the family had been in the country for over two hundred years.

It was true, we didn't have a wild and crazy time with one another and although we didn't always have sex in missionary position, neither one of us could be called adventurous or "out there" when it came to matters of sex or the heart. We both played it safe and that was okay. We understood one another and that would hold a marriage together a lot longer than feelings of extreme love and warmth.

"You're blushing, Ms. Segler-DeMarche," Rory began as if we were the only two people in the room. "If you would like to pick up your sister's belongings, we really should be on our way."

I tried to smile but my face fell short.

I was tired, hungry as I hadn't matched my food intake with my alcohol consumption and I only looked forward to a comfortable bed.

"Yes, I think that would be best."

He stood and I followed shortly before I followed him out of that room. The moment we stepped outside, I could breathe again but it was only the lush air which bounced off the trees from Central Park.

It was the start of late autumn and soon, winter would be upon us. Was it really a few weeks before Thanksgiving? I wasn't expected in France until Christmas but I had an idea I would be going back sooner rather than later now that my poor sister had met her demise. My parents would never settle for anything less than her being buried in the Segler-DeMarche plot. The problem was it happened to be in the Alsatian region of France which meant we would all have to travel for her funeral though they were a lot closer than I.

I honestly didn't know how to feel about walking out of a police precinct with this strange man, someone my sister had been...well, what? A slave? A submissive or what ever they called it? Were they considered dating? Or was the arrangement between them more formal and officially referred to as a relationship? My mind swirled with too many questions and as a reporter, the stupid ones I just couldn't ask.

I knew the Internet like the back of my hand and Google was my best friend. I would try to find out everything I could about this BDSM lifestyle. I'd texted Gray's brother while Detective O'Neill—or was it Wozniak as I couldn't remember now—prattled on about the specifics of my sister's case and he'd recommended fictional and non-fiction BDSM material that was

solid and could be trusted by several authors considered experts in the lifestyle.

I remembered his last text now and couldn't help but chuckle: *For god's sake, don't you dare think of downloading that Fifty Shades shit. That's what vanillas think BDSM is but they couldn't be much wronger!!!*

Yes, the exclamation points had been his, and not mine for emphasis. Jason was a good guy, sweet and full of life and love, unlike his cold fish brother. I sometimes thought Grayson had thrown it in my face because for a while, I was so close to Jason, he had honestly thought about leaving his wife for me.

Not that I was a home wrecker. I would have put a stop to it before it'd ever gone that far however, Grayson had told me half of the truth while we'd still been in the dating stage of our own courtship.

"Jay's into some hard core shit and you don't want anything to do with him, Aurélie. I swear, he could hurt you...and then I would have to kill him."

I couldn't possibly know that was as emotional as Gray could ever become but I knew it now and I still thought I was making the right decision for my career, my future and my life. Love was nice. Love was over the top and beautiful and full of walking on clouds and memories of a touch, the feel of skin, the smell of a body but I couldn't risk my heart again. Not after Renaud. Love, to me, represented Renaud: something I could never have and never would be worthy of ever again.

"Are you going to be all right going inside?"

The smooth velvet voice, a mixture of dark chocolate and caramel, startled me out of my contemplation. I'd always thought of German-accented English to be harsh and French-accented English to be so smooth and sexy. I'd never been so wrong in my life.

I finally looked in Mr. Krieger's direction and felt myself shudder though I played it off as if it were from the chilly evening and not the nearness of my proximity to him. This man might have had something to do with Trésor's murder despite his pleas of innocence. Transatlantic flight or not, that didn't make him fucking innocent or clear him of anything in my book.

"Yes, I should be fine," I replied as our eyes met before I looked away as quickly as possible.

His former apartment building on Park Avenue was as formidable as ever. Tall, imposing and gleaming of nothing but money, this man was not hurting for a penny as far I could tell.

We stepped out on the sidewalk and walked past an astute doorman who welcomed Mr. Krieger by name.

“We’re just here to pick up Ms. DeMarche’s belongings, Harold. There is a showing tomorrow and no personal effects are to be left in the apartment.”

“Of course, Mr. Krieger but...you should know there is a showing going on at the moment. Mr. Hausmann told me to tell you he would not let the prospective buyers see the basement but he would let them know about it and show them photos.”

“That fucking greedy little shit,” Rory whispered under his breath though he said nothing further to the doorman and I walked as fast as my Chanel five-inch peep-toe heels’ would allow. He had a long purposeful stride which was beautiful to watch and his clothes were absolutely impeccable. Expensive silks and vicuna knits were an arresting combination indeed, especially when everything he had on was black head to toe and matched to perfection.

The alcohol high was starting to wear off and I desperately needed another drink, for courage if not anything else. The thought of other people being in the apartment made me feel better but who in the world would want to view an apartment at this late of an hour?

Someone who desperately wanted the place for themselves and were intent on making an offer, that’s who. Or perhaps the murderer? Maybe it was the ultimate collector’s item knowing what they had in their possession and perhaps knowing what they’d done.

In my line of profession, the only true thing I’d ever learned about human nature was no one really knew what people might do and that is what made them so unpredictable, dangerous, arresting, fascinating and complete joy to study, observe and thus report about. It was the reason why I chose journalism as my profession. Ethical journalism was more or less dead but digging dirt and exposing the rich and famous for what they truly were was absolutely priceless.

The elevator actually had a gentleman inside who pressed the button for the floor where Mr. Krieger had lived and it was a penthouse apartment, naturally. Not that there was just one apartment on the penthouse floor but

three with tenants who were all incredibly wealthy and enjoyed their privacy.

“Is Hausmann still in my former abode, Clinton?”

“I don’t think so, Mista K. cuz he took them cats’ up there about two hours ago and I’m sure they took the service elevator. You know how some folks is about privacy and what not plus the media had arrived. Harold managed to get rid of them about twenty minutes ago.”

“Who were the prospective buyers?”

“Just a woman but she was with a man—her attorney I think. Only reason I remember her is cuz she snapped at me when I told her no one was supposed to be viewin’ your place tonight. I didn’t catch her first name but her last name was...Smitz or maybe it was Schmidt.”

“That fucking bitch,” Rory cursed underneath his breath.

I waited until we were clear of the elevator before I turned toward him and grabbed his arm. He glared at me with cool crystal blue-green eyes before I’d realized my faux pas. I held the edge of his vicuña sweater, which had obviously cost megabucks, in a death grip though it wasn’t like it couldn’t be replaced unlike my poor dead sister.

“Do you know this...Schmidt character?”

“Of course I do. Astrid Schmidt: dominatrix extraordinaire due to her height of five feet, ten inches, her predilection for six-inch thigh-high boots and her annoying presence at the club every time I happen to be in town. She’s German, our parents’ are friends and she is a bisexual who had a major crush on my sub. It got to the point where Trésor wouldn’t go to the club without me because her advances became over the top and bordered on harassment.”

“Could she be a suspect?” I licked my dry lips and knew I was grasping at straws but I needed something—anything at this point—to follow so I could start my research.

Rory pursed his lips. “I won’t tell you that. You’re a journalist and I know your type. You’re just itching to do a story on this and you plan to, don’t you? Expose the whole ‘sordid, dirty scene of BDSM’ when you know fuck all about it. You do your own fucking research.”

He snatched his arm from my grasp and walked towards his former apartment.

Rory Krieger was too smart for his own good. Any information I managed to pry from him would only be what he wanted me to know. I

breathed deeply and followed him inside the apartment.

It was airy and dimly lit but didn't feel unsafe. It smelled of different enticing flowers and looked perfectly ordinary. No one would have ever known what kind of lifestyle the owner indulged himself. Nor would they be privy to know he owned the most high profile yet exclusive BDSM club in New York City and others in different cities across the States and around the world, according to Jason, Gray's brother.

Surely he didn't spend all of his time on the East Coast? He had clubs all over and probably traveled often but if I was to get any information from him, I would have to approach it from an angle that would hurt us both: my sister.

"Did you...love her?"

Rory turned to face me. His breath was shallow but he was holding up just fine. "Of course I did or I would have never made her my full time submissive. It is true, I used other women and men but I didn't share her—I would become too insanely jealous watching her with another man or woman."

I stared at him and he seemed deep in reminiscence. It was the perfect time to get him to talk but I would have to keep my wording even, my inflection soft, reflective and pleasant. It was hard to do with my heart knocking in my chest at what seemed like one million miles per hour.

"How did you meet her? Trésor. I understood you allowed her to model even though you two were involved in this...TP—"

"You can just say it. You don't have to use the initials as you didn't even know what they meant an hour ago. Total power exchange." He strode towards me and his eyes wandered from the top of my head down to the bottom of my toes though they were enclosed except for the open-toe part.

"What Trésor and I had was special. It was what she was born to do and with me, she found her calling. I loved her so very much and I would do anything for her but...it's hard because you have to keep a part of yourself closed off, reserved as a Dom. The submissive partner must never know they have any power over you but she did—she knew it. She instinctively knew I would never really hurt her or do anything she wouldn't be able to recover from and that is what made our relationship so fascinating, so beautiful.

"I saw her in a Thierry Mugler show during fashion week in London. It was...lust at first sight. I loved her liveness...her slender body and the way

she looked in the clothing. She was starving herself then but all I could see was how much better she would look if she only gained fifteen pounds.”

“My God, I remember that show. I was there. It was the only one I could make and when she saw me afterwards, she pretended I didn’t exist. She later sent me a text to say she was spacey and please forgive her or some such shit. I don’t remember the exact words.”

“Yes, she was spacey. She was hooked on a combination of Red Bull and Vicodin. She wasn’t eating and she barely slept but the designers loved her because they could cover all her imperfections with makeup. She was also self-harming at the time. The inside of her buttocks so it wouldn’t show when she had to wear revealing clothing. She used a razor blade.”

The tears began to fall whether I wanted them to or not. “Is that why the police think she did this to herself? I just...I knew she was hurting but she wouldn’t kill herself. Trésor had too much pride. I just can’t believe she could do this and she wanted so desperately to be loved. You loved her, didn’t you?”

I knew I sounded drunk and out of it myself because hadn’t I asked him that question already and he’d answered in the affirmative?

“Yes, I loved your sister very much and I don’t believe the suicide crap either. Trésor’s punishment was no worse or better than any previous ones. I would have been here but I got called away to Munich on business. I was only gone two days and God knows I now wished I would have taken her with me.”

He was so close I could smell his cologne. Expensive and dark, it was hypnotic and fragrant. I grabbed his left hand and squeezed. “I’m so sorry I doubted how you felt for her. I had no right to judge. If she was happy... well, that’s all that matters.”

Rory’s aquamarine eyes met mine. “What about you? Are you happy?”

What ever daze had befallen me lifted as if someone had just doused my face with ice cold water. “I don’t see how that has *any* relevance to this conversation.”

“I take that as a ‘no’ then.”

I refused to answer him but he was much more patient than I would have ever given him credit for. He turned on his heels and walked away, leaving me in that empty foyer.

Chapter Three



THOUGH THE OSTENTATIOUS YET UNDERSTATED apartment used to be the residence of my sister's, I had no wish to look around. I couldn't be a journalist at the moment when I was still secretly grieving. I hated my emotions seemed to swing from out right denial of Trésor's demise to passive acceptance which threatened to take over and leave me absolutely demolished as a human being.

The click of expensive shoes brought me back from my own thoughts. The Prada loafers on the pristine marble flooring belonged to none other than Rory Krieger and he held a large wooden jewelry box that was obviously expensive. It contained several different drawers that divided the box into sections and it also had a lock. He gave me the key to hold instead of the box.

"Be careful as that is the only copy. There are other items which belonged to her but I will have them shipped back to your parents' house in France. There was one personal box which I feel you should have...my driver will drop it off at your residence tomorrow. She did leave you with a substantial amount of money but I'm afraid I would need my attorney to speak about that," Rory explained.

"Is it heavy?" I wondered and hoped he understood I was inquiring about the jewelry box.

"Yes, it is as everything inside is real. My driver will drop you at home and carry it up to a safe place."

I sighed and ran my hands through my hair. "This money of my sister's...I don't think I want it and as your attorney isn't here—"

“Don’t be daft,” Rory cut off dismissively. “It’s a lot of money. Meet me at my club tomorrow night in the meat packing district. My driver will pick you up at nine. Is that all right with you?”

“Do you mean...at night?”

“Well seeing as I own a string of *nightclubs* then yes, it would *be* at night, Ms. Segler-DeMarche. It is a sex club for people who are into BDSM. I assure you safe sex is always practiced, I do not hire at-risk females or those who have been sold into a life of bondage.

“It’s a tough job especially where the Eastern European and Asian women are concerned. We often have to make sure they don’t owe a debt to one kind of mafia or another though it is mostly the Albanians, Chinese Triads and Russians that give us trouble. I assure you won’t be witnessing anything you have never seen before unless you have never observed yourself having sex or watched an adult film.”

I pursed my lips. “Is there a dress code?”

“Of course. Wear what you like but dress conservative if you don’t want to be mistaken for one of the workers. They are pretty much fair game...it’s their job and they are paid very well to do what they do.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

We walked out of the apartment and Rory proceeded to lock it before he returned the key in the lock box attached to the elegant door knob.

I waited until he caught up before we strode to the elevator together.

“I think it also goes without saying that you are not allowed to bring any cameras or mobile phones in the club either. Many of my members are high profile in certain industries including finance, law, medicine and politics. They have no wish to be recorded while they are acting out their fantasies and darkest desires. I hope you understand,” he explained in that same sexy dark chocolate-caramel voice.

“Yes, of course. I assume these items are collected by the coat check personnel?”

“Along with other personal effects and your coat, if you choose to bring one. You can assure along with our exclusivity comes discretion and your reputation as a hot-shit, cutting edge journalist will not be harmed in any way.”

The rest of the time with him was a blur and I had never been happier to see Grayson in all my life.

It wasn't much of a trek for his driver and in fact, I could have walked as we lived just four blocks from his old apartment building.

Grayson set the box in the bedroom and immediately opened the floor safe where it and the key were deposited together. He reminded me of Robert DeNiro's character from the film, *Casino*. He wore a paisley robe except his was in red and black and a matching pair of boxers and house slippers. He hated the cold marble floors and though there were plenty of Persian rugs throughout the apartment, he insisted on having house shoes for every Paisley robe and boxer short set he owned.

I changed into a pale pink silk short-sleeved nightgown which almost came to mid-calf and slipped on a matching silk robe. Although not necessarily a nudist, I was comfortable with my body but everything about Grayson, his family and his life was all so very staunch and uptight. One did not walk around the apartment in just pajamas, one had to have a matching robe for said pajamas.

Bare feet were considered uncouth and bootie-socks were considered distasteful and "middle-class". One wore a pair of house slippers at all times when not in regular shoes.

However, due to Grayson's obsession with cleanliness, shoes came off in the foyer and were carried to our prospective shoe closets. Slippers were the only type of shoe item permitted past the foyer.

We sat on the bed, each on our own sides and drank expensive imported French cognac. I did enjoy this ritual as there was nothing better than a Xanax and cognac to put me to sleep. Tonight, I'd added a Vicodin to the mix and wasn't feeling any pain.

"What was he like?" Gray inquired as he stretched his long legs.

He did have a wonderful lean body with hidden muscles and skin the color of burnished peaches and cream. He wasn't deeply tanned but his legs weren't a sickening pale color either. He would never admit it but I knew he had a hidden tanning bed which he used twice a month to maintain his perfect complexion.

I sipped from my cognac though I could have easily downed it and poured myself another. "Who?"

"Rory Krieger. Once you left with him, I called Jason but he was very tight-lipped about the whole Krieger family. Apparently Rory has a brother, Severin, although his nickname is Seven, like the film," Gray informed me before he swigged from his cognac.

“I don’t get it.”

“What don’t you get?”

The nickname? Why Seven?”

“Aw, jeez. Severin is known for being an out and out sadist. If Rory has sadistic tendencies, he is also very kind and gentle but Seven is just a complete and fucking animal. He firmly believes in the whole slave/master mentality and keeps quite a few according to Jason.”

“Yeah, I couldn’t get much out of him regarding his relationship with Trésor other than he loved her. But he wouldn’t tell me what the difference is between a relationship that consists of a dominant and a submissive versus that of one between a slave and a master.”

Grayson smiled but his expression held little warmth. “The difference is huge, my dear. Rory cared about Trésor. Although her body belonged to him, he knew her limits and he didn’t share her with others. That is all I am going to tell you about a relationship between a sub and Dom because you’re smart enough to figure out the rest.

“Now, according to Kaysa, Seven has slaves, two women and a man as he’s bisexual. He not only owns their bodies but he owns their hearts, their minds and their souls. They do not exist outside of him and they cannot imagine a world where they do not serve him, you understand? He keeps one of the women as a pet. She is not allowed to use the toilet, she has a litter box. She is chained up in a cage and he takes her out on walks on his estate. She is always naked and if he wants her to drink his piss or if he decides to defecate on her body, she will allow him to and not only that but she gets off on it. She’s a scat and pain whore and she loves water sports. She doesn’t have a name because she doesn’t remember it and he calls her ‘Pet’ anyway so I suppose she thinks that *is* her name.”

“Christ almighty,” I whispered. “Does he live here? In New York?”

“No. He lives in Los Angeles if I am not mistaken but he visits his brother quite often. Oh yeah, be sure you’re talking to the right brother because they are twins.”

“I’m sorry?”

Grayson breathed deeply in an exasperated way. “They’re *identical* twins. For some reason, Seven likes to mock his brother so he copies his hairstyle and clothes...Jay says it drives Rory nuts but what can he do? They are siblings after all.”

“Where was this Severin when my sister was killed?”

“On a flight here to see his brother. Apparently it has something to do with their family’s business. Anyway, his flight didn’t arrive at La Guardia until shortly after noon so that rules him out. The police have been quite thorough at the insistence of my family. You’re to be my wife, Aurélie, no way would I leave any stone unturned in your sister’s death, you know that.”

I smiled at Gray before I put my cognac glass down and cuddled in the warmth of his arms.

He wasn’t the most emotional person but so what? I knew he loved me in his own way and I loved him. His embrace became a bit more prodding and I allowed him to kiss me and his tongue to probe my mouth.

Eventually we made love and it was lovely and beautiful though I didn’t come and he fell asleep soon afterwards. I hated getting myself off but it was a small price to pay for a luxury apartment, endless money and a man who actually adored me. My orgasm came after a few strokes of my clit under talented and very familiar fingers. It seized me into its grasp and I smiled afterwards before I rolled onto my side and settled into a gentle sleep which washed over me like the ocean breeze.



THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON WAS SPENT at my laptop in my private office. It was only broken up by a quick forty-five minutes on the ten thousand dollar treadmill Grayson had bought the previous Christmas. It gave me time to think and listen to a bit of music. I chose Thirty Seconds to Mars and it was during “Was it a Dream?” I thought about my sister.

Trésor loved Thirty Seconds to Mars. Hell, she loved music period. Was that part of her punishment? I hoped not because it was one of the major reasons why she had chosen to become a model. Models were often used in music videos and music always played during photo shoots and fashion shows.

She loved all kinds of music. She could get down and dirty with Kanye West or live it up with Lady Gaga, cool it down to Madonna, get jiggy with it to Rihanna or just veg out to Mozart. She was a true musical connoisseur who loved hip-hop, alternative, adult contemporary, jazz, classical, pop, soul, and everything in between. Her favorite country and western artist was k.d. lang and she loved Melissa Etheridge. However, I always knew she was

depressed when I heard these two artists because it was the music she chose to sink to the lowest depths.

“It soothes me and makes the pain that much smaller,” she’d told me one afternoon when I asked her why she had gotten into a kick of playing them both incessantly.

“Are you sure that’s not the self-harm talking?” I’d inquired in a snarky manner.

I would never ever understand what people got out of cutting themselves.

“You’re one to judge. At least I can feel pain instead of just burying it in that hollow place you call a heart. That’s why you can’t and the precise reason why Renaud left you.”

I couldn’t remember what I said to my sister then and it was even more of a blur at that moment. I stopped the treadmill and got off before I collapsed, sweaty but thoroughly satisfied at my work desk. My laptop was still open and I wiggled the mouse to bring it to life. First I had to re-type my password back in before the page I was looking at stared back at me.

It was the webpage for Club X-Tasy, the famous BDSM club supposedly owned by Rory Krieger though on closer inspection, his twin brother, Severin, owned it under the Business License Records I’d managed to procure. According to all the legal paperwork filed with New York County that was considered public record and completely accessible to anyone willing to search the Assessor Records for property and the Court Records, Rory had been added as a co-owner later through additional legal documents filed with the County.

As I was a journalist, it would have been completely negligible on my part if I didn’t have access to government records’ and Court websites which were considered public. I often needed the information for investigations but unfortunately, this club hadn’t done anything to me though someone who frequented it might have had a hand in my sister’s death.

These thoughts fueled my anger and had a direct impact on how I conducted research about the Krieger family in general and the brothers’ specifically. It took all afternoon but the internet was awash with information and determination to read as much as possible kept me going.

It turned out my parents’ and the little information Grayson gave me about the family were grossly understated at best and downright misleading

at worst.

Was it no wonder both brothers were sadists and Severin was one to the most severe magnitude he would have made Joseph Mengele proud. There were several questionable deaths in Germany during the early part of the twenty-first century and in every one of them, Severin Krieger was a person of interest.

However, the police could never prove anything. I looked at countless articles about the Krieger family on *Der Spiegel's* English language website and other sources, I had to rely on Google's shitty translations because I couldn't read or speak German, at least not the proper kind. My father was Alsatian but Alsatian German was like Swiss German and bore very little resemblance to "real" German dialects used in the country as it existed in the modern world.

By seven that evening, my eyes hurt and I was tired of the depravity and the sickness of what I had to endure reading about. The Krieger family was far from normal but I didn't understand whether I was thinking that about them because they were Germans or because I was just pissed off about my sister's murder. Then again, what family was exactly normal? Grayson's sure as fuck wasn't and he was mostly Scottish with Welsh, French and a bit of German in his family so this wasn't an ethnicity issue.

I knew it wasn't fair or politically correct but I didn't like or trust German people. That might have come from spending my childhood in France and most of my adulthood in the States. The French had no love loss for the Germans after what they had put them through during World War II under the Vichy Government. As a matter of fact, I would wager they only thought the English were worse than the Germans and that, in itself, was pretty bad.

Although to be fair, most French people I knew disliked the English because they believed them to be uncouth and without manners while most French disliked the Germans because they were too orderly and everything had to be just right. We French liked perfection and orderliness too but we also believed in a certain joie de vivre and preferred not to take all of life so seriously, we forgot to have fun.

At the end of the day, perhaps distaste and hate were too strong of words. Maybe it was more of simple cultural differences than anything else.

If I remembered correctly, the love of my life, Renaud, had a German grandfather and hid the fact with swift resignation. The only reason why it

didn't bring him more embarrassment was because the gentleman was his maternal grandfather therefore he never had to grow up in France with a German last name. Though, like me, he could have dismissed it as Alsatian and no one would have questioned him further.

That part of France had been German land over one hundred years previously and most of the residents had German names and spoke both French and Alsatian, a kind of German stuck forever in a time and place that no longer existed.

I shut my laptop off, stood and quickly showered before I settled on a Hervé Léger black strapless bandage dress and matching Yves Saint Laurent patent leather Tributes. I wasn't going to allow a bunch of freaks to scare me into not being the person I was and who I always would be. I also wore a silver choker with a large onyx set at the base of my throat. It almost kind of looked like a dog collar but the difference was it had a mini camera inside. I snapped photos with the matching upper arm bracelet. I merely had to press my arm to my side and a picture was taken. It could hold up to four hundred photos so that would eliminate any accidental photos or bad photos.

I slipped on a black wool coat with a petty coat like flare. Rory's driver showed up on time and dropped me off at the club. Unfortunately, it was barely after eight thirty when I arrived therefore it would be at least thirty minutes—maybe longer—before Rory and I met up with one another.

The doorman gave me a quizzical look as I looked at the imposing black building. It was all very smart and high tech for the meat packing district. The sign was so discreet one could pass it every day and never know it was nightclub.

He suddenly grabbed my arm though he was careful not to bruise my flesh beneath the wool coat. "Are you *sure* you're in the right place, cupcake?"

I glared at the tall, broad-shouldered man who looked like a dead ringer for Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. He was definitely a Dom and a sadistic one from his demeanor. I could read it in his eyes as he looked me up and down. All the positions he would love to have my capable body in, my screams filling a room would be music to his ears.

It was probably the up-do but I was just used to wearing my hair in a chignon or a French Twist if I was going out. Better to show off the neck, one of the most erogenous zones on the body.

“I’m here to meet Rory Krieger. My name is Aurélie Segler-DeMarche. Trésor DeMarche is...was my sister.”

Dwayne’s eyes only held a hint of sympathy. “Sorry to hear about her *accident*. You can go on in. He told us to expect you.”

“Why thank you. Are you sure you don’t want to make me pay a cover charge?”

Dwayne laughed out loud. “Our guests don’t *pay* cover charges—this is a membership-only club and it’s one hundred thousand per year. If you can afford that on a journalist’s salary then I am sure Rory would love to take your application. Don’t forget to hand over all your personal effects to the slave in coat check.”

I ignored his last comment and walked in as soon as he opened the door for me to enter.

Like most clubs, it was dim though not dark. There were lots of hidden lighting, bulbs which showed everyone in the best light possible and hid all imperfections.

It was all very European in its feel. It was too early for dance music; Mylène Farmer’s *Point de Suture* album played at a reasonably high level. Anyone who knew French knew the album was all about pain and pleasure, both infliction and reception so it certainly wasn’t out of place in this club.

I passed a large booth which looked like a mini clothing store. There was indeed a woman in the booth. She wore one of those elaborate Venetian masks they liked to wear during Rio de Janeiro’s Carnival celebrations. She was naked with pert breasts and oversized jutting nipples, a flat stomach and a Brazilian wax which allowed her sex little to no coverage. She wore a dog collar and a man sat on a stool holding the end of a leash attached to the woman’s collar. He wore one of those leather full head masks which covered all his features except cold, stark blue eyes and slits for both his mouth and nose. Her “owner” wore leather chaps, his angry red cock at attention, and he watched me carefully as I handed my coat and handbag to the coat check slave. She stamped my inner wrist with a florescent number, slipped that same number over my items and began to put them away when her owner dragged her to his side by the leash she wore and whispered something in her ear.

“My Master says you can keep the choker but I need to collect your arm bracelet.” She stared at me with defeated hazel-green eyes before she looked downward quickly.

The young woman was small, slim and looked ethnic in an exotic way though I couldn't place her mixture.

"It's a set," I replied coolly and glared at her owner.

She jumped as he stood and walked toward me. "You're not in Kansas anymore...Dorothy. Hand over the arm bracelet."

His accent was distinctly Nordic. I guessed either Danish or Swedish though I couldn't be sure.

I breathed deeply and began to remove it when a voice said, "Let her leave it on, Anders. I like it."

"It's your choice...Seven. If photos of the club get out then I will tell Rory it was your fault. I *like* my job."

I turned and nearly gasped.

The resemblance was uncanny yet there was something different. Those fucking blue-green eyes were so cold, so lifeless, so soulless. That was the main difference between the two. There was no spark only anger and quietly controlled rage.

I removed the arm bracelet and handed it over to the Master who grabbed it and placed it with the rest of my belongings.

I tried to swallow but this man frightened me to the core of my very being though I could barely admit this to myself.

Rory was different because although he had a commanding presence, it derived from his confidence. There was some real warmth there although it was under a dozen layers of cool indifference. This man was different. He was all ice and nothing existed beneath it but more ice. He didn't care about anyone as much as he loved himself and he wasn't capable of loving anyone other than himself.

My heart thundered in my chest, drowning out my hearing and my mouth was so dry, I tried to make saliva but it was an exercise in futility.

All the sudden I felt cold and I knew why. There was recognition there. He knew who I was and he knew I knew who he was. Not only that but at that very moment, why did I suddenly feel like Rory was lying? His brother had been with my sister sexually, this I was sure of. He may not have shared her with strangers but his identical twin brother must have been just too much of a thrill to not have shared his pet—correction, submissive.

"Follow me," he turned away from me and I followed him through the club as "Sextonik" played in the background. I tried not to look around but how could I not when people were openly fucking and sucking and doing

things to one another in full view of others? We passed a young naked woman who was on all fours like a dog. Two men were taking turns fucking her in the ass as she sucked her “owner’s” cock. At least I presumed it was her owner as he held the chain attached to her studded dog collar.

What disgusted me more was there was actual a look of glazed enjoyment on her face. She kept jutting her ass out every time one pulled out as if she needed to be rutted like an animal in heat.

“Watch your step,” Severin called behind me.

I didn’t understand what he meant until I ran into another scene of depravity. A young woman was being rimmed by another woman while the woman being rimmed was sucking another man’s cock as he was being fucked in the ass. I would have broken my leg if I hadn’t stepped down the stairs in time.

The ironic part of all this open sex was the people who did bother to look at me regarded me as an outsider in their safe world and they gave me looks of anger, reproach and outright hostility.

Women looked at me as if sizing up competition while the looks from men bordered on lust and others of disgust.

I climbed a set of metal steps and was led into a clear office with windows all around. The music was more muted in the office and as the door slammed behind me, I jumped slightly and turned around to face Severin.

In brighter light, he and Rory were indeed identical twins. I couldn’t discern anything other than his eyes that would have told me he wasn’t his brother.

“You can’t wait out there for Rory. The patrons would think you’re fair game and believe me you would have been violated many times. Not everything that happens here is consensual...at least not the vanilla consent you are familiar with.”

“I’m not exactly sure I understand what you are talking about,” I replied as I folded my arms across my chest.

“You’re a woman who is indeed way overdue for a thorough fucking. May I suggest you participate in one of our women’s nights? You might enjoy being fucked by more than one man. It’s all safe sex of course unless you are invited to one of our ultra private parties. The women are on birth control though most are sterilized by their owners. Then it’s anything goes,

including sex without condoms. Those parties are much more fun if you ask me.”

He strode over to his desk and whistled.

A tall, nude blond man I hadn't noticed walked over to the private bar and stared at us with expectation.

“What's your poison, Ms. Segler-DeMarche?”

“I'll have a vodka tonic.”

Severin shook his head only slightly. “You're perfect just the way you are though if you were my slave, I would demand you lose fifteen pounds. I like 'em skinny. Make Ms. Segler-DeMarche a Grey Goose with seltzer water and make sure you add plenty of ice, slave.”

There was no use arguing. I merely accepted my drink and watched in sick fascination as the tall blond served Severin his drink and then got down on his knees and unzipped his master's pants.

I had never wished to have my cell phone in my hands for lack of anything else to look at but this scene before me. There was nothing wrong with sex but I didn't particularly want to watch it going on around me.

This slave acted as if I wasn't there as he serviced his master and Severin stared at me with those cold blue-green eyes.

They glowered at me through my self-righteousness and said, “*I can do what ever I like and get away with it because I'm disgustingly wealthy and we don't have to play by the rules. I am better than you and if I wanted to, I could have you here, servicing me instead of my slave so don't you say a fucking word.*”

I didn't say a word either. I merely watched his face because I didn't want to see what his slave was doing to him but soon his face contorted in ecstasy and he leaned his head back and began to grind his hips. Then, I had to watch the sordid act and God help me but why was this a turn on for me?

I supposed I wouldn't have been human if I didn't think there was something sexy about two people involved in a sex act they were both enjoying.

Severin looked at my face which must have been a deep crimson against my healthy olive complexion and he nodded to someone else.

A beautiful naked blonde walked over and she removed my drink from hand before she put them behind my back. Someone was behind me because a pair of handcuffs clicked into place over my wrists. The more I resisted, the tighter they became. The cuffs which held my wrists were law

enforcement issued but then again what could I expect from a freak like the man I was trapped in a room with right now?

The blonde slid my dress up and I tried to fight her but she glared at me with cool gray eyes, “If you don’t stop fighting, he’ll beat *me* not you,” she murmured in perfect French.

There was a resignation to her tone that made me give up my battle. She spread my legs, ripped my thong and pleased me with her tongue.

I’d had one lesbian experience in my life but it had been ages ago, during my university years. This was different though because there wasn’t anything sloppy or unsure about her movements what so ever. She knew exactly what buttons to push, where to place her tongue, what part to lightly bite, what to suck and what to lick.

I didn’t want to but my orgasm poured out of me with an intensity I had never had with a man or by my own hands for the matter.

She began to pull my dress down when Severin said, “Leave her, slave, and come here. I want to see her pussy get all wet again when I fuck you.”

Oh my God, what kind of depraved scene had I walked into? I only came here because Rory told me to meet him and now I had to watch people have sex and his depraved brother with his monster cock no less. Did he and Rory have matching penises too I suddenly wondered?

However I didn’t have much time to think as Severin instructed his male slave to orally pleasure me again. “Don’t forget her asshole, slave. Pleasure all of her, not just her pussy. The only fun thing about women—they have three holes instead of two like us men.”

The next hour was a blur of multiple orgasms given by multiple slaves and watching the depraved world of Severin Krieger open to me in a way research would never quite be adequate enough.

I was absolutely thrilled to see Rory arrive though he seemed a bit jaded by the whole incident.

“Seven, Ms. Segler-DeMarche isn’t a novice and has no wish to explore our world. You shouldn’t have subjected her to this,” he responded as he slipped my dress over my hips and back into place. “I apologize,” he mouthed to me.

“Yeah, I know and we didn’t do anything to her but give her a few orgasms, Rory. Christ, lighten up, brother. She was bound tighter than a fucking rubber band. There was no penetration and I didn’t do anything remotely sadistic to her except cuff her.”

Rory undid the cuffs and I cried out as the blood flowed back to my hands. “These are law enforcement issued cuffs. Her circulation was cut off but you didn’t do anything sadistic?”

Severin said something in German and it didn’t sound very nice at all.

Rory responded quickly with a few select German words before they both turned toward me.

The feeling of having both their eyes on me felt like icicles sliding down my back. Something was going on and why did I suddenly feel Rory wasn’t telling me the truth or at least leaving a huge part of it out of all our conversations together?

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Chapter Four



“I’M SORRY ABOUT THAT. I hope you can forgive me for being tardy. I was on the phone with my attorney but that isn’t an excuse. I should have never left you there with my brother. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

I tried to compose myself as we drove away from the club while I squeezed my legs together in frustration and embarrassment.

There had been no penetration and that had been the problem. All that teasing and about five orgasms later, I was beyond sexually frustrated. I would have preferred if his sexy blond slave had fucked me but then I would have cheated on Grayson and that wasn’t fair to my wonderful fiancé.

Then again, hadn’t I already cheated when all those slaves took advantage of me sexually?

I didn’t like living in an ambiguous gray zone of what could be considered cheating and what wouldn’t be considered. Never the less, I’d confess to Grayson about what’d happened that night and how I’d been handcuffed. It wasn’t as if I could get away and go anywhere when there were more than fifty people between that office and the club’s front door.

Severin had warned me not everything that happened was consensual which meant often dubious consent was given when not really meant. In other words, people were violated on a regular basis and their rapists got away with it because they were in a club that condoned such activities.

“What did your brother mean when he said not everything that goes on in that club is consensual?” I wondered out loud.

“Is that what he told you?” Rory inquired back.

“Yes, those were his words, not mine.”

“And is this the reporter speaking or are you generally interested in what goes on in Club X-Tasy?”

“Both.”

He pulled over to the side of the road and it was only then I realized we were on the NY-27 heading east. We weren't anywhere close to being in New York City anymore but well on our way to the Hamptons. Exactly what did this man think he was doing and where were we going?

Rory pulled out an iPhone, one of the many cell phones he seemed to keep as he'd had an Ulysse Nardin Android phone the previous night. “Here, call your fiancé and tell him you won't be coming home tonight. Tell him you are too distraught and are staying at a suite I paid for at the Waldorf Astoria.”

“You think that is going to work? He'll just call the hotel and try to be connected to my room. He's not stupid you know.”

His crystal blue-green eyes seemed to bear so deeply into me that my whole soul was revealed before him. “Why the hell do you think I have this bargain basement, cheap iPhone for? The call will be forwarded to this phone.”

“And why should I do that? What makes you think you're worth the risk to my relationship and my livelihood? In case you don't realize it, not only is Gray my fiancé but I am employed by his father's company. If this gets out, I'm not only single again but I will be fired!” I exclaimed coldly.

Rory pulled out his Ulysse Nardin and pressed a series of buttons before I was forced to watch myself with the blonde between my splayed legs. Although my hands were cuffed, there was no indication from where the camera was placed. Merely a bunch of up close and pornographic shots of me getting my pussy eaten by another woman.

My heart sank before I turned away. “Can you please shut that off?”

“How much are you willing to bet that is more likely to get you fired and your fiancé to dump you than a night without him, Ms. Segler-DeMarche?”

“Did you set that up? That whole scene with your brother and I just to have something to use against me?”

“Of course not; the whole club has cameras everywhere. We'd be idiots not to otherwise we'd have law suits every five minutes. Do you know how many people have passed through that club, done something consensual because they were a guest of someone else and then have come back and

tried to sue us? Once the video evidence is shown, ninety-nine percent of the lawsuits are dropped by the plaintiffs' themselves."

"What happens to the one percent who decide to pursue a case in court?"

"Well, you always have idiots willing to go to trial only they never make it because after the judge views said evidence, the case is thrown out of court."

"It must be nice enough to be rich and have people do any and everything you want them to do for you," I murmured under my breath before I placed the call.

Grayson didn't answer so I was forced to leave a message. "Sweetheart, it's me. I just wanted to let you know Mr. Krieger put me up in my own suite at the Waldorf for the night. Apparently my sister's will is a lot more complex than I thought. No, you don't need to call your father as there is absolutely nothing fishy going on. I'll be back tomorrow afternoon. Love you and call me if you need anything."

I left the message, ended the call and tried to hand the iPhone back.

"You better keep it just in case he calls you. It's a throwaway phone anyway. I keep them, use them for a month and dispose of them on the black market where they are often resold or stripped. Very few people have my real number."

"And if I were to look on my sister's cell phone?"

"I never gave it to you. She had a UN Android like I do. Hers wasn't as expensive of a model but it wasn't cheap either. I kept it. I didn't even give it to the police. If you want it, you're welcome to it. Having her mobile isn't going to bring her back...I know that but I couldn't bear to part with it in the hours after her death. Plus, they are rare, extremely expensive and I was afraid I wouldn't get it back."

I scoffed. "Rare? Expensive? Yes, I know that because my future brother-in-law also has an Ulysse Nardin. What is it with pervs and that particular brand of Android phone anyway? Do you have something against Apple?"

"Not particularly, no, but I wasn't overly fond with the late Steve Jobs and I would rather support a company I have a lot of stock invested in so there you go. Plus, everyone has an iPhone. The nice thing about being rich is you don't have to go with the flow and I don't want a popular model used by the proles of society. There, I said it so you know I'm not only a snob

but believe in the delineation of the classes in society. The Indians have it right with their caste system; it's only a shame it never caught on in Western society to the extreme they take it."

"Mmm, something tells me you are also a follower of Nietzsche as well and adhere to his 'God is dead' doctrine," I replied in a snarky tone.

"No, actually, I don't. That's more of my brother's domain. He's the family philosopher, not me. I think Nietzsche was a sick twisted fuck who was in love with his sister and spouted off the kind of hard-line dogma Atheists and Fascists like to hear. I'm an equal opportunity offender, my dear, and although I adore certain facets of the BDSM lifestyle, you will find out soon enough everything with me is about control not extremity."

I was quiet and didn't say anything else until we reached Southampton and drove up to his vast waterfront mansion. What else had I expected from someone who had nothing but money to burn?

Though we were arriving in the dead of night, it was hard to miss the unique one of a kind mansion that was painted a white so stark, it seemed to glow. Everything about the place was very modern and art-deco but cold and lifeless

Rory drove us into the garage and I stepped out of the Porsche Cayenne before I closed the door behind me. I couldn't pretend my feet didn't hurt. Yes, I was used to wearing heels as it was a requirement from Grayson that I do so at all times. He was a "legs" man and liked the way they looked on me. However, high heels, regardless the price, were never truly comfortable and one had to get used to the pain of being on stilts all the time. Not to mention the grace required not to fall on your ass after one too many alcoholic beverages.

It seemed forever since I'd eaten and I was starving but I didn't want to tell Rory for fear of a "cock" joke though he certainly wasn't the easy going or laidback type. He wasn't a prankster like his sadist brother which shouldn't have surprised me in the least. They were truly as different as night and day.

I followed him inside and he led me through the house. After we stepped in, he programmed the alarm and we crossed from a dimly lit hallway into a wide expanse of a kitchen with an island, stainless steel appliances and everything else blinding white with granite countertops.

He opened the fridge and removed a glass bowl filled with fresh exotic fruit and a bottle of chilled Cristal champagne.

I took the moment to step out of my shoes, and take off my coat before I walked over to the fruit bowl where I began to dig in with my hands. He seemed to watch me quietly and contently while he grabbed two fluted champagne glasses and opened the bottle before filling each glass almost to the brim.

I still didn't know what to make of him but could I truly handle how easily he'd read my mind? Or perhaps he was an expert with body language. I didn't think I'd made it all that obvious how hungry I was but somehow he knew.

I chewed on a piece of papaya and followed it with a sip of champagne before I sighed with contentment.

"I take it you're okay with my selection of food and drink?"

"Mmm, yes. I've never had Cristal before. Grayson's family refuses to buy it because it is too 'ghetto'. They prefer Dom Perignon or Krug to Cristal so I had no idea it tasted so..."

"Delicious," he said though it was more of a statement than a question. "I find wealthy people like the Compstons' tedious to deal with. To boycott a product that is highly superior to every other champagne on the market just because hip-hop artists have good taste in alcohol is plain stupid. Cristal didn't get its reputation in the past twenty years—it has been around since 1876."

He leaned casually against the island and stared deeply into my eyes. "My family has bottles of Cristal going all the way back to World War II in their wine cellar at their estate just outside of Munich. It was the first alcohol beverage I tried when I was fourteen. Granted, I was curious because I'd heard it mentioned in so many hip-hop songs but once I tasted it, I fell in love with it. It's the only alcohol I allow myself to indulge in hence the reason why there are bottles of it on tap at all the clubs we own."

"I've always been a vodka girl myself," I replied in a soft tone before I began to eat a slice of pineapple.

"Do you know how beautiful you are right now and how much I ache to tear your clothes off and fuck you right here?"

I'd finished my champagne and between the fruit which did nothing to soak up the alcohol, I was feeling no pain. "When do the whips, chains and paddles come out?"

Rory smiled at me in a devious fashion. "Oh, eventually, if that is what you want...but unlike my brother, I *enjoy* bondage though I don't *need* it to

get off.”

My heart thundered in my chest so loudly I was sure he could hear it too. I bit my lip. “I don’t think I understand.”

He smiled again and his teeth were brilliant, white and straight of course. “I love women and I respect them. Bondage is an itch I like to scratch but I can be as vanilla as the best of them. However, my vanilla is more of a French vanilla than just plain old vanilla per se. I prefer to explore a woman’s body and no part of her is off limits. I would like to fuck you every way there is to fuck a woman but I won’t ever force myself on you.”

“Ah, I get it now.” I raised a perfectly shaped eyebrow. “You are more of the ‘kill them with kindness’ types? My God, I can see how Trésor fell for you. Unfortunately, I’m already in a relationship but if I wasn’t, I would definitely take you up on that offer.”

Rory became serious again and his blue-green eyes turned cold, icy. “A relationship that makes you so incredibly unhappy and yet you stay. Is it the money?”

It was my turn to grow distant because I wasn’t angry, not really. “Yes and no. My family is comfortable and I knew all the right people when we were growing up but we weren’t wealthy or even rich. Merely middle-class. My father certainly couldn’t afford the platinum Oyster Rolex you’re wearing on your wrist or a fifty thousand dollar cell phone.”

“My model was slightly more as there were some adjustments made to it but yes, I can see your point. Is money your sole purpose for finding a mate in life? Is that what will make you happy?”

I shook my head reluctantly. “No. I’m not sure I deserve to be happy. I was in love with a man and he wasn’t rich, merely middle-class, just like me. His name was—well, *is*, as he isn’t dead just located in France—Renaud and he’s a brilliant human being, extremely intelligent and we got along and understood one another, you know? Unfortunately, he *did* need money to make him happy. He left me for an heiress whose family has nothing but class and wealth. I couldn’t stay there, not after they married one another. I guess you can say I was forced to flee here back to my mother’s home country. I could have moved to a different region I suppose but I liked Paris and Versailles. I really couldn’t imagine living anywhere else there so I just left and came to New York.”

“Why don’t you have an accent?”

“I was reared bilingual. I spoke as much French as I did English. My sister and I would often speak in Franglais to annoy people or so people wouldn’t know what we were talking about. It didn’t take much to get a job a CNW and I worked my way from the bottom up by working smarter than any of my colleagues around me. I may be one of the youngest investigative reporters on television at the age of thirty-two but believe me when I say it is well-deserved.”

Rory was silent for a long time before he grabbed the bottle of Cristal and began to leave the kitchen. “Come along. I want to show you something.”

Our friendly banter had ended just like that and all the sudden, the same old fear returned to my frightened body. I knew he wasn’t capable of hurting me like his brother who would have rather enjoyed it so why was I still so nervous around him?

I grabbed my empty champagne flute and followed him albeit reluctantly. We walked together down a long hallway and he turned on a light before he opened a doorway. It led down and I realized with dread it was another basement. It must have been some kind of requirement when he was shopping for various residences around the world.

“What the hell? Does every one of the residences you own have a bondage basement?” I inquired off-handedly.

“Most do but not all. My Lake Las Vegas home has a room similar to this but it is on the third floor where I can assure what ever guest I have and myself privacy. Basements are extremely rare in Southern Nevada for instance—”

“I think that has something to do with all the nuclear testing they did just fifty miles north of the city. They probably aren’t sure how far into the ground it affected so it isn’t something you see out there,” I explained as I looked around in a curious state of anxiety.

“How do you know so much about Nevada?”

I turned suddenly and realized he was standing right behind me. “I lived there for a while in Las Vegas when I first moved back here to the States.”

Rory held up my hand with the champagne flute and refilled me. I smiled in reply and took a slight step back.

“That isn’t what you said upstairs.”

I sipped from my Cristal champagne. “I didn’t realize I was supposed to tell you everywhere I have lived here in the States.”

“What did you do in Las Vegas?”

“I worked Public Relations Department at Vogue Hotel, Spa and Casino.”

“You are fucking with me, aren’t you?”

I glared at him. “No, I’m not. I was in their PR Department. Then the recession hit and I was laid off. It was an unneeded position at the time or at least that is what I was told by the manager in Human Resources. I had made good money and I didn’t have any ties as I only rented and I hadn’t bought any property so I purchased a one-way ticket to New York.”

“The person in HR, do you remember her name?”

“Yeah, her name was Astrid Schmidt.”

“Don’t you think that’s odd? She laid you off all those years ago and now she’s buying my apartment in New York. Yet...you acted as if you had never heard of her before when she was mentioned last night. Why?”

I laughed out loud. “You should have been a cop if you weren’t so filthy rich. I honestly didn’t put two and two together at the time. I’d just found out my sister was dead, remember? I wasn’t exactly thinking like a reporter last night and if truth be told, I’m not thinking much like one now either. It is considered extremely bad taste to go home with someone you are potentially investigating. You lose credibility big time especially if and when it comes out. It colors the investigation and makes it seem like your story is more a witch hunt than a search for the truth.”

“Then what are you doing here?”

I swallowed the rest of my champagne for liquid courage. “To be honest, I don’t know.”

Chapter Five



RORY STRODE OVER AND TOOK the champagne flute from my hand before he set it on the floor and stood in front of me. I had to look up to him to meet his eyes but I only met them for a short time before he led me to an ottoman and sat me down.

I don't know if it was the effect from the champagne or if the basement was heated but it felt overly warm and soothing. I was in over my head and we both knew it but I couldn't begin to fathom what I could possibly do to escape. I was a bit disconcerted Grayson hadn't bothered to call yet. Wasn't he worried about me? I was overly vague with my message and I thought he might get the hint something was wrong but I wasn't saved by the bell or a cell phone call.

He knelt down in front of me and only then did I notice the black cuffs in his hand. They weren't like the law enforcement issued ones that had been placed on my wrists earlier that night but they were just as foreboding. I didn't want to be involved in any of this but how far was I willing to go to find out what happened to my sister? How deeply into this depraved world was I willing to enter before I'd had enough and decided it wasn't worth it? Trésor was dead and no amount of investigation would bring her back but if someone had killed her, I would make them pay.

I didn't say anything as he cuffed my wrists. My hands were placed in my lap but I was more or less helpless at this point. They clicked into place and as if sensing my unanswered question, Rory showed me a formidable looking key. They weren't play cuffs after all but the real deal and I couldn't just shrug out of them.

"You can get up now," he commanded.

“What do you think you are doing? I’m not my sister, you know. Like you told your brother, I’m not some fucking novice and vanilla sex is fine for me. I don’t need extra kinks thrown in to orgasm, you know.”

“Unfortunately, I think you do. However, you are free to go back and tattletale to your fiancé if you like. I’ll send him the video of you getting off at my club. Do you think he would like that as a pleasant email in-box surprise on Monday morning?”

I glared into Rory’s blue-green eyes. “You wouldn’t.”

“Yes, I would. Did it ever occur to you my brother was thinking of stealing you for himself? He always wanted Trésor but I was adamant she was mine. Now, here you come along, fresh meat and you’ve never been in the life. Your eyes, they’re so bright and innocent yet you’re also curious and I would like to ease this curiosity for you but you must *allow* me.”

The tears fell from my eyes before I could stop them. “Please, let me go. I won’t tell and I won’t investigate my sister’s death any further. I don’t want this and I cannot do this. It would be wrong for this to happen between you and me—we both know I am to marry another man. I don’t want to deal with the deception and I can’t fuck you...I just met you.”

Rory wiped my tears with his thumbs before he placed his hands dangerously close to my neck. “You can do anything you set your mind to...humans are capable and fascinating creatures. Do you know Claudette?”

I sniffled. “Who?”

“Claudette? The French blonde who ate your pussy tonight at the club... no one calls her Claudette anymore as she is only known as ‘slave’ or ‘slut’ or ‘whore’ to Severin. She started off as a bartender in Club X-Tasy and became a little too curious for her own good. I tried to warn her but Seven got to her first and well, you now see what she is like.”

“Is she...his toilet slave Grayson told me about?”

“No. Alas Severin got rid of her or...rather she killed herself but he doesn’t keep one anymore. He prefers to use the regular kind of lavatory you and I use. He said it was fun for a while but just got too fucking tedious and disgusting. Plus he couldn’t deal with her touching him sexually after he turned her into...*that*...so what’s her use if she can’t please him for what he really needs her there for? My brother doesn’t need a toilet slave, he needs a healthy human mind he can fracture and shatter into a million pieces before he puts it back together again in some kind of weird

Frankenstein-like way. Right now, he only has Claudette and Hans. You met Hans tonight as well as he serviced you too orally if I remember correctly.”

“You were there the whole time?”

Rory smiled. “Of course. Severin has all kinds of uses but he is better at this than I am. I can admit it because it’s true. He is the one who turned me on into the lifestyle but I am not hardcore like him. I have no use for a dedicated twenty-four hour slave. I like to play games because they’re fun but at the same time, I also like to be...normal.”

“Is this what you call normal? Kidnapping me and bringing me to this house against my will? Has any of tonight been *normal* for you?” I shouted.

He shook his head. “No, this won’t do. You’re going to be a tough one to crack because you aren’t really submissive at all—you just like to act the part.” He leaned in close to me and whispered in my ear, “*Sie sind nicht das was Sie zu sein scheinen.*”

My breath came harder as he grabbed me by my cuffed hands and stood me to my feet. I watched as he led me to a strange looking piece of leather furniture. It was designed like a plush triangle except he lowered me down in front of the highest part of the triangle and my upper body was forced down at an angle with my cuffed hands laid out straight in front of me.

“What did you say to me?”

He placed a leather blindfold over my eyes and secured it into place. It was the real deal because my world went completely dark and I couldn’t see anything.

“I said you are not what you seem, *auf Deutsch* of course. Are you uncomfortable yet or just horny?”

“Neither. I am frightened and I want to go home.”

Rory laughed again. I was tired of being the butt of his amusement. “You’re a grown woman. Stop acting like a child or I will have to spank you. I wasn’t planning on indulging in any of those kind of games tonight as it really isn’t my thing.”

“What is your ‘thing’?”

I felt his hands along the edges of my dress and he pulled it up ever so slowly until it was around my waist.

I tried to think and concentrate on anything other than the sheer humiliation I felt with my backside open and exposed in front of a man who was not Grayson. I was far from prudish but I hadn’t had a one night stand since I’d been in my early twenties. I preferred stable relationships with one

partner and definitely would have been considered a serial monogamist. I could stand to be on my own but I preferred a partner.

This just seemed perverse. My fiancé at home while another man had his hands on my ass. He pulled my cheeks apart so he could study my privates like I was some kind of science project...or sex object.

To be honest, I felt like such a tough shit feminist right now, I would rather be thought of as a science project than a sex object. Perhaps this was the reason why I hated to find out Trésor had been involved in this life. She had a brain and she was smart, beautiful, witty, and could have been anything she desired to be. She didn't have to degrade herself like this and succumb to a man for a place to sleep and a casual fuck thrown her way when he felt like it.

My anger surged through my body and made me try to get up but he forced me back down. "So strong and tough but alas, I am stronger than you. Be still or I will hurt you even though I don't want to."

The tears tumbled down my eyes but they gathered in the leather blindfold and did not slide down my cheeks. I sniffled and felt my whole body wrack with sobs full of uncontrollable rage and anger now directed at myself because I was too curious to see where this would lead. I wanted him to do what ever he wanted to me although it went against every grain in my body to be dominated or controlled. How dare he think he could do what no other man had done, not even Renaud.

"Shh." His breath was warm against my cheek and smelled faintly like peppermints and Cristal champagne. "Why do you deny yourself of something we both want to happen? Do you think I chose you at random? I am grieving...don't get me wrong. I am not looking for a mere replacement for your sister and I don't want one either. But I do want to do this with you because something inside me compels me to do this with you."

"If we...do what you want us to do then will you let me go?"

"Of course. I won't ever contact you again and you probably won't ever see me except at Trésor's funeral and perhaps the odd social function or two. It will be like it never happened but we will know it happened. We're just killing time...no safe words, no boundaries...just pleasure and pain. I won't inflict any on you because we both have enough psychological pain between us to keep us sated for the time being, you understand."

I nodded my head.

“I don’t rape or take advantage of women so now, I must have your permission. You have to agree to allow me to do what ever I want to do to you tonight. Just know I won’t hurt you or leave any bruises on your body what so ever. Grayson will never know another man’s cock or tongue has been anywhere near your body, is that understood. Nod if you understand.”

I reluctantly nodded my head again.

“I don’t want you to speak, do you understand me? You are not to say a word but you are free to grunt and moan and make any kind of noise you like. The basement walls are padded and no one would hear you anyway. The only time you are allowed to open your mouth is to say yes or no to me using your body tonight.”

I nodded again.

“Good. Now that we have that out of the way and before you are not allowed to speak for the duration of the night, do I have your permission? Will you let me truly open your eyes to what you are missing in your tiny world where pleasure is often denied and you feel no relief except what you give yourself? Don’t you want a man to make love and satisfy you in every sense of the word? Don’t you want to be dominated and felt like you are not good enough, not worthy enough but I will allow you to come again and again anyway? By the end of the night, your pretty eyes will be begging me to make you come another few times before I drive you back to New York and I may or may not take you up on your offer. A ‘yes’ or ‘no’ shall suffice.”

My breath came in ragged gasps. I wanted to say no but my lips betrayed me and softly, I whispered, “Yes.”

Chapter Six

Rory



RORY COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS LUCK when she'd said "Yes" to his request.

He knew everything about her because like Aurélie, he liked to be prepared and he insisted on knowing people he slept with as to fuck a stranger had lost its appeal ages ago.

She would probably be surprised to find out they were the same age yet his life had been so very different from hers. Not just because of the money but because of his sexual predilections and the people who were part of his world tended to be just as wealthy and depraved as he.

Rory took pride in believing he was better than Severin because he didn't keep slaves and there were months where the lifestyle just didn't suit him. He stayed away from the club and at the time, he'd had Trésor. They got lost in their own world and from the outside, they looked like the perfect vanilla couple but at home, he would dominate her. She trusted his decisions on what she should wear, eat, how they had sex and how many times a night they had sex.

It was all so very ordinary except instead of the clubs, they attended the opera or a Broadway show or the ballet. She loved ballet and wanted to be one because of their mother but alas, her feet were too flat and she would have made an awful ballerina. She loved modern dance too with acts of gymnastics and ballet involved. She was a huge fan of Cirque du Soleil and they never missed a show when he took her on trips to Vegas.

He owned Vogue Hotel, Spa and Casino, therefore it was quite a mind fuck to find out Aurélie had worked for him and he had no idea what so

ever. The Casino had been built when he was only twenty-two years old with money his parents' had given Severin and him just to get them out of the country. They were tired of their two wayward sons who caused them nothing but trouble and payouts due to their wild lifestyles and thought they would be happier in America where they would blend in and find people who were like them but happened to not move in their parents' tight-knit circle of friends in the Munich area.

No matter how much he tried to convince himself he was not trying to replace Trésor, he could not deny he did need someone in his life and at his age, he'd grown too jaded just to have anyone. He had specific requirements and unbeknownst to Aurélie, she ticked all the boxes he looked for in a woman.

He didn't need a mindless airhead who would do everything he said to his exact specifications because he'd been there and done that. Like his brother, the power to have complete control over another person was intoxicating at one time but it soon became too taxing on his system.

When a grown human being of full mental functioning capacity allowed themselves to be reduced lower than a dog due to fear or the need for another person to control every aspect of their lives, they weren't beautiful or wanton creatures of pleasure anymore but pathetic shells he didn't lust after but merely despised with a passion.

Hence the reason why he did not believe in a master/slave relationship and would never enter one again. His conscience was far from clear and he had to live with himself knowing he had caused someone's death during his short lifetime. He'd spoken the words though another woman had committed the actions but it was his turn of phrase: "You're so pathetic, you don't deserve to breathe the same air I do and you would do me and the world a favor if you were dead. You'd be better off dead you stupid, worthless slut!"

He'd left because her pleading eyes, begging for a way to please him, always made him see red. Causing her pain couldn't even satisfy his sadistic tendencies any longer.

When he arrived home and found his slave dead, he'd panicked and called Severin.

Although identical twins, Seven was two hours and forty-five minutes older than Rory and he trusted his brother implicitly no matter what happened or what his sexual predilections were.

Severin had held him as he sobbed openly and told him in hurried German what had happened to the young woman. He chastised him before he sent him to Las Vegas. He never asked Severin what happened to the body and his brother never offered any insight into what he'd done but he owed him his life and his freedom.

Rory knew what his brother was capable of but despite it all, he could not bring himself to believe he would have hurt Trésor. He knew she was the closest his brother had ever felt to love and therefore would have not hurt a hair on her head.

It was important for him to convince himself of this because it had been Severin and not Rory who had dealt out Trésor's punishment five days before her untimely death. His brother had recorded the incident and sent it to him while he was still in Germany. He had gone so far to actually fly to Germany just to give Rory an alibi of having flown when he said he had and turning right back around at the airport before flying home. Severin had been home in Los Angeles for less than twelve hours before he'd made the trip back to New York.

Rory hadn't been in Manhattan at the time. His manservant, cook and housekeeper all attested to this. No one had been there except Astrid Schmidt and she had only come by briefly the day before Trésor's untimely death to drop off some information she wanted Rory to have. He still hadn't looked at it what ever the paperwork was she had dropped off but if he had to guess, she was probably making a bid for his apartment then. She knew how much city life was starting to bother him and he felt it a waste to have the apartment when he could stay at the permanent suite his parents had at the Waldorf Astoria.

Rory barely went into the city more than a couple times per week and there truly was no reason why his home in Southampton couldn't take care of his needs full time when he was in New York. He didn't spend much time there but he had no wish to spend all his time in the oppressiveness that was Manhattan.

He needed open spaces, beaches and the water. He craved it as it soothed his soul and gave him serenity. It also gave him the peace he needed to approach life with cautiousness and expedience but never miss an opportunity that might be presented to him.



RORY SAW AURÉLIE FOR THE first time at a Pediatric HIV/AIDS charity event in Manhattan. He and Grayson went way back as he knew him through Severin. Seven and Jason were quite tight, mostly because one of Seven's prized slaves had fallen for Jason and he offered her marriage after confessing his undying love and loyalty to her. Not that Seven minded much.

"I was sick of that whiny bitch anyway," his brother had replied as he eyed them at the party.

"Are you sure you're not just a little sore?" Rory had teased.

Trésor, beside him in a twenty-five thousand dollar pink gown and over one hundred thousand dollars worth of jewelry, merely laughed. "I highly doubt Severin has to beat down any woman's door to get one to sleep with him."

"Is that an invite?" he'd inquired with icy aquamarine eyes.

"Only with my Master's permission would I share my body with another," she'd responded lightening-quick.

"Why don't you go refresh my drink?" Rory had suggested and she nodded slightly before she walked off with his empty champagne flute.

"Wow. You have her trained although...don't you get tired of treating her like an equal?"

"She isn't my equal. Just because I don't have her with a dog collar around her neck, a leash attached and she isn't crawling on her hands and knees doesn't mean she isn't aware of what her place is in *my* life. She is here to serve me and for my pleasure. I don't cane her or humiliate her because I don't get anything out of it and neither does she. We have tried a various number of games and we have established where she excels. She's an anal slut and loves it up the ass after I spank her ass but not too hard. We both love the arrangement and I am happy. That is the ultimate goal, isn't it? Happiness? I don't feel like she is overly dependent on me but she will do what she is told. How much more perfect could I hope for an arrangement to be?"

"It depends what you consider a perfect arrangement but alas, if you are happy then enjoy the way you are feeling." Severin sipped from his cognac

as he cocked his head to the side. “Wow, would you look at that? I wouldn’t mind having those two as a sandwich.”

Rory could feel a migraine approaching and tried to focus on what his brother blathered on about. He’d written his atonement check and felt better about himself for donating to such a worthy charity but he still looked in the direction Severin observed with obvious interest. Trésor looked and acted extremely uncomfortable in her present situation with a woman who could easily be her sister or perhaps it *was* her sister.

Her arm was held by the young woman and she spoke quietly to Trésor as she rubbed at her wrists.

“That’s Aurélie Segler-DeMarche, the news reporter. How do you think she knows your sub?” Severin had wondered out loud.

“Aurélie is her sister. She doesn’t speak to her family very often but obviously she isn’t overjoyed to see her either.”

“Do you think she’ll bring her over for an introduction?”

“Not a chance,” he whispered.

“Did you know who she was before I pointed her out to you?” His brother was a master manipulator and knew he’d had no idea who she was or what she did for a living. He didn’t exactly keep up with current affairs the way his brother did, at least not the frivolous kind.

They both knew Rory was the more serious type who actually read in detail what was happening in countries like Darfur, gave money to the enslaved Mexican workers who were kept in border factories and supported street children in Brazil. He cared nothing for models—though as irony would have it he was in an intense and exciting relationship with one—news reporters or superstars. He just wasn’t wired that way, not there was anything wrong with his attitude.

Severin stepped behind him and whispered in his ear, “She is beautiful, isn’t she? Not that she is more gorgeous than Trésor but they are truly both lovely in their own way and that is what makes them such unique pieces and so complimentary to one another, don’t you think?”

“Oh, absolutely, she’s completely riveting and breath taking. Did you say she was a journalist?”

“Yeah, for CNW if I’m not mistaken. Oh, Christ,” Severin cursed under his breath, “here comes the ‘god of fuck’ and his ‘fuck slave’.”

Rory couldn’t help but chuckle. No matter how many of these charities they attended together, Severin still hated to run into Jason if he was

accompanied by Kaysa. The poor woman never seemed to get over Seven and that was an unfortunate embarrassment for him as he was never able to completely rid his life of her presence.

“Rory. Severin. It is a pleasure to see you both as always.” Jason looked around like he was slightly bored and wished to be anywhere than where he was at the moment.

His golden blond hair was cut short but still long enough to signal he was a man of wealth and his ice blue eyes appraised people like they were pieces of property. As he viewed his wife this way, Rory was scarcely surprised with the man’s attitude. He, too, wished to leave this fake and phony party as soon as possible at a socially acceptable hour.

“Do you know that woman over there?” Rory inquired to Jason, pointing in the general direction of Aurélie and Trésor.

Jason looked briefly before their eyes met. “I’m assuming you are talking about Aurélie? She is brilliant and smart but my brother has his eye on her in the worst way. It makes no difference she is completely wrong for our family, Gray is destined to have her.”

He placed his hands together and studied the blond man. “What do you mean?”

Jason rolled his eyes. “Their parents’ were awful. Aurélie and Trésor’s mother is a prima ballerina—at least she *was*...now I think she teaches spoiled rich kids with bad feet and the wrong body type for dance but apparently it pays well—and their father was in the orchestra. They used to tell people they were looking after her sister’s children as she was a crackhead in America and couldn’t be bothered to look after them herself. Can you imagine calling your parents aunt and uncle in front of strangers?

“Anyway, I always wondered how you got Trésor but now I think I understand. With dysfunctional parents like that, who needs normal ones, right?”

Rory said nothing though he did smile in return.



NOW THIS BEAUTIFUL DISASTER WAS before him with her ass in the air and her lovely body bared to him to do as he pleased. The globes of her ass were perfectly olive and round. She didn’t possess an ounce of cellulite anywhere

on her ass cheeks or her thighs. They were perfectly toned and proportioned to her slim body.

“Tell me, when you were a child, did your mother ever try to convince you and your sister to try dance?” he inquired as he allowed his hands to wander over her firm ass.

“Yes, she did but neither of us had the right body types. I was a bit too ‘fleshy’ as a child and didn’t have a dancer’s body. My sister was too tall and would have made an awful counterpart. Most male dancers are never more than five feet, ten inches. My sister almost managed that height on her own,” she explained.

Rory no longer detected any panic attacks or crying which was a good thing. He had purposely brought up her childhood to calm her down. He didn’t want her feeling out of sorts or coerced into doing something she didn’t really care to be involved with as that was akin to rape. He wasn’t a fan of dubious consent and what he craved most from her was her trust and the feeling she would give herself to him because it was what *she* desired.

He continued to run his hands up and down her thighs in slow, rhythmic motions. He liked to watch as her moist pussy seemed to get wetter and hotter. She had no idea where he would touch her next and the thought made him so hard, his erection was painful against the strain of his pants but it was worth it just to observe her in this position of submission.

“What if I told you Severin slept with Trésor?”

“What if I told you I’m not the least bit surprised? I don’t think you were in the country when she was supposedly punished or killed.”

“Are you telling me you suspect my brother of murdering the one woman who I ever felt anything for?”

“I didn’t say that.” Her voice was muffled but she pulled her head away from the cushion of the liberator ramp. “I don’t think either one of you was involved in the murder but I don’t think that absolves you either. If you suspect someone in your...circle...and you don’t tell the police, you are just as guilty as *them*.”

Rory laughed before he allowed his fingers to drop to her moist pussy. He allowed an index finger to caress her clit and she began to writhe beneath his touch. “It must be nice to have such strong moral convictions.”

“Why are we having this conversation? I thought you didn’t want me to say a word.”

“Ordinarily, I do prefer women to be silent but under the current circumstances, I enjoy talking to you.”

She didn't say anything further as he played with the zipper on the back of her strapless dress. She'd done him a favor because he desperately wanted her naked and had no intention of letting her out of the handcuffs. He would have ripped the dress and bought her a new one if she had worn anything harder to get off.

Slowly and with deliberate movements, he unzipped the dress all the way down to the deep cleft of her buttocks which were exposed at the moment. He peeled the dress from her body and threw it on the comfortable black leather sofa in the corner.

Aurélié shivered a bit but he knew it was from pure nerves rather than her being chilly. The room was overly warm and with good reason. Not many clothes were ever worn in the room.

Rory stripped out of his black silk pants and white silk shirt which he placed next to her discarded dress. He was only semi-hard but it wasn't for lack not wanting her. He desired every inch of her body but he had to calm himself down.

Orgasms had never been difficult for him to achieve and he was still young enough he could have multiple orgasms in a night and not feel spent. It'd taken every ounce of control not to jerk himself off at the club while he watched the surveillance footage of her being eaten out first by Claudette and then by Hans. However neither had done anything other than orally stimulate her as were both his instructions and Severin's. They were not to penetrate her with their fingers, toys or any other objects because that would be his job alone. He wanted her completely untouched inside so she seethed under his teasing and succumbed to him.

He had to keep reminding himself he only had her that night. Afterwards, he would allow her to go about her life as if he'd never entered it and although it would be perfectly suitable for them to speak to one another at parties and various other social gatherings, they would never be intimate again.

This was the solemn vow and oath he'd made to Trésor's perfect memory which burned in his mind. He could not dare allow himself to sully the time they spent together by trading in her dead corpse for her living sister's body. It could and never would happen. To do that would be the

ultimate betrayal to a woman he had almost fallen in love with and would have had they been given more time together.

Rory walked over to her and knelt in back of her. She tried to keep her legs closed but it did nothing to hide the moist sex between her legs. He should have gotten some toys so he could properly play with her but with a sudden overwhelming thought, he realized he didn't want to tease her with anything artificial. No, if they only had one night then he would use his own arsenal: his fingers', tongue and cock. That would be more than enough to drive her over the edge.

He did reach for the flavored lube that was nearby. It claimed to taste like vanilla but as far as he was concerned, he was only using it to warm her up. He wouldn't fuck her in her soaking pussy yet. He would make her wait until she begged but there were other ways for him to be granted satisfaction rather than taking advantage of her there.

Rory backed away slightly from her and spread her ass cheeks with his hands before he licked the puckered nub of her anus. She tensed as he moved his tongue all around before going straight to the spot that would do her the most damage. Her breathing became ragged, unfocused as he spread the warming lube over her anus and used his fingers to loosen her up.

He slipped his right index finger into her ass and slowly worked in and out of the tight hole. Her movements were completely expected but at the same time, he could feel her battling her own body and losing the fight.

"When's the last time you moved your bowels?" he inquired in a non-descript and neutral tone of voice.

"What?" she inquired as if he were speaking a foreign language. "I don't understand the question."

"Have you ever had anal intercourse?"

"No...yes...I mean, once but it was a long time ago."

"Then I will repeat my question: when was the last time you had a bowel movement?"

"This morning...I get regular colon cleansings every couple of weeks at a clinic uptown as Grayson believes they are quite beneficial despite there being evidence to the contrary and it's a green tea cleanse. Everything comes out. I don't usually eat after the cleansings and the only food I have had was the fruit you fed me when I got here," she explained in a voice so soft, he had to strain to hear her.

“Good, then I don’t have to use a condom back there if I didn’t want to but rest assured, I will. I am quite fastidious about these types of issues and I don’t like to ‘double dip’, so to speak, when I am bare-backing. I assume you are on some form of birth control?”

Aurélie breathed out as he continued his assault on her anus with three of his fingers slid inside her to the hilt. “Yes, I am. I have...an IUD inserted.”

Rory slipped his fingers out of her ass and ran them up her back in a slow teasing manner. “I thought you had to have a child before you could use an intra-uterine device.”

“It used to be the case but not anymore. Besides, Grayson and I aren’t sure if we wanted kids so we decided to do the IUD for a few years and if it worked out, I would go ahead with a tubal-ligation. However, our plans didn’t work out quite that way. We found out only recently he’s been firing blanks the whole time. He can’t have kids so...I planned to have it removed but I just haven’t gotten around to making an appointment yet.”

“Why can’t he have children?”

“We were merely told our body chemistries were highly incompatible and basically, my body is killing off his sperm before they can make it far enough to fertilize an egg even if I wasn’t on birth control. This is beginning to feel a bit like an interrogation. Do I have to undergo anymore embarrassing questions about my sex life with my fiancé?”

“No,” he said quietly, “I’m done.”

He slipped on a condom and applied more lube on the condom and at the opening of her anus.

Aurélie began to hyperventilate the moment she felt his cock at the crack of her ass. He thrust into her brutally, knowing she wouldn’t relax in time for him to make it inside anyway. He didn’t move as he allowed her body to become familiar with his size and length. Her hands were fisted in balls and she tried to hold up her head before she allowed it to sink down on the liberator ramp.

The whole point of this session was for her to derive absolutely no pleasure at all from his vicious assault on her body. Her pleasure would come later but this was about him and what he needed from her.

Rory was intentionally cruel as he ground his way into her and began to fuck her almost mechanically. He’d lubed her up good enough she wouldn’t

tear but it didn't make it anymore comfortable for her especially as she was a novice when it came to anal intercourse.

He thought about all the women he'd been with who absolutely loved to get their ass pounded and loved the feel of a fat cock in their asshole, much more than they preferred getting their pussy fucked but Aurélie obviously wasn't as enthusiastic about the sex act as her sister.

Not yet at least.

No! There would never be a next time. Just this once and they would go their separate ways. He couldn't afford to have this kind of intense relationship with another person so soon and yet again.

Rory pounded into her quicker and harsher as he felt the orgasm begin at the base of his balls and wind all the way up inside of him. He was going to come and unfortunately, it would be inside a condom this time but not the next. The next time he would use her without any barrier between the two of them and she would love it just as much as him.

And then he allowed himself to come and the orgasm flowed out of him with such force, he dug his hands into the soft yet firm flesh of her hips and collapsed on top of her body.



THEY SAT IN A DEEP ornate tub filled almost to the brim like long-time lovers.

Rory washed Aurélie with scented expensive soap and as she was no longer bound, she could have fought him if she wanted to but she didn't.

The perfect submissive, he thought to himself before his brain screamed "No!"

She could never be his and he knew that without a doubt but why couldn't he convince his fucking heart to just keep out of it? He shouldn't have felt anything for her because he was grieving and basically transposing his feelings for Trésor on her. She was a living, breathing human being and he wanted her with all the passion there was to want a woman but he wasn't stupid enough to believe insta-love existed either.

It had taken him a full eighteen months to realize he felt anything other than a patronizing fondness for Trésor and her sister couldn't possibly be any different. He used women...he used people and that wasn't about to change anytime soon. He loved his life and all the different ways to explore

pleasure in pain; the feeling of shaping someone else in his image of what he wanted them to be to satisfy his needs.

Rory wasn't completely a monster. He'd made sure Trésor never wanted for anything and he allowed her to work because it satisfied her, not because she needed the cash. He vowed he would take care of her forever and he'd meant it. Her family would receive her body and she would be buried in France but he'd taken care of all the arrangements and merely called her parents to let them know.

Although she'd had a will, her small net worth—barely five million dollars—would be wired to a bank account of her family's choice but he'd left her with an additional fifteen million dollars should she decide to move on with her life and leave him.

As he sat in the tub with Aurélie, that money had already been wired into one Swiss and two Cayman Island accounts underneath her name. His attorney would call her the following week before she left for the funeral with all the information. Regardless what she thought of him, she would never have to whore herself out to any man ever again and if Grayson wasn't what she wanted, she could leave him and still carry on with her career for as long she desired without a thought towards money.

"Why are you doing this to me? What is it about me that makes you want me so much?" she finally inquired, breaking his contemplation and the silence between the two of them.

"I'm not sure I understand what you mean." He held her close against his body and drew lazy circles around her areolas with his fingers.

Aurélie turned toward him though he only glimpsed her profile. "There is nothing about me you should want when you can have any woman out there. Surely it isn't just this: a shell that vaguely reminds you of the person we both lost? If you need me to be my sister for a night then just say so."

"Trésor has *nothing* to do with this!" Rory stood and stepped out of the bathtub. He grabbed a black terry cloth robe and wrapped it around his body before he stepped out of the bathroom.

His heart thudded in his chest and he realized he had revealed too much. He'd always valued his complexity and the ability to control his emotions. If no one knew what he was thinking then he always had the upper hand so how had this woman brought out a side of him no one should know about ever?

Rory walked to the kitchen and immediately grabbed a bottle of Cristal chilling in his fridge. He fiddled with the plastic wrap and threw it on the island before he popped the cork and grabbed two fresh champagne flutes.

He poured a glass of champagne for himself and downed it in two swallows before refilling the glass.

“I’m sorry I said that to you. I shouldn’t have.”

He looked in Aurélie’s direction and had to look away. She wore Trésor’s robe and he couldn’t stand to see her in it. She walked into the kitchen and he poured champagne in her glass before he handed it to her.

She downed it quickly and set it on the island counter.

Rory stared at her for a long time. He meant for his study of her to intimidate but he couldn’t focus on her face for long before his eyes wandered down to her lush body. Trésor had been much thinner but Aurélie was womanly and beautiful; she was shorter than her sister had been and although his former lover’s body had been exquisite, her sister’s voluptuous lines were made for sin and temptation.

“Come with me,” he ordered and grabbed her hand before she had a chance to object.

He had finished off the champagne in his glass but grabbed the half-empty bottle and took it with them upstairs to his bedroom.

Some people might have found it ironic but although he and Trésor had been lovers, she’d never slept with him at night. They usually did their sexual activities either in the basement or her former bedroom which resembled a sexual playhouse for deviants but after they were finished with what ever they did, he went back to his bedroom and she slept alone. She preferred it that way and he never pushed her as he secretly found it hard to rest when another person was in bed beside him.

Rory wasn’t stupid and knew it stemmed from a childhood where everyone had their place in the home and even his parents’ maintained separate bedrooms, for what reason he would never know. His parents’ were still sexually attracted to one another but for some reason, they never had sex in his mother’s bedroom but his father’s and then she would quietly steal away in the night.

He remembered seeing his mother creep back to her bedroom on various occasions, her negligee perfectly in place though her blonde hair was always slightly tousled. She’d always give him a gentle smile and order him

back to bed; he would always comply and wonder what they did that his mother found so distasteful she didn't want to share a room with his father.

He couldn't hide his discomfort at the thought of someone sharing his bed but that night he would make an exception because some part of him wanted to finally break past that barrier. He needed to discover what was so awful if he did the unthinkable and allowed a woman into his private sanctum.

Rory swigged from the bottle of Cristal several times to calm his nerves before he opened the double doors to his bedroom.

The place he called his own was cold, neat and masculine. Lots of stark whiteness against a large California King poster bed with perfectly polished steel, ivory sheets and a matching duvet set with European pillows fluffed perfectly. He liked pale sheets because they were easy to clean and easy to spot dirt. He was fastidious with his hygiene and although they would only be used once, everything on his bed would go right into the laundry shoot the following morning.

The polished marble floor felt cold against his feet until he stepped on the large area Persian rug placed in close proximity to the bed. Aurélie looked around before she turned back to him.

"Are you never here at all? This place looks like a showcase at a museum, not a bedroom anyone actually uses."

Rory smiled and offered her the champagne bottle which she took gratefully and sipped from delicately before she handed it back to him. "Of course I use this room. No one else does and I am a bit of a neat freak so if you'll forgive all the perfection, just know you are free to mess it up at anytime."

"Somehow, I think that will get me punished and I'm not ready to try that aspect of this lifestyle yet."

Did she just say yet? Perhaps he'd misunderstood what she meant but it mattered very little as there wouldn't be a next time and besides, he didn't want to bring that part of his life in that room. For the first time in what seemed like forever, all he wanted was to indulge in good old fashioned vanilla sex. French vanilla in his case as there would be a bit of domination and submission but no toys, no games—just two young, healthy individuals who would enjoy carnal knowledge in all of its bold and exciting glory.

Something inside him wanted out and just seeing her in that robe made everything male and primal about him crazy. He set the bottle down on a

glass art deco bedside table and strode toward her with precise movements. Before she could say anything, his left hand reached out and grabbed her by the nape of her neck and pulled her in for a hungry kiss.

Another first in a long time as he wasn't big on kissing either; it was too intimate and could easily lose the balance of what was just physical pleasure and what went further.

Rory thrust his tongue in her mouth and she responded eagerly as she allowed him to control her movements. He undid her robe with his right hand and ran his hand from her collarbone to her pussy. She had a Brazilian wax which didn't hide much and he easily found the swollen nub between her legs. She had no idea what he'd done but she had learned her first lesson in orgasm denial.

He'd purposely fucked her in her ass earlier that evening knowing she wouldn't get any pleasure out of the act because she wasn't in the lifestyle. Had she been, it would have turned her on even more but she was pretty hot and wet now so he hadn't done too bad of a job.

Her robe came off as she shrugged out of it and he pushed her onto the bed. "I want you flat on your back and do *not* move. Put your hands over your head and lace them together. No matter what I do, you are not to move your hands. If you do, I'll be forced to put the handcuffs and blindfold on you, understand?"

She nodded her head vigorously as he slipped off his robe and let it slide to the floor. Her eyes fixated on his pulsating cock and although she tried to act coy, he knew she wondered how something like that had fit into her anus. He wasn't John Holmes, the famous dead porn star, that was for sure but he had a healthy penis size of eight and a half inches when erect and girth along with his over-average cock.

He was hard at the moment, so very hard his scarlet cock curled against his belly and the mushroom head was a deep purple.

"Spread your legs," he commanded and she did so with a wanton elegance only a French woman could have done.

Rory smiled before he spread her pussy lips with his fingers and circled her clit. She tensed under his touch and a soft moan escaped her mouth as she watched him with hooded-eyed interest.

He settled between her legs and began to dart his tongue inside her as she began to writhe under his fingers. He stopped playing with her clit and brought his hands underneath her buttocks. Her anus was still red and

swollen from his rough treatment and he kissed it before he began to rim her with flourish.

She twisted underneath him uncomfortably, whether from pleasure or pain or perhaps both, it thrilled him to his very bones he could still bring this kind of response out in a woman.

Perhaps his manhood had taken a beating when he lost Trésor. If anything, she had made him a better lover and a better Dom because he still wanted to please his submissive. Yes, she wasn't his equal but if she derived absolutely nothing out of the arrangement then a Dom could soon find himself alone. He'd seen it happen to many friends who went too far and didn't realize although they thought they were controlling their subs, they were actually bottoming out to them.

When these very same submissives' left them for other masters, they were heartbroken and became more sadistic due to the departure. Many of them took the culture to an extreme and he didn't like to watch their handy work therefore he managed to keep himself to himself and indulge when it suited him.

Rory met Aurélie's eyes and glared at her like a scolded child. "You're not to come unless I tell you to. Do you understand?"

"What?" she asked out loud.

"You heard me perfectly."

"But...how do I control something like that?" The look on her face and in her eyes, which were completely gray at the moment, was one of apprehension and confusion.

"It can be done. Just learn to control the impulses inside of you. Believe me, I am only asking you not to come for a short time. I will let you come tonight, just not now."

Rory began to tease her resolve by licking and sucking on her clit. Her breasts heaved up and down and he reached up with careful fingers and pinched her nipples hard.

The sensation was to take away the pleasure from him tonguing her but it seemed to do the opposite. Her hips bucked against his face and she shook with an ache so deep, he knew he had made her come and it was not a feeling she could have stopped under any circumstances but he would still punish her regardless.

"Bad girl," he whispered and flipped her over from her back onto her stomach. "Get on all fours and stick your ass in the air."

She did as she was told and her ass puckered high before him, her pussy lips slick with juices from deep inside. He touched her ass possessively as if she already belonged to him and slapped her hard. She winced with pain but said nothing. He slapped her again and wished he had a paddle because they did more damage than his hand ever could. He had no wish to break her skin but he did want her red and sore.

Every time his hand hit her ass, there was just the sound of the slap. She was defiantly quiet as if to make a sound would be a sense of weakness and she would never give in to him. Her defiance made him hit her harder and still, nothing, not a peep out of her.

He stopped and soothed her aching ass cheeks which were still scarlet against her healthy olive skin.

“Turn over.”

Aurélie did so and she stared at him with a look of forlorn shame yet underneath, defiance clung to her expression. Her face, wet from the tears she'd allowed to fall and her eyes, red yet the color didn't take away from the beautiful green-gray of her irises. She'd cried silently but she'd never said a word or buckled underneath the pressure.

He settled his body between her legs before he licked the tears from her cheeks. She didn't flinch or turn away but she almost seemed to be in a fugue state, her eyes wide open but so little movement.

Rory kissed her lips, slowly, softly at first before he parted her lips with his tongue and she responded this time. He grabbed her hair and jerked her head back as he began to devour her neck. He wanted to taste every inch of her but his cock ached for release and he needed to be inside her once and for all.

He grabbed his thick manhood and inserted himself inside of her inch by precious inch. She felt lovely, warm and tight. He could sense every sensation and pleasure because there wasn't a condom barrier to prevent him from feeling anything.

Aurélie's face was a mask of ecstasy and her eyes, brilliantly green-gray at that moment, were lust-filled and stared deeply into his. Rory didn't want to look at her because it was too intimate in a way beyond sex. She could see his soul and he could see hers; he began to thrust inside her slick, tight depths just to concentrate on something other than the look on her face.

However, even the pleasure he was feeling and giving to her in return didn't allow them to turn away from each other. He could imagine how he

looked, his face contorted in pure ache to come yet delay it as long as possible. He would never be in this position again with this woman. Yes, he could take her again, and probably would before she left, but it wouldn't be the same. He would close himself off and make sure he felt nothing for her. It would be just pure sex and nothing else.

He leaned over and kissed her hard, his tongue connecting with hers in an open mouthed passionate endeavor and she slipped her arms around his neck. He didn't tell her she could do it but it felt right as she grabbed his hair and her gentle hands caressed his scalp.

She spread her legs further and he worked on keeping them as far apart as possible. It was a turn on to look down and watch his cock sliding in and out of her slippery depths. She was so fucking wet, it turned him on even more and he couldn't help thrusting quicker and deep as he could work his way inside her but her depths seemed endless. There was a barrier there but she was so perfect, so warm and snug he felt like a child again protected by his favorite blanket.

How would he be able to let her go in the morning? The thought scared him to death because he needed to be with her, wanted her, and craved her like no other woman who'd ever been in his life. He would soldier on and survive like he always did but it wouldn't be pleasant and a heartache would set in from the pain of losing both Trésor and Aurélie although the latter wasn't his to lose as the former had been.

Rory's orgasm began to build from his balls and travel up in a slow, agonizing hum that drowned out everything. He leaned over and said, "You can come now."

Aurélie moaned loud, her eyes closed as she scraped her fingernails against his back, breaking soft skin along her trail.

He stifled a moan as the pain and pleasure met at the same time and his orgasm flowed out of him into her. It seemed to go on forever and continued to thrust into her until he went semi-soft. Finally, he collapsed on her body though he balanced his weight and made sure it wasn't too much for her to bear.

Slowly and with great reluctance, he exited her body and lay there, his head on her stomach as she caressed his head and neither said a word.

Why did he always have to be right? She was the one he'd been searching for the whole time but alas, she could never be his and that hurt more than if she'd outright rejected him or his advances.

He closed his eyes and sleep claimed him as a tear fell from his eye pressed against her fragrant stomach.

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Chapter Seven



I LAY THERE FOR A long time after Rory had gone to sleep on my stomach. I felt the wetness of his tear and wanted to ask what that was about but he slept instead, his breathing deep yet soft against my skin.

Had I ever met someone who was as emotionally fucked up as he was? I didn't think so and that hurt me more than when he had violently taken me anally. Could I just walk away and forget him? I didn't think so but it wasn't my decision and that didn't sit well with me.

My sudden and unexpected feelings for Rory scared me only because in him I could see my kindred spirit. We were opposite sides of the same coin; completely and dysfunctionally screwed up yet nothing we could blame our parents' or anyone else for doing to us. We were both cold, emotionally withdrawn people who found it hard to connect with others and although I was engaged to another man, my feelings weren't even the slightest bit conflicted over what I had done.

Like him, I craved pain as much as I liked to dole it out but I had absolutely no idea I would be as receptive to *physical* pain as I was to psychological and mental pain. I was the perfect little masochist as well because didn't I practice orgasm denial on myself with Grayson. My fiancé had never made me come and I didn't think that made him a bad lover but rather it made me quite good at blocking out any pleasure he could ever offer to me because I *refused* to accept it?

I was okay with the money and the material gifts but when it came to really opening up and *giving* myself to him, he used my body but he never saw the depths of my soul or ever pierced my heart.

This made me chuckle to myself because here I was judging this man who had just fucked me and made love to me at the same time yet I was in no position to render a verdict on anyone other than myself.

I was a selfish human being and I didn't deserve Grayson. I definitely didn't deserve Rory because he didn't truly want me. I was just a poor substitute for my sister, who he had probably been in love with and missed terribly. We resembled each other enough for him to get lost inside the memory for one night but he probably wouldn't want to touch me again once he awoke.

I didn't blame him and in my own twisted way, I hoped he found me disgusting when he awoke. I couldn't take another session of his lovemaking for it would literally tip me over the edge.



RORY WOKE ME UP AS he kissed my neck. Sometime during the night, he'd moved behind me and he pulled my head back to kiss my mouth which I instantly regretted. He'd obviously been up because his breath was fresh and his body smelled delicious, like expensive men's body wash while I must have smelled terrible. I hadn't taken a shower yet or brushed my teeth and I had no wish to kiss him with morning breath but he wouldn't be satisfied with anything different.

His tongue thrust itself between my closed lips and I allowed the invasion though I tried to breathe through my nose as to not offend. My body tensed up when his nimble fingers found my nipples and squeezed hard. I moaned out loud though I tried to keep it to myself.

Rory flipped me onto my stomach and he molded my body into an arch as his tongue explored my already wet sex. I wanted to protest but I had no choice because one hand pinned my arms behind my back while his mouth and tongue explored every hole below my waist.

My face smashed into the pillow, my arms stretched to what seemed like their limit, I was in so much pain but in that pain was pleasure and it dominated the moment. I knew I had to hold onto my orgasm though he was making that almost impossible. He had to know by the sounds that left my mouth and my body which fought his strength I was at his mercy, and under his control to do what ever he wanted to me.

He kissed his way up my back as he let go of my hands and I was able to lift my upper body off the bed with great effort. My arms still felt like jelly but I managed somehow to gain some control of myself.

Rory bit my ear lightly. "That was a nice breakfast. Are you ready for dessert?"

I nodded enthusiastically and kept my eyes closed.

He grabbed my hair and pulled; I opened my eyes to stare into his own. "You were a very good girl for not coming but that doesn't absolve you of further punishment for last night. I want you to suck me and when I come in your mouth, you will swallow every bit, is that clear?"

I stared into his crystal aquamarine eyes but I said nothing. His fingers gripped my hair tighter until I let out a squeak.

"Yes," I murmured.

"Good. I won't make you call me 'Master' or 'Sir' because we aren't in a real relationship but if we were, you would worship my cock every morning because that is what good little whores like you do."

I don't know why his dirty talk turned me on but it did and I crawled before him. He lay on his back caressing himself until I was in position of his splayed thighs.

"Do you know what rimming is?"

I glared at him. "I wasn't born yesterday and I grew up in France. What the fuck do you think?"

Rory smiled. "You know that just earned you a spanking but we'll take care of that later. Open your mouth and fucking suck me off, bitch."

I was good at games and could play them quite well myself so I took no offense at his language which was another way to separate himself from what he'd shown me the previous night. We had already gotten underneath one another's skin but to admit something like that would be sacrilege to our arrangement. I had given myself to him for one night only and then he would let me go.

My mouth stretched to accommodate his girth and he easily slid past my tongue. One thing I had excelled at a long time ago was the art of giving of a very good blow job. I'd held on to my virginity until Renaud had come along when I was nineteen because I could suck off a boyfriend so good, they would forget I had other holes on my body other than my mouth.

The hardest parts to learn were avoiding teeth scraping against the sensitive male flesh and relaxing one's throat muscles enough to deep throat

without gagging. That had taken over a year and several accidents where a boyfriend was covered in vomit from my lack of gag control but soon it was a cinch.

I would be willing to bet the only reason why Grayson and I were engaged was because of his addiction to my blow jobs though he would never admit such a vulgarity. He called me the master of oral sex and said he'd never be able to go back to an American woman again because my Frenchness had spoiled him.

I knew I was doing much better than expected because when Rory grabbed me by the hair to shove himself down my throat, I complied and opened for him instead of gagging. His pubic hair, what little he had as he trimmed, smelled of soap and as I thought, he'd taken a shower before he'd awoken me.

I caressed his balls with my hands while a few selected fingers traced up and down his perineum.

Another pair of hands, soft and warm, touched my backside and this caused me to startle. I was hardly in a position to just turn my head to see who this mystery person was but I just felt it.

Rory. If Rory was touching me then whose cock did I have down my throat?

Holy Christ, I'd fallen for the oldest trick in the book regarding identical twins but to my credit, could I be blamed as I was half-asleep and how should I have known to study his eyes when he was lying in bed beside me?

I'd been wrong about so much but why did this make me feel so out of my depths? Yes, it was true, Rory and I had bonded the previous night, but he didn't plan to work me out of his system by calling me every dirty name in the book. He was going to share me with his brother and thus strip away every sanctified and precious moment we shared together. It was good, Machiavellian with a touch of Marquis de Sade good but still brilliant never the less.

I wouldn't have ever thought of it but then I wasn't a part of the community either and had a lot to learn about the BDSM lifestyle.

Something told me I should have known. The touch wasn't the same; the innate familiarity with my body hadn't been the same. And why would he ask me about rimming when he'd done it to me the previous night? The answer was simple: it wasn't the same person using me or my body.

I was jolted out of my contemplation as Severin ejaculated in my mouth and down my throat while Rory's touch was smooth, practiced and perfect. His fingers circled my clit before he teased my wet sex with other practiced fingers.

Severin pulled me back by my hair before he let go as if I were a toy he'd decided to dispense for the time being. He lay on the bed and began to lube up his cock which was still hard as a rock despite his previous orgasm. What was he? Superman?

Rory pulled me tightly against his firm, masculine body and pinched my nipples in full view of his brother. "He takes Viagra so he can go at this all day but I promise you'll be home by two," he breathed into my ear.

He turned me around to face him and pushed me slowly onto my back though instead of lying on the bed, I was on top of Severin. He worked his cock into my asshole without pretense and shoved his way inside me. The biting pain of being invaded didn't ever seem to wane as he had no compunction about going at it rough in that tender place of my body.

Rory joined us by sitting at an angle and pressing his cock into my moist sex at the same time. I had never been part of a threesome let alone one where double penetration occurred. Sure, I'd seen it in porn films but I was naïve enough to think most people didn't bother to practice it off camera and in real life.

Unlike the adult movies I'd witnessed, their movements were coordinated and they whispered back and forth to each other in German. Rory smoothed my hair out of my face and kissed me passionately, his tongue seeking my own out and I sighed as I tried to get use to having two men fucking me at the same time.

I could say without a doubt this had been one of the hardest and most humiliating positions I had ever been in because I didn't know what to expect but I didn't feel the least bit liberated, only degraded and reduced to some kind of human object with three holes and nothing else. My mind, my heart and my soul didn't matter and all the education I had counted even less. They weren't interested in what was between my ears but what I could do for them sexually.

Sometime during the act, we changed positions and I finally did get the chance to suck Rory's cock in slow, languid strokes where he moaned out his pleasure. Severin took the opportunity to apply more lube before he assaulted me again anally. I was coming to the swift and firm conclusion he

found vaginal sex distasteful—at least with me—and had no need to practice it in order to get off. In fact, he needed to possess me from the back to feel any pleasure at all.

“Fuck, your asshole is so tight. Were you a virgin ‘back there’ before Rory introduced you to our life of deviant debauchery? I can hardly imagine Grayson ramming you in the backdoor,” Severin explained in a cold voice.

I stopped licking up and down Rory’s cock as I replied, “That is none of your business.”

“None of my business? Are you serious or just plain deluded? You’ve got the bloody cheek, you know that? You have an ass and a mouthful of cock yet you are under some false impression you are running things around here when the reality of the situation is you aren’t running anything but your mouth.”

“Stop it, Seven,” Rory warned.

Apparently, he wasn’t too impressed by his brother’s tone because he thrust into me hard and deep, over and over, with more than enough fierce sexual energy as our damp skin made a slapping sound against one another’s. He pulled out and came all over my back side before he got off the bed and slammed his way out of the suite.

I finished servicing Rory and he moaned as I brought him to orgasm. He stood and walked into the bathroom before he came back with a hand towel and wiped my buttocks gently with the damp cloth.

I collapsed into his arms shortly afterward and he held me to him in a protective manner.

“Is that your way of saying good bye? Sharing me with your brother that is?”

He caressed my hair before he kissed my brow. “No, actually, that wasn’t the plan. I awoke early, took a shower and went into town. I stopped by the local bakery and picked up some coffee along with all the trimmings for a nice barbeque out by the pool before I drove you back to the city late this afternoon.

“When I arrived, I saw his silver Range Rover parked in the garage and I only hoped he hadn’t hurt you. He was in a foul mood—I could tell as much from the way he spoke to you. He begrudged me in German for not sharing my ‘new toy’. When I responded you were neither mine nor a toy,

his anger only worsened and I am afraid he took it out on you. For that I apologize.”

I stared into Rory’s intriguing blue-green eyes. “What ever gave him the impression it would be all right for him to sexually possess me? Did he play around with Trésor too and pretend to be you? Did he think he owned a part of her and was due adequate compensation by using me? Help me understand what is going on here.”

“Nothing about Severin is neatly put into a box to understand, Aurélie. Hell, he is my identical twin and I don’t even completely get him all the time. I think he is suffering from burnout to be honest. He’s done some of the most depraved and extreme acts the lifestyle has had to offer but like everything else, it can get boring. I can only thank some small part of his functioning morale that still exists he hasn’t commissioned a snuff film. Usually when members of our community...snap...the consequences are great for everyone involved.

“I’m sorry but I saw no other choice. If sharing you pulled him back from the precipice then I was happy to do it but that doesn’t mean I *wanted* to do it. In some small way you will never understand, you are mine and although I have no right to declare ownership over any part of you, I am still overly protective of you and I will defend you at all costs.”

I don’t know why but I leaned over and kissed Rory’s mouth. “Thank you.”

“For what?”

“Everything. That whole situation could have turned so ugly and although it wasn’t exactly pretty, I never felt unsafe because you were here.” I lay my face against his chest and inhaled his scent. “I must sound absolutely certifiable. I have never done anything like that and I don’t think I want to do it again but...promise me, you won’t ever put me in a position where I have no choice.”

“I don’t really think that should be an honest concern of yours seeing I have to deliver you back to the city and the arms of your fiancé by this evening.”

I said nothing further and he didn’t probe me either. I had no intention of going back. My whole life had changed the moment I heard of Trésor’s untimely death and I still planned to investigate it and delve into this new world Rory had introduced me to but that meant leaving the country and long stints abroad. I was considered a French national—and by default,

possessed European Union citizenship. I also had American citizenship through my mother though I was born in France. It had all been a rather fun affair to drive down to the United States Consulate and register my birth outside of the United States, or so she had told me.

In surrendering all control in one night of pure and unadulterated ecstasy, I had actually regained a part of myself I'd forgotten existed. I didn't want to be beholden to any man and although I knew it would hurt Grayson, he was a born survivor and would soon move on without me. I had my sister's modest inheritance though Rory still hadn't told me how much it was worth, and what better way could I live then trying to find out how she got involved in the BDSM community and what had really happened to her? It was the biggest story of my life and a journalistic coup, but unless I found evidence of foul play, it would never reach the airwaves.

I wasn't doing this for my own personal glory or the public's. I felt compelled to speak on behalf of my sister who'd lost her dynamic voice in the basement of an extremely expensive apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

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Chapter Eight



I LAY BY THE POOL with Rory and thanked God it was one of those glassed indoor affairs. All the windows could be opened and there was a gorgeous skylight that could completely slid back on warm, humid days but it was starting to get cold and the weather looked ominous outside our glass palace. We could see the sea from the view the indoor pool afforded us and it was choppy with fierce waves that crashed against the natural sea barriers.

To my utter chagrin, Severin had not left. He'd only shackled up in a spare bedroom before he walked down in an open black robe and a pair of black swimming trunks. His slaves, Claudette and Hans, followed behind on dog leashes collared to elaborate silver chains around their neck.

It seemed like the man had a bit of decorum as even though they sat on either side of them, they were seated on plush pillows instead of the hard marble flooring of the pool area.

“So, did Gabriel get around to calling you yet?” he inquired out loud.

I looked around and realized he was talking to me. Although I wore a modest white bikini that looked great against my rich skin, I still wanted to pull my robe on and cover my body. Regardless he knew what every inch of me looked like, I still felt naked under his intense gaze.

“Who?”

Severin chuckled as he swigged down the rest of his martini; he placed the expensive Baccarat glass on an even more elaborate and disgustingly expensive art deco glass table. “Gabriel Klume. He’s our personal attorney. Rory’s and mine, that is, as well as our financial advisor.”

I tried to avoid looking at him. It just felt wrong I had had his cock down my throat earlier that morning and now here we were having a normal conversation. I kept trying to remind myself to someone like him, this wasn't strange at all except perhaps he would like me knelt down on those soft pillows with a white gold chain around my neck and a leash attached to it.

If he ever thought that would happen, he had another think coming because that would never fucking be me. I was very comfortable in my own skin; I didn't particularly trust people and I had no false security anyone *other* than me could keep *me* safe.

"No, I haven't heard from him yet," I replied as the iPhone Rory had given me the night before began to ring. It was obvious who it was but my heart started a deep thud before I answered the phone.

"Hello, sweetheart," I greeted in a warm voice. "I was beginning to think you'd never call."

"That son of a bitch isn't keeping you held hostage, is he? I thought you would be home by now," Grayson replied in a voice filled with anger.

"No, it's nothing like that. He actually drove me up to the Hamptons for the day. We were just going over the arrangements for Trésor's funeral."

Wow, that was a smooth lie. Where did *that* come from?

"He hasn't tried to fuck you yet, has he?"

A sudden image of the two of us the previous night flashed in my mind—him taking me from behind on that weird triangle spongy device down in his basement and how much that turned me on despite the pain and his force. My face immediately heated up and I had to squeeze my legs together to stop the sudden heat that grew and flooded my sex with longing.

"Of course not, honey. Why would he do that?"

"Don't bullshit a bullshitter, Aurélie. The man eats, sleeps and drinks sex. Do you really think his lustful looks at the precinct escaped me? He wanted you so bad he would have fucked you in front of all of us if we'd been game. He has absolutely no shame and *those* people don't think like normal people."

You mean like us in the vanilla crowd?

I bit my tongue and instead replied, "I noticed that too but he has been a complete gentleman. He's still so choked up about Trésor, he must have gone through three bottles of Cristal and he passed out on the sofa. I slept in my sister's old room."

“Surrounded by all those disgusting sex toys and weird ass sadist devices she keeps in there? Those masks are enough to freak me the fuck out.”

“How would you know what her room looks like?”

I didn’t even know what her room looked like because he never took me there.

It was his turn to sputter. “Uh, remember last year when you couldn’t go to the Hamptons due to the assignment in Darfur you couldn’t extricate yourself from?”

“Yes,” I replied, my hand holding the damn cell phone so tight, I thought I might break it.

“Well, I went with Jason and Kaysa. We stayed at Rory’s place and Trésor was there. You know how my brother and his wife are and what they’re like. Severin came by with his slaves, Claudette, Hans and his pet slave who didn’t have a name...it was all so depraved and disgusting what happened that night, sweetheart. It would have never happened if we had gone to the Hamptons together like I’d planned.”

“What did you do?” I kept my voice neutral though tears were threatening to break free.

“I don’t want to talk about it. The poor girl is dead now, isn’t she?”

“Yes but last summer she was very much alive so what the fuck did you do, Gray?”

“Shit...” He sighed heavily. “The wrong thing is for damn sure. I participated in their sex orgy. All the guys pulled a train on Claudette, Trésor and Kaysa. It was pretty...rough. You know it’s not something I would normally do but it reminded me of college. We got drunk and loaded and you know how men can be—”

“Yeah...I know how men can be. Is that because I told you I was raped by Renaud?”

“Well, you two were in a relationship at the time of said occurrence so was it really rape?”

“Priceless,” I murmured. “I get it. If two people are romantically involved then a woman automatically loses the right to say ‘no’ if she doesn’t want to have sex? Is that how it works? Forget I said anything. I’ll be back in the city tonight.”

I ended the call and threw the phone to the marble floor. The iPhone faceplate shattered but remarkably the phone itself didn’t break.

I wiped the tears away from my face with anger and walked inside the house for a moment to compose myself. Though instead of pulling myself together, I fell apart in the sitting room and collapsed on the sofa.

It was all so long ago and Renaud had apologized for his behavior. We'd managed to move past it and he still dumped me in the end so why was I crying about something that had happened in our relationship? Perhaps most people thought like Grayson and didn't really consider a woman in a relationship a rape victim if it happened with her partner?

I breathed deeply and opened my eyes. They were still downcast as I faced a pair of perfect feet, especially for a man. I slowly looked up and knew immediately it was Rory.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. One minute, I was talking about your personal financial advisor with your brother and the next I'm having a horrible disagreement with my fiancé on the phone on what constitutes rape. Actually, I'm just great."

He sat next to me though he went out of his way not to physically touch me. My bare right thigh rubbed against his jean-covered left thigh and I swore I could feel the heat from his body through the fabric. He wore a black wife-beater which showed off his toned yet lean physique.

"It really isn't any of my business about the whole 'rape' subject but do you want to tell me what happened?"

I breathed again. "It was between my ex-boyfriend and I so it wasn't a stranger like with Trésor."

Rory said nothing and I looked at him. His crystal blue-green eyes glared at me in surprise. "You knew about that?"

"Yeah, she told me because she knew what had happened between Renaud and I and she didn't want to end up like me...battered, broken and completely unable to trust men. I mean, if I could act like that about an incident that happened with my then-boyfriend...what would happen to her when she didn't know the guy? She thought it was best he was some random photographer and she would never have to see him again but I ran into Renaud everywhere in Versailles, even after we broke up.

"It was part of the reason why I left France. I just couldn't stop seeing his face and that smug look. I don't know if he did it to hurt me psychologically or because he was as drunk as he claimed but in the back of

my mind, I always knew he knew it happened so...how drunk could he have been, you know?”

“Rape isn’t the end of the world even though it often feels like it is. If you can understand that and learn to deal with the incident then it is half the battle. It happened and sometimes we have to move on. The devastating effects on the human psyche are often times worse than the act itself. It hurts us deeper than we can ever imagine but we have to keep moving forward and eventually, each day it hurts a bit less but you have to acknowledge it happened first. You felt weak and helpless at that moment but no one will ever make you feel that way again,” Rory explained in a soft voice.

I stopped sniffing and stared at him. He didn’t have to say anything because I already knew. “It happened to you, didn’t it?”

Rory smiled though there was no mirth in his expression. “It was my first time at a BDSM club. A hardcore one in Hamburg...I was twenty-one and Severin was with me but we got separated. He wanted us to stay together and I didn’t know why he was so concerned but I soon found out there was a method to his madness and he wasn’t being overly paranoid. It was geared more towards homosexuals though there were some women. I witnessed an act of a woman being assaulted and by the look of helplessness on her face, I knew she wasn’t enjoying it at all.”

He swallowed and I watched his Adam’s apple bob up and down. “You have to understand that there is a lot of dubious consent in the community. I mean, you have your pain whores—people who get off on being humiliated and degraded. It is a physical turn on for people to piss and shit on them, abuse them beyond what any...sane person...would think is normal or even acceptable. This woman wasn’t one of those people and there was just a train of men using and abusing her. They were double and triple teaming her and I tried to break in to be of some assistance.

“I won’t go into the whole sordid episode but I was...assaulted multiple times. I honestly don’t know how long it went on because I passed out and my brother found me. I had to go to the hospital and I needed stitches and spent a whole week in the hospital, face down. My bowels were re-routed and attached to a colostomy bag so my ass could heal properly as there was a lot of internal damage. Let’s just say it made it harder to become a true Dom when something like that happens to you because no matter how hard you try to separate yourself from someone, you always wonder how they

are feeling, what they are thinking...if they truly enjoy what is happening to them.”

“Is that why you don’t have slaves?”

“I don’t have slaves because I don’t *want* them. I have no wish to break down a person’s mind like Severin has done to Claudette and Hans. It’s a lot of work before and a lot of work after. I just thank what ever is above us he hasn’t gotten bored with them because the transition is going to be very... difficult for them. They’ve basically been living in a dream world for the past couple of years and when their service to him ends, they will be completely free and on their own to make decisions they haven’t had to do in ages.

“He literally tells them when they can use the toilet, take a shower, when they are allowed to feel pain and pleasure. I don’t condone my brother’s lifestyle but I can’t quite condemn him either because he has always been there for me in a way you can’t understand unless you have an identical twin. It’s a very strange relationship we have but...it’s functional and it works. I suppose I am not a true Dom especially if I am dependent on someone else to make me feel safe and that person is Severin, not me.”

I don’t know why I wanted to reach out and touch him at all but I needed the human connection and I could only hope he wouldn’t reject me. I slipped my arm around his waist and leaned against him. He slid his arms around my naked waist and pulled me closer to him. There wasn’t anything sexual to it; truly we were two people who desired skin-to-skin contact if only not to feel alone in a world so big and cold.

“Come on, let’s go get a drink. A little bird told me you aren’t expected back in the city until tonight. So, you can have a glass or two of Cristal with me?”

I don’t know what it was about him but the way he casually suggested I stay longer made me smile before I said, “I sure can.”

It was so strange to me how easily we could transition back to that place of being friends. I could understand why my sister felt safe with him and why she was loathe to leave him despite their rather strange sexual practices. If it made her happy then who was I to judge her?

I was one to think about not so usual sexual practices when I had experienced a double penetration that morning. That was definitely something to leave out telling future generations if I ever decided to spit out a kid or two.

We stood and walked to the kitchen together and it wasn't until we got there, I realized his left hand was holding my right. When did that happen? When did we become so close it was okay for us to touch each other without it being the least bit sexual?

Rory let go and opened the fridge to take out a bottle of Cristal. As I watched him work, my breath caught in my throat and my heart thundered in my chest with an intensity that frightened the shit out of me.

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Chapter Nine



YOU FEEL NOTHING FOR THIS man, my inner voice warned me.

Could that same rational part of my brain communicate this to my heart? I began to breathe hard until I was wheezing like a goddamn asthmatic and I slowly sank to the floor. The tears came before I could stop them and I had to cover my face out of embarrassment and fear. This wasn't supposed to happen and I would never forgive myself for this. I promised myself no one would ever touch my heart the way Renaud had and there I was back in a situation so beyond my control, I couldn't draw breath.

Rory was immediately at my side and all I could do was read his lips because I couldn't hear his voice above my own heartbeat. I was falling apart in front of a man and I cursed my fucking weaknesses. I was stronger than this. I was a smart, independent woman who didn't need a man and just like that, I decided I wouldn't have one.

Slowly, his concerned voice came into focus and my anxiety attack began to wane. I didn't feel completely out of control anymore and my ragged breath began to fade away.

"Deep breaths, okay? It'll ease you back down, okay?"

I nodded my head as Severin walked into the kitchen and glared at us though his focus was primarily at me. I could feel his gaze burn over my skin as I allowed Rory to help me up off the floor.

"I didn't realize you liked bottoming out so much. Looks like my brother dearest has found a replacement for Trésor, his poor dead pain whore."

I saw red and before Rory could stop me, I stormed at Severin and pushed him so hard he fell on his ass. "You take that back you fucking

asshole! My sister is dead and you talk about her like that? You're just jealous you couldn't turn her into another Claudette. Is that why you killed her?"

Severin's aquamarine eyes shined with hatred as he stared me up and down. Even in his subordinate position, he commanded a power and studious demand I bow down to him, I looked away before I did something I regretted.

"Calm down, he didn't mean what he said. He's just upset—"

"*What? And I'm not?*" I screamed at him.

"I didn't mean it like that. Come with me." Rory grabbed the bottle of Cristal before he slid his arm around my waist.

As we passed, Severin stood and murmured, "*Du gehörst zu mir...nicht vergessen.*"

I didn't bother to ask what he meant though Rory said something mumbled in German to his brother before we strode to his bedroom and he closed the doors behind us and turned the lock on the door knob.

"What was that about?"

Rory still faced the double doors. "Trouble between my brother and I but nothing for you to worry about."

I walked toward him but stopped as he turned toward me. "What did he say to you?"

"To paraphrase, 'I should remember I belong to him'. It can be misinterpreted as it doesn't mean the way it sounds. I merely replied 'I don't belong to anyone but myself' but that was meant to hurt him. It was stupid...I don't want to talk about it."

He looked at the sheets and scrunched his face up in disgust before he strode to the bed and began to strip it. Was this his version of a panic attack? The bottle of champagne had been left on the floor in a precarious position and I grabbed it as he continued to take the linens off the pillowcases.

There was a fireplace that had never been used with a nice mantel and I placed it there before I approached him reluctantly and touched his shoulder. He whipped around to face me and his whole visage was a mask of anger.

At the look of fright on my face, his features softened and he grabbed me possessively before he kissed me long and hard against my mouth. I

allowed his tongue to probe my mouth and I surrendered to the sensation because I wanted to do anything it took to calm him down.

We finally separated. “I’m sorry...this is going to be impossible and I can’t do this. I won’t let you go tonight because that arrogant prick doesn’t deserve you. You’re an amazing woman and to think...you are going back to that...phony.”

I chewed on my lip which had started to swell from our bruising kiss. “No, I’m not.”

“What?”

“Who is Gabriel and why should I talk to him?” I wondered out loud, purposely changing the subject.

Rory sat on the stripped bed and ran his hands over his face. “He’s our attorney and financial advisor. I specifically told him not to contact you until after the funeral because...I didn’t want you to be upset or think I was trying to buy you.”

I looked at him though he did not meet my gaze. “What’s going on, Rory?”

“Your sister left her monetary wealth to your parents. It isn’t much but they will have a nice retirement and knowing your parents, they’ll be okay. I didn’t understand her decision nor did I think it was right. I’d always put aside some money for her and when she died, you inherited it. It’s not a fortune but I think it will give you the financial freedom you require,” he explained before his blue-green eyes met mine.

“How much is it?” I inquired.

“Does it matter if you’re not going to accept it? This was before I knew who you were. I only knew she had a sister and I decided you should inherit her money should anything happen to her. I found out later...who you were...your reputation and your dedication to the *truth*.”

Was he mocking my profession?

“You don’t like what I do?”

“What? Journalism? It was one time a very noble profession but now it is chasing down Kim Kardashian and her latest lover or wondering where Snooki is passed out on the Jersey Shore. It isn’t a profession I consider with any conviction or ethics what so ever, that’s for sure,” he replied snidely.

I laughed. “I don’t do the entertainment section and you know it. I do the hard core stories and investigative journalism—”

“Yes, I know. You were one of the first journalists in harm’s way during the whole ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings and you do stories about Tibet and Darfur and Myanmar and Timor. I’m not ignorant in the way of the world. I attended the University of Munich at the age of sixteen and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. I received my Masters in Business Admin from Columbia University at the age of twenty-one *and* have a Doctorate in Philosophy from Harvard in Political Economy and Government. I followed the same path as your current President so...you don’t have to try to educate me about the world’s issues. I know them a little bit too well.

“My point is what good does it do to talk about these places and what’s going on there if you have absolutely no fucking clue how to change the course of the situation? The problems are a little more complex than having a fund raiser with George Clooney and throwing money at the ‘issue’ before turning your attention to yet another bleeding heart cause in the world.”

“What would you propose I do?” I questioned. “I will take your fucking money—however much it is—and probably give half of it to these ‘worthless’ causes but it will make me feel better and I know at the end of the day although it’s probably useless...it’s better than doing nothing. I am so scared that what we have lost most is our humanity and our ability to feel. Is that what attracted you to the lifestyle in the first place? Is feeling pain or pleasure better than feeling nothing at all?”

I closed my eyes and before I could open them, I felt him next to me and his hand, so soft and hot, was running down my bare arm. It was the most exquisite and beautiful feeling on earth.

“Yes, the experience of pleasure and pain is better than feeling nothing at all. You want to know why? It is the feeling of being alive instead of subsisting through life as if we are already dead. Do you think you are the only one who walks through life numb, Aurélie? We Germans have turned it into a proper blood sport. To feel dedication and passion for *anything* is to be reminded of our fanatical history so we prefer to feel *nothing* at all. Everything is mechanical and precise and perfect. Alas, perfection does not exist but we hopelessly strive for this fantasy to be fulfilled.”

I sagged against his hard body and slipped my arms around his neck as his hands wandered down to cup my breasts. I could feel the outline of his hard cock against my back and I murmured as he ripped my bikini top and teased my nipples with nimble fingers as he kissed my neck.

“I thought you couldn’t do this?” I questioned breathlessly.

“I can’t and I shouldn’t but you...*du faszinieren und erschrecken mich.*”

“*J’ai peur aussi,*” I whispered, “but I am more afraid of *not* doing this with you than I am of continuing.”

Rory flipped me around and pressed my breasts to his clothed chest. “One more time...and then we say good bye?”

“Yes, just once more and then we let go forever.”

It was so easy for me to fall back into his embrace which felt like a welcome home and this time, there were no games yet there were no rules either. He kissed me slowly, passionately, and I swear I felt like a teenager again. I could spend hours in his arms as heat and moisture flooded my sex with an overwhelming warmth that threatened to burn me in an inferno to last all of eternity.

His hands, once so cruel, were like silk upon my skin and when he touched me between my legs, it was a gentle caress to soothe an ache the likes of which I had never experienced. I felt safe and secure though I should have taken little solace in this knowledge, it overwhelmed me with joy and pleasure.

I sighed as his fingers undid the little bows on the side of my bikini and it dropped to the floor before I hoisted myself around his waist and he didn’t let go of me. His fingers were too busy trying to unbutton his jeans and I impaled myself on his cock the moment it was exposed.

We moaned together as he began to fuck me painfully slow where he stood and I tried to control our movements but it was an awkward position to be in and allowed him full control over our sex.

I wondered if he wanted to dominate me at all when he whispered in my ear, “Don’t you fucking come until I say so.”

“What happens if I do?”

“You’ll be punished.”

“Maybe I want to be punished. It will make you keep me here longer than necessary and I won’t have to enter the real world. Not yet, not now.”

Rory shut me up as he kissed my lips again and his tongue invaded my mouth with a furious caress I caved into immediately. Slowly, he inched us toward the bed and threw me down on it though there was nothing except a mattress pad which covered the bare mattress underneath.

He suddenly withdrew from me and stood as I lay down with my eyes closed before I opened them to see what he was doing.

I sat up with my legs splayed and watched as he took off his wife-beater and stripped out of his jeans. His body was so lean and smooth and hairless. He was shaved everywhere and I hadn't noticed this last night. His cock, scarlet with an angry purple tip looked strange against his skin which was alabaster with only the tiniest hint of color. I don't know why but he made having pale skin seem cool and gothic. There wasn't anything pasty about his complexion; instead he resembled a marble statue, perfect and white against my olive toned skin. The combination of his milky skin against my own was another turn on neither of us could explain nor comprehend.

"What is it? I'm not tanned, I know. I should go to one of those salons and get a spray on because...alas, I can't naturally. Not very sexy, is it?"

"Why? Because you are supposed to be dark haired and tanned to be handsome?" I inquired out loud.

"Yes, of course. It's what all the magazines say a strong alpha male should be."

"I love you just the way you are."

I crushed my lips against his if only to cover the faux pas of my wording. I didn't love anything and we were just fucking because that was what healthy, normal adults did when they were attracted to one another. There would be no love, only lust.

Rory interrupted our kiss as his body crushed my own but he leaned up a bit, if only to see my breasts. He caressed them before he bent down and took my left nipple into his mouth. I moaned out loud.

"I love the way you look, your skin, the smell of your flesh. I thought I would never...but now, all I can smell is you. Your scent haunts me and I think every time I smell violets and vanilla again, I will instantly be reminded of you."

"You have me now," I said.

"Yes, I do. But sometimes possession isn't enough. Especially when it isn't long term and I have absolutely no control over when you will leave me."

"Nothing lasts forever, Rory. You know that better than I do."

"And I still want you in my arms and here in my bed like this, forever. I would give up everything for you including the life. If you don't want it then we can be a vanilla couple and I would do it for you. We don't ever have to do anything you don't want to do."

Tears in my eyes blurred my vision. “Rory, stop...stop and just fuck me, please.”

“It won’t cure what you are missing...what I am missing and we both know that, Aurélie.”

“True but we both agreed ahead of time what this would be and sometimes in life, there are no take-backs so you just have to settle with what you asked of me and when the time is right for me to leave then I will do so,” I responded in a diplomatic fashion.

“Fine.” His aquamarine eyes were bright yet they cooled considerably beneath my gaze. “Turn over so I don’t have to look at you.”

“You’re not going to...” I trailed off, dreading the thought of him taking me anally. My ass was incredibly sore as I had never been an enthusiast of back door love and preferred it the natural, normal way people usually had sex.

“That isn’t for you to decide. Remember, I own you until I have to return you to your normal, every day, vanilla life so I can so what ever the fuck I want to do to you.”

I turned over onto my stomach and he grabbed me by the waist and pulled me down until my feet rested on the floor. I couldn’t hide my legs felt shaky and uncertain underneath me even with his strong hands and the steady way he held me.

Rory slid into me and I moaned as he began to thrust inside me with slow, deliberate movements which shook me to the core of my being. My legs wanted to give way and I didn’t feel comfortable standing up. I tried to redistribute my weight and put more pressure on my upper body which still clutched the bed. One of his hands no longer held my waist and had snaked its way between my splayed legs. His fingers massaged my clit and just as I was on the precipice of coming, he withdrew and his fingers disappeared.

I was beyond sexually frustrated and moaned but it was one of sheer anger and annoyance. He laughed and worked his manhood into my anus. I bit down on my lower lip and tried to hold back the sounds that would tell him I was no longer enjoying this even if he was. It didn’t seem fair. I had basically told him no to a relationship so he was going to punish me because he could and he knew I would do nothing to stop him.

I had to admit it wasn’t nearly as painful as the night before or when Severin had used me there earlier. Perhaps it wasn’t so bad after all. I tried to remember the few books I’d read about BDSM. Annabel Joseph’s came

to mind and I remembered her talking about a place submissives' would go when the pain became unbearable but I didn't have a "go to" place as I'd never been that out of it I needed to escape from sex while I was in the position to have it.

When I thought I wouldn't be able to take it anymore because he was slamming and thrusting into me as if he would never have sex again and we were both covered in thin layers of sweat, he began to stroke my clit again and I was pleasantly surprised to find it was hard as granite under his touch. I was still turned on even though he was doing nothing for me sexually other than making me angry, he whispered in my ear, "Come now."

Dear God, I hated myself at that very moment but when he commanded me to orgasm, I did. It shook from the core of my being and worked its way outward until I screamed with release and he released a string of angry curse words in German as he came at the same time.

What was he doing to me? I would never be able to live through this or afterwards but at that moment, I lived for the never ending orgasm that continued to flow from my body underneath his heavy handed yet smooth touch.

Chapter Ten



DINNER WAS A PAINFUL OCCASION because soon, I knew we would leave in Rory's Porsche Cayenne and he would drive me back to the City under the pretense of taking of me home.

I had made a decision that was long overdue. I couldn't continue to deceive Grayson and pretend as if nothing had happened between Rory and I. Although I would never give him details, I would end our engagement and I intended to find out who killed my sister.

There was a box of her stuff to go through which had been delivered the same day as I'd ventured into Club X-Tasy. I was loathe to read her journals but they took up half the box and thus it was only fair to see what she'd said about her togetherness with Rory.

I could clearly say I no longer suspected him but I did believe someone in his inner circle was capable of such a heinous crime. He would have never known it especially if the murderer was someone Severin knew. I didn't tell him any of this because frankly, it wasn't any of his business. He would do an investigation of his own but he wouldn't look at the obvious nor could be objective like I could.

Trésor was my sister but we had barely been sisterly towards one another in years. We might as well have been only children with the way we acted towards one another. One minute, she called our parents' and I; the next, she simply broke off contact.

The strange part of the whole affair was there had been no big fight or huge falling out, she simply ignored us as if we had died or were no longer people she had to be concerned about.

All I knew was it happened after she and Rory started seeing one another exclusively and I hoped her journals would give me a clue. This was a huge reason why I no longer suspected Rory. If he had anything to hide, why had he kept the journals from the police yet given them to me? Perhaps that proved he did have something to hide because now he'd had me every which way there was to have sex with someone, he thought I would be too ashamed to approach law enforcement if I found something that wasn't copacetic.

It was a great defense argument. I was jealous of my sister and wanted the life she led so after her death, I had slept with her former boyfriend and after he'd dumped me, I'd accused him of having something to do with the death of my sister. It would be very difficult to prove otherwise. Severin would give testimony of my clinginess and how I was unable to let go after Rory had made it perfectly clear ours would be a fling and little else. It was perfect in fact and I no longer put it past him to have set it up that way just so he would have an alibi.

"How is the salmon?"

"What?" I asked.

"I asked how is the salmon? You seem a bit dazed over there."

I looked at Severin before I observed the table. There was only Rory, he and I who were seated while his two slaves were seated at his feet and he fed them from a separate plate, giving them scraps of food with his fingers.

The meal couldn't have been more perfect if it hadn't been so damn awkward. Salmon in a lovely cream garlic sauce, fresh steamed vegetables and fluffy whipped sweet potatoes. It had been delivered from an upscale restaurant in the heart of town and the food was beyond reproach but my mind wasn't exactly on the fish at the moment.

"It's very good," I replied on auto-pilot as I licked my dry lips.

"What are you thinking about? All that money Rory is going to give you as a kiss-off present? You don't deserve it, you know. If anyone should be sitting here right now, it's Trésor, not you."

I ignored Severin's little dig and continued to eat my food. He was determined to be an asshole to me and it was obvious to anyone he didn't like me. No, that wasn't the right word. He couldn't stand the sight of me. He never had liked me, from the evening before when he had his slaves do degrading sex acts to me just for the sake of recording them.

That was what sealed the deal and would stop me from ever bringing charges against him or Rory. Did I actually want that tape to be played in a courtroom with a jury watching? My credibility would be reduced to zero as the cuffs were probably not seen in the video and it probably appeared like I had my hands behind my back on purpose. It was a leisurely position, was it not?

“What makes you think someone like you is worth fifteen million dollars? What have you done with your life besides to pretend to care for causes you couldn’t give a shit about? You’re engaged to a man whose father owns the television network you are employed by yet someone is supposed to take you seriously? Give me a break. You’re less than nothing. At least Trésor was useful.”

I refused to respond and it drove Severin almost to the brink. “*Answer me!*”

“No, I don’t think so. Not with you acting like a spoiled child,” I responded before I sliced off a piece of salmon and stuffed it into my mouth.

I noticed the slight hints of rosemary and sea salt. It was definitely fresh water salmon and it tasted delicious. It was almost as satisfactory as watching a scarlet faced Severin lose it in front of his slaves. Somehow, I didn’t think that was very good decorum.

“Leave her alone, Seven. If she doesn’t feel like talking then who are we to make her?” Rory’s voice was cold, jaded.

“Easy. She should be here on the floor with my slaves because she is *not* our equal! I had her before me this morning, sucking my cock as if it were the most decadent thing she ever tasted and you know what the kicker was, she wanted to please me because she thought I was *you*. If your stupid little whore can’t tell the difference between us then why should I respect her?”

“For fuck’s sake, let it be, Severin.” Rory pinched the bridge of his nose. “You are giving me a goddamn migraine with all your insipid talk.”

“Yeah, just don’t fall in love...you know what happens when you do...” he trailed off cryptically.

Rory shook his head before he threw a cloth napkin over his plate in anger. “You just ruined a perfectly good dinner with all your bullshit. Aurélie, let’s go.”

I wanted to say I was sorry to go—and in a way I was because once he dropped me off in Manhattan, I would never see him again—but I couldn’t

take another minute of Severin. I wasn't exactly sure what kind of relationship he and Rory had but it didn't take an assessment from Dr. Phil to know it wasn't a healthy one.

If I didn't know better, I almost thought Severin was in love with his brother and didn't want anyone else to have him. It was probably just my imagination. Was it possible for something so sick to happen between siblings?

I followed Rory wordlessly into the garage. My dress was tucked into a small Louis Vuitton carry-on he'd given me and I wore a Juicy Couture pink sweat suit he'd had delivered earlier that evening. It certainly wasn't my favorite designer but at least I had on a comfortable pair of Chanel flats to match and my high heels were also in the carry-on along with my small purse and my wool coat I'd worn the night before.

As I climbed into the passenger seat next to him, he seemed to ignore me as he cranked up the car and turned the heat on low as the night had grown quite chilly. I looked in his direction every now and then but I didn't know what to say to ease the ache. It couldn't have been easy on his ego when I'd outright said no to his offer of a relationship but it wasn't for the reasons he probably thought and I needed to express myself or I would regret it for the rest of my life.

I turned toward him as he continued to focus on the road. Mylène Farmer's *Bleu Noir* played low on the stereo and I thought the album was a perfect soundtrack for our past weekend.

"So, are you a big fan?" I inquired.

"Of who? Madame Farmer? Well, Severin is and it kind of grows on you after a while although she is a bit campy, isn't she?"

"Well, it is true a lot of homosexuals like her music in France but she's popular amongst everyday people too you know. I grew up listening to her so I am quite fond of her music. It didn't escape my attention *Point de Suture* was playing at the club last night. It...fit the scenery."

"Severin chooses the play lists when he is in town. There are a lot of Europeans who frequent the club so we tend to play a lot of British and French artists. Although you are surrounded by some of the most depraved activities, you get to see them performed to great music. We try to avoid the whole 'club atmosphere' with pulsing bass music as it is a bit of a cliché. There are plenty of BDSM clubs like that but all of ours are exclusive and we try to cultivate that atmosphere."

“Why didn’t you ask me if I had been tested for sexually transmitted diseases?” I questioned, changing the subject.

“What?”

“Well, you asked me what birth control I was on but you never asked me whether I was Typhoid Mary. I might *look* clean but we both know that means nothing...” I trailed off.

Rory laughed out loud. “You are *kidding*, right? Someone in my position doesn’t have to ask such inane questions. I only wanted to know whether you would be truthful or not but I have my ways...of knowing, that is.”

My heart began to accelerate in my chest. “What do you mean?”

“Listen, I know your whole medical history, including the abortion you had when you were twenty-one. Was it Renaud’s?”

My face burned and I knew my complexion was scarlet at the moment. “How did you get a hold of my medical records?”

“It’s easier than you think now that everything is online. Most doctors store their medical files online in places like DropBox and a fair amount of them use Cloud programs provided by Amazon and Apple. Stupid, I know, because a pretty good hacker can crack those programs. I know an excellent hacker and she keeps me up to date for a fee. I’d rather pay it then not and make a horrible mistake.”

I said nothing because the thought of someone invading my privacy in such a way pissed me off so thoroughly.

“Listen, it’s nothing personal. I do it with all my sexual partners. It might seem like a very promiscuous lifestyle but it isn’t. When I am at the club and I get involved with a customer, I always wear a condom with absolutely no exceptions. The only person I didn’t use any form of protection with was your sister. I knew her and she wouldn’t dare cheat. Plus, I had access to her medical records as she used a doctor I paid for and he knew what to expect from me.

“I have never had a sexually transmitted disease and I would like to keep it that way. It was nothing against you but I have to be careful in my line of work. It isn’t exactly the safest profession you know but I enjoy what I do and the clubs I run. I provide a service and people are very satisfied with what they find at our establishments. That is the way it should be.”

“When did you have your *hacker* procure my medical records?” I wondered out loud.

“The same day your sister died. It was only precautionary at the time. I wanted to make sure there weren’t any diseases in your family that might have caused Trésor’s death—”

“What are you on about? Her throat was slit. What would a family disease have to do with that? Don’t be daft.”

“Detective O’Neill and Detective Wozniak had already been assigned the case but both refused to tell me how she died until I was in the country. They merely called my mobile phone and inquired where I was and at the time, I was in the air on a flight back to the States. When I asked how she expired, they refused to give details and told me I would have to meet them at the precinct when I arrived. Ironically, I’d only made it to the station fifteen minutes before you and Grayson came waltzing through the doors. By then, I knew.

“I was worried and thought maybe she died because of something I had done so I scoured her medical records and ordered both your parents’ and yours from my hacker friend. She delivered them within a couple of hours and by the time I got to the police department, I knew it had to be foul play. You will tell me if you find anything suspicious in her journals, won’t you?”

“Of course,” I snapped. “Wait...are you telling me you have never read them?”

“No, I haven’t. I wouldn’t dare invade her privacy like that.”

I laughed though it was highly inappropriate. “You don’t mind hacking into someone’s medical records but you won’t read your lover’s journal for fear of *invading* her privacy? I’m almost positive you don’t see the irony.”

“Well, one concerns me. Her health is important to me and the other... her journals...they are not of my affairs.”

“Yeah, I suppose that makes sense.”

I was quiet for a while and didn’t say anything further until we were on Interstate 495 heading west towards Manhattan.

“So, you said you aren’t staying with Grayson when you get back. May I ask what it is you plan to do?”

I glared at Rory before I said anything. “I don’t think that is any of your business. Let’s just say I don’t have to stay here in New York any longer and my leaving here won’t be a moment too soon. I am not particularly

crazy about Manhattan and never have been. I just moved here for the job and after I became engaged to Grayson, well, it was a given this is where we would stay.”

“I always knew you would be the type to suffer from wanderlust. Are you going back to Europe?”

“Maybe,” I replied.

“So, you won’t tell me where you are headed? Do you think that will stop me from tracking you down?”

“Stop you? No, but I hope you would respect my privacy if I have no wish to be found.”

“I suppose I have no choice. It does make it easier for me to check on you and make sure you are all right. Just because we are not in a relationship doesn’t mean you haven’t gotten under my skin. You are Trésor’s sister and that is a dangerous position in these times if she didn’t commit suicide. You do realize you aren’t safe and if I don’t know where you are—”

I held up a hand to stop him from talking. “It’s better this way, Rory. Less temptation for both of us because...you got under my skin too and if you constantly came around, I’m not sure I could resist temptation. You’re a lovely human being and together, we are two fucked up individuals with a lot of baggage but somehow, we make it work. Sometimes, it just *shouldn’t* work and these are one of those times. You and me—it can’t happen.”

“Is it because I was in a former relationship with Trésor? Do you feel like you are betraying her memory if you were to be with me?”

I shot him a look. “No, she doesn’t have anything to do with it. I need to be on my own for a while and perhaps find some...closure to this whole issue. I know it won’t bring her back but let it be a cause—my own personal crusade if you wish—I can actually do something about because she’s my sister and I loved her with all my heart. I can’t do anything about all those conflicts far away but perhaps I can settle the one raging within me. I acted stupid and selfish—I was the older of us two by seven years and I should have done everything in my power to make it right.”

Rory sighed and I could tell I was just frustrating the hell out of him. “Your answer, though eloquent, lacks conviction. I would do anything to make sure you are safe yet you will take absolutely nothing from me. What if I threatened to withhold the money?”

“I’m leaving anyway—money or no money, Rory. After what has happened between us, I can’t just go on with my life and pretend everything is okay. It’s never been my style to lie and I will tell Grayson the truth but I won’t blame you. In this case, I knew exactly what I was getting involved in and I did it with my eyes wide open.”

He said nothing further and as the bright lights of Manhattan began to illuminate the night sky, my chest tightened painfully and I found it hard to breathe. By the time he pulled up to the foreboding building where I resided with Grayson, I was in the midst of a full on anxiety attack.

Rory stared at me for a long time before he grabbed my hand closest to him and squeezed tightly. “Do you want to go inside?”

“Not really,” I managed in a soft voice. “To be honest, I am afraid but I have to pick up some clothes and Trésor’s possessions. Gray might be a bit reluctant to hand them over and I don’t want a huge fight but I suppose it can’t be avoided at this point. It’s my own sorry fault. If I had been honest with my fiancé and myself from the get-go then this wouldn’t be happening.”

“Listen, do you have the code to the parking lot?”

“Of course.”

“Then I will park in a guest spot and accompany you upstairs. You’re breaking it off anyway so I don’t see how my presence can harm the situation.”

At that moment, neither could I and therefore I merely nodded in acquiescence to his decision.

We parked and both got out. As we boarded a private elevator connected to the garage, he pulled me to him and I didn’t fight his touch or his embrace. “Where will you stay?”

“I haven’t thought that far ahead to be honest—”

“I can’t drive back to the Hamptons tonight...I’m worn out from all the exertion of our sexual activities. You can stay with me at the Waldorf until we figure out what you’re going to do.”

“Rory, don’t push it.”

He stopped touching me and instead held his hands up in mock-surrender. “Why don’t we get this out of the way now? I care a lot about you but I will never push you past boundaries you are not willing to cross so let’s make a deal. Stay with me until you get everything straightened out. At least until Trésor’s funeral is over as I also have a house in Vaucresson

that is empty more often than not and could use a guest every now and then. When you know what it is you want to do then I will let you go. On your own, without me, is that understood?

“We don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do and that includes sexually speaking as well. We will get your belongings and we’ll leave for France tomorrow, deal? You can rest up and do what ever kind of research you need. In fact, I will put you in touch with some of her friends who were also in the community. I don’t want us to fight about this. You need to find out what happened to her as do I. Perhaps you are the better person to carry out that investigation and I can accept that.”

He paused and touched my face with his hands. “I can’t be free of you yet and I know I don’t have a right to ask but just please...be with me. It’s the loneliness that gets to me more than anything. I miss her smile, her laugh and having her in my life. Can you understand that? I don’t want to be on my own because I am bound to follow my brother down a path of self-destruction and I fear I might not be able to recover. I am *begging* you.”

I crossed my arms in front of my chest. “How big is this house in Vaucresson and will I have to see you everyday?”

“Not if you don’t want to. I also have a cottage in the country and once you leave me, will you promise to stay there? No strings? You don’t have to worry because Severin doesn’t know anything about it and you will have all the privacy you need. Please, let me do this for you. You have no idea how much her death eats away at my conscience because I can’t help but think everything that has happened is my fault.”

“No, it isn’t.” I leaned in to him and barely felt his left hand as it clutched the nape of my neck before he brought me in for a passionate kiss. His tongue probed my own and I found myself surrendering to the feeling of complete and utter ecstasy. His right hand reached down into my sweats and caressed my clit from the outline of my panties and I sighed into his mouth.

The elevator doors opened.

“*What the fuck is going on here?*”

We both stared at a scarlet-faced Grayson who had caught us both with our hands in the proverbial cookie jar. I realized with embarrassment Rory’s left hand clutched my right breast possessively. If I wanted to make sure my

relationship with my fiancé had properly and completely been severed, I had done it tonight with flourish.

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Chapter Eleven



IF LOOKS COULD KILL, GRAYSON would have been dead from the gaze of contempt Rory tossed him alone.

“What the hell does it look like is going on? I accompanied Aurélie up here because she was afraid to come on her own. She’s leaving you and would like to collect her personal effects. Neither one of us wanted this to turn into some kind of ugly confrontation. Let her take what is hers and we will be on our way,” Rory explained in a calm and rational manner.

“You duplicitous, self-righteous prick. How dare you enter my residence and pretend like you have any right to be here. You have your tongue down my fiancé’s throat and your hand down her pants and I am supposed to be okay with this?” Gray’s cold blue eyes met mine. “And *you*, I trusted you and this is what I get? A trampy little slut who can’t wait to spread her legs for the sick fuck who probably had a hand in her sister’s death. Was it good? Did he fuck you every which way and did it have you moaning out for more? Both of you are so fucking disgusting, I can’t stand the sight of either one of you. Get what you came here for and leave my house as soon as possible.”

I wanted to say something but Rory held me to him. “Go pack. I’ll take care of this—”

“But, Rory...he hates me.”

“I said I will take care of this, all right? Do you trust me?”

Did I know him well enough to trust him was the most appropriate question but my feelings caved and I nodded in reply.

“Good, then go get your stuff and let me handle Gray, okay?” Rory tilted his head and kissed my nose. “Give me a smile, huh? It’s not the end

of the world.”

I laughed softly instead. “Fine. I will go pack.”

“Thank you,” he replied before he disappeared down the hall after Gray who had headed towards the bar on the opposite side from where the bedrooms were.

It was strange entering the suite which had belonged to Gray and I but I pushed all the memories to the back of my mind and got to work. I only packed what I had bought or brought and left everything behind Gray had purchased for me. In that case, my shoe collection was paltry as he’d purchased all the pairs of Christian Louboutin, Gucci, Chanel, Jimmy Choo, Manolo Blahnik and Yves Saint Laurent heels’ in my collection.

He’d also purchased most of my clothes and jewelry as well. I stared at my left ring finger which still wore the platinum band with a tasteful white diamond surrounded by yellow diamonds. I slipped it off and put it in the jewelry box. It wasn’t mine to wear and I didn’t want to be reminded of a failed relationship or the person who gave me the ring to wear.

I was a cheater and worse than that, I had never loved the man I had agreed to marry and become his wife. Furthermore, there was no use pretending there had been something special which existed between us when our relationship had been very much like my chosen profession: a fraud and a lie.

Rory walked in as I was just finishing up, and he was accompanied by Gray.

“Your ex-fiancé and I have talked it over and everything is fine,” he commented in a dismissive fashion.

I stood and looked at them both. “Oh, how’s that?”

“Claudette is looking for a way out. She is...exhausted by Severin and he has his eye on another woman so she has agreed to be the blame for your relationship’s demise. Gray finds Claudette quite attractive and her bedroom skills are unmatched so he will be quite happy with her. She is ready to settle down in a normal, vanilla relationship. Severin has been trying to find a way to dump her for ages but she is not the type who can be on her own.

“In other words, your fiancé gets an out and officially, he left you, not the other way around. Claudette gets a life of respectability and all the trappings she so desperately craves without the pain involved. Everyone is happy. I didn’t trick Gray into doing anything he doesn’t want to do and if

he is not happy with her then he can leave her at any time. She understands this but she is willing to take the risk.”

My mouth was suddenly dry as I stared deeply into Gray’s blue eyes. “I am so sorry.”

He smiled and approached me in a weary fashion. “It isn’t your fault, Aurélie. We both know you are in no shape to do this and you never really wanted what I could offer you. The money doesn’t mean anything and I always respected you for that. I will forward your clothes, shoes and jewelry to the cottage through our respective attorneys. I don’t know where it is located and Robert will not tell me as it is a deal bartered on your behalf. He and Gabriel will work everything out.”

I embraced him and noticed he was taken aback by my reaction. “I wish you happiness and all the love in the world, my dear. I am just so sorry I couldn’t give it to you. You know that is the truth, don’t you?”

“Of course. Renaud fucked you up royally but you will have to let all that pain go eventually, Aurélie. You deserve to be happy and I know I am much more concerned with how you will be in the end than I am with myself. I am a survivor. I always make it and this is no exception, you know that.”

We separated and I smiled at him again.

Several housekeepers loaded the items, including Trésor’s jewelry box and personal effects into the back of Rory’s Porsche before we took off in the night towards the direction of the Waldorf Astoria. I didn’t know quite what I was doing but it felt good to be out of a duplicitous situation which would have caused nothing but hurt and bad feelings for everyone involved.



THE WALDORF ASTORIA WAS A grand building of luxury, beautiful gothic architecture and sheer opulence. I had stayed there before but never in the Waldorf Towers which were a separate entity from the regular Waldorf Astoria.

The Historic Suite which belonged to the Krieger family was large, sumptuous and spacious with every amenity a four and half star hotel could provide including concierge service and large, airy rooms that overlooked some of the best views in Manhattan.

“This must cost your parents a small fortune. Why don’t they just buy an apartment here?” I inquired as we walked around.

Rory had decided to give me a tour and although I was bone tired, I still became as excited as a child at all the magnificent displays of wealth around me.

“They *do* own this place. It was a private transaction worked out with the hotel. They weren’t happy but alas, my father made them an offer they couldn’t refuse,” he explained in a casual manner.

“Please don’t let it have been the head of someone’s thoroughbred horse in their bed,” I joked.

He instantly made the connection to *The Godfather* and laughed out loud. “No, it was nothing as dramatic as that. We’re Germans, remember? We would never have done something like that. My father probably blew up the owner’s new BMW or something. Much more subtle and it sticks it to one of our prized competitors.”

We were in the dining room and both of us had a champagne flute full of Cristal. The formal area had a large dining room table which sat at least eight people and the whole place smelled like fresh flowers which were everywhere in elaborate vases. I could see what the appeal would be to live in a hotel when you didn’t have to worry about upkeep and knew the sheets would be changed on a day-to-day basis.

“I noticed there’s more than one bedroom so if you wish to have your privacy, I can sleep in the guest room—”

“Nonsense.” He smiled at me and the look in his blue-green eyes tried to appear nonchalant but there was an air of neediness right below the surface. “I don’t want to hide anything from you and one day, I won’t. I will be able to tell you all my secrets and some of them are so awful, perhaps they will push you out of my life for good but you truly make me feel like a better person. More than all the money I have shoved at all your precious causes. I want you to be happy...even if it isn’t with me.”

I set my champagne glass down and reached over to stroke his gorgeous hands. “You’re lovely and much too good for me. I want to be happy again too but I need to do this and you’ll be quite the distraction but as long as you let me have some alone time and allow me to do what I need to do then there is no reason why this can’t work. I will establish my laptop in the guest room and work there during the day. Are you needed at the club any time soon?”

“No. Severin is here so he can check in on the club. Besides, there is a young woman who has caught his eye. She belongs to another but he doesn’t really want her now. She’s too young and inexperienced. She happens to be German and my brother has a special weakness for our women when they are so young and virginal and fresh. He wants to break her himself and he has every reason to hang out at the club until he’s secured her.”

Rory’s sudden talk about the lifestyle jolted me out of my relaxed state. It would always hang over our heads, wouldn’t it? Like dark clouds that refused to dissipate, the community and his various sexual predilections would always color our relationship. He might want to appear like he could just up and leave the life but could he really? How often did people truly change?

I sipped from my champagne for liquid courage and traced the rim of my champagne flute. “How did you do that tonight? With Gray I mean? What exactly did you say to him?”

His aquamarine eyes fixed on me intently before he smiled. “Do you really want to know or are you surprised he gave you up so easily and without a lot of fuss?”

“Both, if I am to be honest with myself and you.”

Rory stood and walked over to me. He grabbed my hand and led me to the sitting room where we sat next to one another on the cream sofa. I wanted to move over if only to reclaim some of my own space but every time he touched me, my skin felt absolutely electric and I couldn’t imagine not being in this man’s arms.

One of his hands clutched my breasts possessively and he nibbled at my neck.

“Stop it. If we continue at this pace then you’ll be tired of me by next week,” I murmured.

“No, I don’t think so.” He continued to nibble at my neck. “I used his weaknesses against him, Aurélie. Can you guess what they are?”

“I wouldn’t have a clue. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be asking you.”

“Would it surprise you if I told you Gray has always wanted to be a part of the life but never had the balls to do it? You’ve been with him in bed. Is he a particularly good lover?”

I scrunched up my face remembering the times we had sex. “No. I thought perhaps I was being selfish and holding back from what he was

trying to give me but if I am honest with myself, he was barely adequate at best. I have never had any problems coming with you...or Renaud for the matter.”

Rory leaned on me as his right hand worked its way into my Juicy Couture sweats and caressed my clit over the wispy lace material of my expensive La Perla lingerie and I involuntarily moved towards his fingers. “You mean he never made you do that?”

“N-no,” I stuttered as my breath caught in my throat.

“Or what about this?” He slipped my thong to the side and slid two fingers into my wet sex and caressed me gently.

“Oh, God no!” I exclaimed.

He removed his hand and sucked on the two fingers which had previously been inside me. “Too bad for him. As I have stated, he’s a selfish lover and those are usually the type ripe for the community. Take Severin for instance. I don’t think I have ever seen him bring anyone to orgasm without all the games and orgasm denial techniques other than Trésor but his feelings for her were so complex, I might never understand them.”

I tried to block out my throbbing sex which still clung to the memories of his caress and turned toward him. He slipped off his shoes and lay on the sofa while I lay on top of him between his parted legs, his achingly hard cock pressed against my stomach.

“What do you mean, exactly? You...you said you weren’t here when Trésor was punished and he did it instead of you. Do you think she was aware?”

His hands caressed my hair with a gentleness and familiarity I didn’t think we should have after such a short time of knowing one another. “No,” he answered in a truthful manner. “She was a model after all and therefore not as cognizant as you. There were times she would get us confused if we were in the same room unless she actually watched me dress and knew what I was wearing. I think she seriously thought I was bi-polar though she would have never said something like that. A good submissive knows when to open her mouth and when to keep it shut.

“We didn’t talk much about him to be honest and she would often mention incidents where Severin was involved therefore I wasn’t aware they’d happened at all. She would then tease me about suffering from early Alzheimer’s but that wasn’t the case at all. I didn’t participate in some of the sexual escapades she had because Severin stepped in and pretended to

be me. He obviously allowed her to think I was the one who did these things to her and not him so when you are reading her journal, if you ever have any questions about what she writes down, you are free to ask me and I will let you know if I was there or not.”

“But why would he do that? For a laugh?”

“Why did he trick you, sweetheart? You weren’t aware at first it wasn’t me so what tipped you off?”

My right hand touched his face and the rough two-day stubble sent chills down to places that should have been more than sated with all the sex I had had in the past twenty-four hours.

“When you touched me. It was so smooth and almost reverent. I knew then I was sucking off the wrong brother but I wasn’t exactly in any place I could object either.”

“You were smart not to object either because sometimes I don’t even know what he will do and he hasn’t been in the best mood lately.”

“You still insist he had nothing to do with Trésor’s murder though?”

“I want to say yes because he cared deeply about her too so what would he have gotten out of killing her? It makes no sense. He could use her when ever he liked by pretending to be me and supposedly, he showed up at several of her photo shoots and after shows to take her out on the town. I know it wasn’t me because I was probably in Vegas or checking out our other clubs.

“In retrospect, I wished I had made time for her shows but fashion isn’t a huge passion of mine. I go to mingle and hook up with contacts but it’s not something I live for season after season and I don’t really give a damn about the latest spring or autumn clothes anyway. It’s the precise reason why I have a shopper who does all that tedious shit for me.”

I crawled onto his lap and sat astride him. “You have a shopper and you say this with a straight face?”

“Well, of course. I don’t know all that much about fashion but I trust Sonja. She’s very thorough and she knows what I like. Every season, she comes over to where ever I am with samples and I choose what I want but she innately knows my style by now. Sometimes I send her away to buy nothing as I don’t think I need anything and sometimes she has to go to several different specialty stores because of my tediousness but she is a gem and she is paid well never-the-less.”

I bent over and my lips hovered above his as I studied the smooth pores on his face. “Should I be worried about this...Sonja character?”

“Only that she might jump your bones and not mine. She’s a lesbian and she’s definitely *not* into the lifestyle. I plan to hide you when she comes over to ask me about what I want for winter,” he murmured as his hands cupped my ass.

“And when is she expected?”

“The day after Trésor’s funeral at our house in Vaucresson.”

The way he proclaimed the house was “ours” sent a shiver through me. Surely that was a slip of the tongue and he didn’t mean it the way it sounded. It was his house and I merely confirmed I would stay there for however long I felt like it.

I still liked the sound of it though things were moving at a lightening quick pace and I didn’t think we had time to breathe. Surely he would soon be tired of fucking me every which way and he would dispose of me? My sister and I didn’t look a damn thing alike and I was only reminded because there was a photo of her we’d passed on the mantel piece when we walked into the sitting room.

She didn’t smile but her look was still sultry. Her pale green eyes were magnetic and she looked like the perfect French girl next door with her long medium brown hair, lithe figure and perfect face. She didn’t look the least bit exotic like I did. No one would have ever guessed our mother was Creole from the bayous of New Orleans because she didn’t have that otherworldly look about her. She was simply beautiful with good cheekbones, a slim figure and tall where as I had something extra, was shorter and more voluptuous though still slender.

I was a carbon copy of our father except for my mother’s lips and coloring. I had inherited her deep olive skin where as Trésor had resembled our mother except for our father’s lips and his coloring. Two sisters, so incredibly different but united by parentage and now separated by the vast abyss known as life and death.

I wondered if we would ever see one another again and my eyes began to tear up on their own.

Rory didn’t ask me what was wrong, he merely looked at the photograph on the mantelpiece and sighed. “Shit. I should have removed that.”

“Why? So you can remember how much my sister and I aren’t alike?”

He touched my lips with the tips of his fingers. “*Liebling*, I don’t want you because you are Trésor’s sister. You can’t replace her and even if you could, what a sick, twisted reason to crave someone. I was attracted to you from the moment we met at the police station...before that if I am to be perfectly honest. I saw you for the first time about eighteen months ago at a fundraiser. I didn’t know who you were and I would have never seen you but you and Trésor were arguing. What was it about?”

I sat up and balanced myself on his lap though his manhood, tense and swollen against me, made it hard for me to concentrate. “She’d cut us out of her life by then and I wanted to know why. I’m not going to sit here and pretend like my parents’ gave a shit because they have their own lives to lead and they weren’t particularly concerned. She’d disappointed them and they seemed to be forever bitter about her chosen profession, how she decided to live her life. I could understand her taking a cooling off period with them but I didn’t understand why she wasn’t calling me.

“She was lucid and obviously off drugs but she’d had a drink or two and was very stand-offish. She merely went on and on in circles about how she would contact me when she got the opportunity and she was incredibly busy at the moment.” I stopped talking and tried to remember that night clearer.

It was a charity ball for the fight against Pediatric HIV and AIDS if I wasn’t mistaken. I did notice a trio of three men watching us at one time, only because I recognized Jason but I didn’t recognize the two men he was with at the time. They looked similar but why hadn’t I pegged them for identical twins. It was probably because I’d only glanced at them quickly before I tried to finish a conversation with my sister that seemed to be going no where. She wasn’t having any of it—my concern, my sympathy were lost upon her and all she wanted to do was end the conversation as soon as possible.

“You remember me from a charity event you attended eighteen months ago?” I asked out loud.

“Well, I am ashamed to admit now but I didn’t even know who you were but Severin did. He told me you were the famous reporter...without his insight...I wouldn’t have known. I just saw an *extremely* attractive woman talking to Trésor who could have been her sister.”

“I think you are the first person to say that. Most people say we don’t look a damn thing alike at all and when we were growing up, we would get

this bewildered look and then, ‘You two are sisters?’...it was all so very amusing until it wasn’t.”

Rory laughed and I couldn’t help but laugh along with him. “Try being an identical twin. Do you know how much shit I caught because Severin would mess up and I got blamed? I don’t know why but Mama favored me so she had Severin’s hair cut off so people could tell us apart by our different hair styles. It made no difference though as I could never be rid of him and then...it got to the point where I didn’t *want* to be away from him and enjoyed the closeness we shared. We both attended University of Munich together and we got the same Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. He stayed in Germany though and decided to get his Master’s in Munich. I didn’t see him again until Harvard and that is when we both attended there for our Doctorate degrees but he majored in a different subject.”

“What did he study?” I inquired.

“Organizational Behavior. I didn’t really get why he would do a Doctorate in something that was basically sociology and psychology wrapped in one but I have been proven wrong over the years. He gets people and he can peg someone the moment they enter our club. He’s definitely kept our various establishments clean and controversial free. He can spot a pedophile, someone who enjoys bestiality or someone interested in making a snuff film from a mile away. He’s just absolutely brilliant when it comes to understanding personality types way more fucked up than his and I can’t take that away from him.”

Rory smiled at me with a twinkle in his expressive blue-green eyes. “He says I am too trusting. I have too much faith in people. The problem with him is he doesn’t trust people at all and he doesn’t feel like he has the upper hand unless he knows he can either use someone or control someone.”

“Aren’t they one in the same?”

“No. When he sets out to use an individual, he’s not interested in long term usage and if he is controlling someone then it will be for a while and he has no wish to dispose of them so quickly. Everything about Severin is methodical.”

“Isn’t it the same with you too?”

“Yes but less so. If you can pin-point why you can spot the difference when other people can’t then feel free to let me know?”

I lay my head against his chest as he began to massage my scalp again. “That’s easy. It’s in the eyes. Yours still have life in them...a conscience

and a soul. Severin lacks that. I don't know what happened to him but it shut him off from his emotions. He is incapable of feeling much of anything at all."

"My thoughts exactly. Let's go to bed."

"I thought you would never ask."

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Chapter Twelve



ALTHOUGH I HALF-HEARTEDLY PRAYED for a quiet night, I knew the chances of that happening were quite low the moment I caught the look of lust in his eyes. I stood and waited until he gracefully made his way to his feet. He strode to me like a panther who had his prey in sight and I continued to back away from him.

He began to strip clothes as he walked toward me. His silk shirt disappeared as did his black stovepipe jeans when I was pleasantly surprised to find out he wore no underwear.

“Where are you going?” he asked in a completely innocent voice. “The bedroom is this way and you’re heading in the wrong direction.”

“Oh?” I stared his luscious body over with hungry eyes. All that lean perfection and hidden muscles, a washboard stomach and that delicious V-dip of his torso toward the male organ that was hard as a proverbial rock.

I backed into the mantel of the fireplace and he grabbed me into his arms. My sweat jacket disappeared to reveal a sexy La Perla bra which matched the thong I wore underneath the bottoms. Rory slipped the bra strap down and my nipple peaked out. I was completely taken by surprise as he bent before me and felt the heat of his mouth on my nipple. His teeth bit it lightly before his tongue teased my ultra sensitive nipple and I arched my back.

I reached to slide down my pants but his hands were immediately at my wrists and pushing them against the wall as he continued to assault my left breast. My right breast felt overwhelmingly ignored but I learned the hard way even if Rory wasn’t as an extreme Dom as his brother, he still was one and it didn’t pay to do anything to be punished.

My heart thundered against my chest and I wondered how he would choose to punish me if I did mess up? This house didn't exactly seem to be filled with sex toys, hand cuffs and other fun sadistic items although I knew looks could be deceiving.

He grabbed my hands and held them behind my back with one hand while he walked us to the bedroom. His other hand teased and caressed my neglected breast, his index and thumb pinched the nipple past the point of pleasure and firmly into pain territory.

"Are your nipples extremely sensitive?" he whispered in my ear.

"What woman's nipples aren't sensitive?" I questioned back.

Rory held my face with a hand. "We'll have to find out since you seem to incapable of answering sex-related questions."

He pushed me back on the bed which like most hotel room beds, had already been folded back. I lay down as he slipped my sweatpants, thong included, off my body and undid my bra before he disposed of it on the floor.

He walked over to a drawer and opened it and grabbed a metal chain I didn't get a good look at it before he strode back to the bed. "Are you scared?"

"A little," I replied truthfully.

Rory smiled and leaned over toward my left ear. "You'll just have to trust me but since I don't want you to go into full hyperventilation mode, how about you wear a blindfold. I won't handcuff your wrists because it's a game of trust. I trust you to know I am fully aware what I am doing and you trust me not to go too far. As usual, no safe words, no stopping until we are finished, is that clear?"

I nodded vigorously as a tear slid down my cheek.

He kissed my face and his hands felt delicious against my naked body. "I wouldn't do anything to hurt you or cause any scars. I promise you will enjoy this but sometimes you have to lose yourself to find yourself. It's a cliché but it's true. It is about letting go. Allow yourself to belong to someone else and this will be a lot easier for you to accept. Does that make sense?"

"Yes."

"I won't gag you either but I am trusting you to keep your volume level down, is that understood. And the same rules apply...no coming until I tell you."

“Okay.”

I bit my lip as he slipped the blindfold over my face. The room went black and he lay me down again. His fingers pinched my nipples again and although the feeling wasn't pleasant, I arched against his touch. And then the first clamp was placed on my nipple and I gasped out loud.

“Breathe. Your nipples are remarkable instruments. They are meant to feed children...they are a lot tougher than you think.”

I tried to breathe normally as he placed the second clamp on my other nipple. The pain began to fade a bit but there was a weird chain as I could feel cold steel against my ribcage and on my stomach. Rory spread my legs and slid two fingers inside me before his hot breath teased my clit. I sighed and he gave the chain a little tug which made my nipples sing with pain.

“Remember, no coming...under any circumstances.”

I nodded my head again.

He tongued my clit and my hips bucked against his movements involuntarily. His teeth scraped against the nub before his whole mouth surrounded my pleasure center and I moaned out loud. I was close, so very close to coming until Rory squeezed my clit between his fingers and placed a clamp on it.

It was impossible for me to come now, not when I had a clamp on my clit that squeezed the desire right out of me. My breath was coming hard and fast now.

“Calm down and remember what I said, you have to breathe.”

“But...why would you do that?”

“Do what?”

“Every pleasure center of my body has been cut off and I can't enjoy sex,” I moaned out loud.

Rory laughed at me though there was plenty of mirth involved. “What if I told you that is a far from the truth as possible? I have cut off three pleasure sources but believe me there are others and that is what this is about...learning you have so many other erogenous parts of your body. When they take you to the edge then I will just have to give a little tug at the chain and the pain will bring you back into focus.

“There are two ways to look at pain. You can detest it and therefore when I do bring you back into focus, you will start to hate the clamps I have put on your nipples and clit. Or...you can embrace it and learn to love it and understand it. Realize that pain is every bit as sexy and exciting as

pleasure and it will allow you to cross a threshold and unlock more pleasure than you ever thought was possible. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

And I did understand but I had always been a bit of a wuss when it came to pain. I wasn't good with it and didn't want to know it, become familiar with it or embrace it for the matter. Perhaps I would have been better off with the vanilla yet unsatisfying sex Grayson and I had. Then again, that bridge had been burnt and there was no way to turn back the hands of time.

I could feel his hands on my thighs and buttocks as he spread my legs and two of his fingers slid inside me again but this time, there was so much pleasure, I couldn't take it. He was caressing my G-spot and although I knew how much a woman could get out of stimulation, I'd never tried it without added clitoral stimulation.

I spread my legs further and the position allowed him to manipulate the spot inside me until I was on the brink of a monster orgasm. He tugged at the chain and despite the pain, I couldn't block it out and bucked against his hands as my whole body shook as if I was having a seizure.

He lay between my legs and I could feel his warm breath on my face, near my ear. “I did that on purpose. I didn't want you to think I am a total sadist. If you'd held out a bit longer, I would have actually taken the clamps off but you seem to be enjoying them so let's leave them on a bit longer.”

A bit longer?

My nipples were so sensitive to the touch, one tug and I was writhing beneath him. My clit felt like it was on fire yet the pleasure was so intense, it was the ultimate sadistic device!

Rory grabbed my left leg and lifted it onto his shoulder. I didn't quite know what he was doing until I felt every inch of him sink into my dripping sex. I was so wet, I was embarrassed by all the slickness and noises my body made while he ground away inside of me.

It was a trip to another depth of sex as he thrust into me with slow, languid strokes and every time he was to the hilt inside me, his pelvis would hit my clit clasp and make me gasp. He was obviously doing it on purpose but it was no longer painful, just an incredibly tense form of orgasm delay as opposed to denial.

His body felt so firm against mine and when he laid his chest against my nipple clamps, I moaned without thinking. It was too much, my body felt overly stimulated and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it but take

it. From his long, slow thrusts inside of me to his pelvis hitting my clit clamp and his chest firmly pressed against my nipple clamps.

“Look at your face, you are so fucking beautiful. I could watch myself fucking you all day and never come but I’d be so satisfied because I do believe this is the first time anyone has been able to bring out the real you. You’re a natural born submissive and you don’t even know it. You needed the right man to come along to coax you instead of forcing you but look at you.”

“I can’t look at you—I’m blindfolded, remember?” I inquired though I sought out his face based upon where his voice was coming from.

The contours were beautiful and the roughness of his five o’clock shadow gave way to the smooth lines of his forehead. My fingers traced his soft lips before his mouth opened to me and he sucked on my index finger. I burst into laughter as he tickled it with his tongue before biting the skin lightly with sharp teeth.

He slipped the blindfold away from my eyes and my vision quickly adjusted to the dim light, his face studying mine intently as the steady beating of our own hearts could be felt against each other’s damp skin.

I stared into his aquamarine eyes and pulled him toward me. He kissed me hungrily and the clink of metal from my clamps and the sound of flesh hitting flesh was blurred out by our intense make-out session where his mouth seemed to devour my own with a feverish urgency and intensity. Our tongues, glued together as if they were one, explored each other’s mouths and the kiss we indulged in was so passionate and hungry, I could feel myself on the edge of a delicious precipice where the end was so near yet so far away.

He ended our kiss way too prematurely for my taste and turned me over onto my back. My heart galloped in my chest and a sinking feeling hit my stomach. Not my ass, please don’t let him take me up the ass. I was sore and needed time before I could indulge in that activity again.

As if reading my mind, he leaned into my ear. “Don’t worry, I won’t take you anally. Actually I can’t because you haven’t been cleaned out properly and I am not big on accidents happening back there so we will leave that area of your body alone until I have had proper time to teach you everything you need to know. We can explore that more when we get to France.”

I breathed a sigh of relief as he kissed my back and grabbed me by the waist. His cock thrust back inside me and I sighed as he entered my depths over and over again. As he fucked me, he managed to remove the clamp from my clit and that area, deprived of blood, flooded and engorged painfully. He slipped the nipple clamps from my breasts and blood flowed to the tips of my nipples and sent a shiver of pain straight through me.

“Tell me, *lieblich*, are you ready to come?”

“Yes,” I gasped out loud.

“Good because I will help you on your way,” he whispered as he leaned over me and his fingers rubbed my clit which felt sensitive and raw. How wrong I was, it was hard and the moments his fingers circled the nub, some sensual part inside me snapped like a rubber band and I came long and hard, my vaginal muscles clenching his cock so hard he came in a low, throaty moan.

We were in that position for what seemed like forever before Rory withdrew and lay on his back. He pulled me to his chest and held me within his embrace as if he were afraid to let me go. His fingers played with silky strands of my hair and his breathing returned to normal until I barely felt the rise and fall of his chest.

“I thought I exhausted you earlier today,” I teased him before I laughed to break any tension my comment might have caused between us.

“Believe me, you have but...if I knew what the hell it was about you that drove me crazy, I would tell you to stop it so I can get some well needed rest. I haven’t slept much since...”

He didn’t have to say it. We both knew what he was talking about. The death of my sister had left him listless, unable to rest and all he wished to do was get lost in sex and lots of it. However, he wasn’t supposed to feel anything for his bed partner and I had thrown a serious monkey wrench in his plans though no more than he had done in mine.

I looked into his mesmerizing aquamarine eyes and never broke contact. “Tell me, what was it like when you and Trésor first began to date?”

He smiled slightly. “First of all, we never dated because I don’t ‘date’. We fucked one another because we were attracted to each other and wanted to get off. I was a bit weary of the age difference as I didn’t want someone who would become clingy or overly emotional. I needed her to understand she was there for my needs, not the other way around. Her feelings weren’t important to me and...she seemed perfectly happy with that arrangement.

“I could never know it was because she was just as afraid of commitment as I was and that is why she never pressured me. That photographer really did a number on her and he killed a part of her soul when he did that to her. She was never quite the same after that. It took a while to wear her down but that came from the relationship we had. She was my submissive and she thrived while I was her Dom. I was very proud of all the work we did together and it really made me feel like I could give as well as I could get.”

I lay my head on his chest again. “What does that mean? Were you not always a Dom?”

“I was but for a long time I could be dominated as well by stronger Doms than myself. It might surprise you to know I have had consensual gay sex before and after the ‘Hamburg incident’. It’s the lifestyle. You do have those who are strictly hetero or won’t participate with men while they don’t mind a bit of girl on girl action but most of us are bisexual.

“Once Trésor and became exclusive, I withdrew from the life for a while. I participated in enough club functions to throw Severin off or cause him to become suspicious but it was just the two of us in our relationship. I lied to her and told her it was because I had to break her down until she eventually became a good slave but I had absolutely no inclination to make her my pet or treat her like a slave. It was an act because I realized your sister wasn’t good with half-measures. She lived her life in extremes and she had to believe she would have to be reduced to the lowest level to comply.

“You can rest assure the worst it got for us in our TPE was the whole chastity belt thing. That was a sadistic piece of equipment but ironically, she was the one who *suggested* it to *me*. She said I wasn’t giving her harsh enough punishments and what good was it for me to leave her in the cage when she could cheat and get herself off? I told her it was about trust but she didn’t get it. She told me I should never trust her and if I was smart, I would make it so she had to suffer more than the humiliation of the cage.”

Rory sighed. “I realized then Severin had been impersonating me and probably told her I was too soft on her and she took advantage of my generosity. I bought the damn chastity belt and she had never looked so grateful in her life. She wanted me to use it immediately and because I was a bit reluctant, she found a reason to disobey me on something extremely trivial therefore I would have to punish her and use the chastity belt.”

“Is that what Severin meant when he talked about falling in love?” I inquired.

“Yes and no because...I wasn't in love with Trésor,” he responded in a soft voice. “I was very fond of her—don't get me wrong—and I admit I loved her very much but there is a big difference between being in love and loving someone. I have thought for a long time I was incapable of falling in love with anyone. My last great love...I was eighteen and stupid. She didn't deserve my love and she is the catalyst I use why I got into the whole BDSM lifestyle in the first place when in reality, it was probably always there.”

“What happened between you two?”

He clicked his tongue. “Do you really want to hear about this? It's all so impossibly dreary and boring. It's worse than an album by The Verve when it comes to all the angst.”

I raised an eyebrow. “You know all about Renaud, my long lost great love. I think I want to hear about the woman who broke Rory Krieger's heart.”

“Fine but I'm only telling you because well...it is you. And I feel like I can tell you anything without judgment. Her name was Mathilde and she was gorgeous: tall and statuesque with olive skin, long honey-blond hair and the most gorgeous gray eyes I've ever seen until I saw your eyes for the first time. Yours trump hers by a mile because they are my favorite colors: green and gray.”

“And I thought your favorite color was black. Most of your clothes are at least.”

“Black is a favorite too but when it comes to eyes, I have always had a weakness for gray and green eyes. Anyway, her coloring came from being a quarter Turkish although three out of four of her grandparents were ethnic Germans. We met at university and she was the apple of my eye.

“Our relationship was very vanilla for about the first six months until she took me to an exclusive BDSM club she belonged to in Munich. I didn't realize that is why she wanted me to dominate her in bed. I wasn't doing what she wanted so she took me there and I had to watch Severin fuck her in full view of the club to understand what she wanted but at the same time, she needed my anger.”

I wrapped a leg around his waist. “I'm starting to see a pattern. Do you ever have a woman to yourself or do you always have to share with your

brother?”

Rory grabbed my face and made me look at him. “Listen to me: he may have fucked you up the ass but he will never fuck you the same way we just did, do you understand? Your pussy belongs to me and don’t you ever forget it. If he even looks in your direction just tell him and he will back off.”

“That’s great in theory but what if I don’t want to do anything sexually with him ever again? No hand jobs, no blow jobs and no backdoor love. Absolutely *nothing*,” I explained in a rational manner.

He stared at me intensely. “I’ll make sure he gets the memo and he will never touch you again. Is that clear? And as you know what to look for with him, don’t you ever let him trick you into thinking it’s me?”

“Is there a question I can ask about you only you would know?”

“Yes. When did I break up with Mathilde? He believes it was in the spring but it was actually in the winter. December twenty-ninth. She would have never told him and he doesn’t know.”

I leaned on my elbow as I sat up. “How can you be so sure he doesn’t know or she won’t tell him now?”

“Because she’s dead. She died on my birthday. I had planned to get back with her but when I found out about the accident, I couldn’t believe it. She was the first death in Munich where Severin was a person of interest.”

“When is...your birthday?”

Rory suddenly tackled me on to my back and kissed me deeply. “You’ll know soon enough but that isn’t something you need to be worried about at the moment.”

I laughed and settled into the comfort of his embrace.

Part Two

Discovery



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Chapter Thirteen



RORY AND I WERE ONLY supposed to stay at the Waldorf for a day but business kept him in Manhattan for longer than we would have wanted. The police still hadn't completed the inquiry and would not release Trésor's body until the autopsy results had come back.

It got to the point where not only did my family become involved but Rory had to call both Gabriel and his family's personal attorney just to get any news on the investigation. This spurred the department in action and we were promised her body could be flown to France in several days.

By this time, we had spent more than a week and half in a city I had grown desperate to escape. I didn't want to explain my resignation from CNW and I sure as hell didn't want to run into Grayson or any of the Compston family to be honest.

No one was more surprised about my change of residence or status than I was and I thought it only fair to tell my parents what had happened. In typical Gallic fashion, my mother wasn't the least bit phased by the change of events. She'd never liked Grayson and although she had her suspicions, she kept most of her opinions to herself.

"I take it you haven't met Johann and Lorelei yet?" she inquired out loud in rapid French.

"No, not yet. We are still in Manhattan and his parents are back in Germany. You don't...think what I am doing is a bit...I don't know...it can't be copacetic in the least bit," I paced in the sitting room of the elaborate suite I'd called home for almost two weeks.

"What do you care what I think or anyone else thinks for the matter, Aurélie? It's *your* life. Your sister is dead and it isn't like you took him

from her although it's probably good you two didn't meet while she was alive. It sounds like he is crazy about you and with Rory that is a rare characteristic," she explained.

"Maman, did we ever hang out with the Krieger children when we were young?"

My mother was silent. "What makes you think that? There are a lot of adults your age, Aurélie. You two being the same age shouldn't have anything to do with your decision and whether you want to make a life with him."

"That isn't what I asked and no one ever said anything about a *life*. We are talking about a very adult relationship where we enjoy having sex with one another and that is it."

"If you say so. Perhaps the Krieger children showed up to a seventh or eighth birthday of yours but that is about it. Your birthday is at the end of September and the twins are at the end of May or the first part of June. I'm not good with birth dates, you know."

"Maman, I am starting to think you aren't good with anything that doesn't concern you directly," I said in quick French as I turned around to face Severin. His eyes gave him away as usual and he looked less than pleased.

"Well, we'll see you two soon, right? I'll make a Sunday dinner and you two can come by. How about it?"

"That sounds great, Maman. Did you two get the...money from the estate yet?"

"Yes, Gabriel handled it quite quickly. Your father and I were able to pay off our little cottage and we are very happy. After Trésor's funeral, we are taking a holiday on the Norwegian Cruise Line. We're going to Alaska."

"Sounds like fun, Maman. I will talk to you soon. Love you."

"*Je t'aime!*" she exclaimed and I immediately pressed the off button.

"What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same but with you having such a charming conversation with your mommy dearest on the phone, I didn't want to appear rude," he greeted as he looked around before he sat down on the sofa.

There weren't many places in the suite Rory and I hadn't christened so my face burned with embarrassment as I sat beside him. "How can I help you?"

“He sure did move fast with you. In fact, I haven’t seen my brother move quite so fast since...well that quarter Turkish bitch who wasn’t good enough for him. That little pain whore got exactly what she deserved and now I am seeing him repeat the same mistake with you so I am worried of course.”

I stood and walked over to the bar. “Can I get you something to drink?”

“It’s a bit early for booze. A bottle of water is fine.”

“Pellegrino or Evian?” I inquired out loud as I grabbed the French brand of course.

“The same as what you’re having.”

I grabbed two Evians’ and walked over to Severin before I handed him his bottle of water. “Are you merely here to intimidate? It’s the vibe I am getting from you. Rory isn’t here.”

“Yeah, I know where he is. I didn’t come here to see him, I came here to see you.”

I bit my lip and set my bottled water on the glass magazine table. “What could we possibly have to talk about?”

“Oh you would be surprised what we have to discuss. You should know this up front, sweetheart, if you break his heart, I will fucking kill you and not bat an eyelash.”

I didn’t doubt the severity of his words though the reporter immediately came to the surface. “Is that what you did to Mathilde?”

“Ah, he told you the bitch’s name? That fucking slut didn’t deserve Rory’s love and he thought her ass was lined with gold. I hated her from the moment I met her, similar to the way I feel about you.”

I was taken aback by his attitude. “What have I done to you to make you think I am using your brother? Furthermore, how could you hate me when you don’t even know me?”

“I hate how you’ve stepped into Trésor’s place and replaced her in his mind’s eye. She should never be forgotten yet he is slowly losing himself in you. What I find so distasteful about the whole situation is he wasn’t in love with her though she was *perfect* for him. According to Rory, she had some kind of ‘flaw’ he found rather unsettling and he felt he could never truly *trust* her. However, he *can* fall in love with you though we both know this relationship is a disaster in the making,” Severin explained as he leaned toward me in anger.

I didn't even know how to address his words of venom. Furthermore, I wasn't sure exactly what he wanted from me. Something inside me screamed he had no right to accuse me of trying to steal my sister's memory from Rory because this wasn't the least bit true.

I wasn't jealous of my sister and the relationship I had with the man who had been her former lover was nothing like what they'd had together. We didn't practice domination and submission anywhere except in the bedroom and that wasn't every time we made love. I had no wish to be a submissive and he didn't expect me to be one. He was more than happy to accept me the way I was but I couldn't explain that to Severin because frankly, it wasn't any of his business.

"Severin, I have no doubt you care for Rory very much and I am sure you have his best interest at heart but I am not trying to take your brother away from you nor am I trying to replace my sister. Their relationship is over because Trésor is dead. I am not going to supposition what you felt for her either because it truly isn't my place but...your concerns are unwarranted and unfounded. Rory and I are both grown adults and what ever goes on between us has *nothing* to do with you."

"That is where you are wrong, darling, because it has *everything* to do with me—he is not only my brother but we are also business partners. Did you persuade him to sign over his ownership of the clubs to me? He didn't ask for money—he merely asked Gabriel to transfer all his interests in the clubs to my name solely. The only piece of property he still has is Vogue Hotel, Casino and Spa and that was always just a 'fuck you' property to our parents because they consider places like Macao and Las Vegas uncouth and wouldn't be caught dead gambling outside of anywhere other than Monte Carlo. They're terrible snobs you know."

The feeling hit me as if he punched me in the stomach. So that was why he'd asked me about my employment at Vogue—he owned the goddamn casino for Christ's sake!

I cleared my throat and never wanted a cigarette so badly in my life though I'd managed to quit and hadn't had one in over six months with the exception of my slip-up the night I found out my sister had died. I stood and smoothed down the black body-conscious vicuña sweater I wore over a pair of indigo skinny jeans. The outfit had been a recent present from Rory who never tired of buying me anything I wanted. It was nice but I could have gotten the same items from Grayson so it had nothing to do with why I'd

chosen Rory over my former fiancé. I walked to the window and looked out at all the buildings and a clear view of Central Park.

“How well do you know Astrid Schmidt?” I finally wondered out loud after a vast moment of silence between the two of us.

“What do you want to know about Astrid for?” Severin shot back in a defensive manner.

I turned to face him as I didn't trust having my back to him. “She was the Human Resource manager at Vogue Casino and apparently, she purchased Rory's Park Avenue penthouse. Don't you find that the least bit strange?”

His aquamarine eyes were bright though cold as ice. “She's our cousin and her relationship with Rory has always been a close one. They met up today for lunch which is how I knew he wouldn't be here.”

“He called her a ‘fucking bitch’ when he found out she had visited his penthouse that night after we left the precinct. Why was he so angry with her?”

“Probably because he found it highly distasteful she would view his apartment the same day Trésor's body was removed. He probably found the whole situation a bit insensitive on her part as if his lover dying meant nothing to her. Or at least it didn't register enough for her to wait until the following day to schedule a viewing. Where are you going with all of this?”

“No where to be honest...he doesn't discuss your family very much and I would like to get to know who you all are and how I factor into the equation. I would hate for everyone to think I am just some fraud who wants to take over my sister's place in his life. This wasn't supposed to happen at all but it did and there is no turning back.”

Severin stood and strode over to me. “When you're ready to leave, let me know and I'll be happy to help you pack.”

The double doors closed and I had never been so happy to see Rory in my life. I walked over and embraced him warmly before I whispered in his ear, “He's been here for about twenty minutes and he's quickly becoming a major pain in my ass.”

Rory stared at me and smiled before he kissed my lips and slipped an arm around my waist. “What are you doing here? Isn't this a bit out of the way for you since you're out in Tribeca? Why didn't you join Astrid and I for lunch?”

“No particular reason. I just wanted to come by to see your new love. She seems happy and healthy...are you trying to replace her so you don't have to remember Trésor?”

“We both know this has nothing to do with Aurélie.”

Severin walked towards us, murmuring in German and what ever he said wasn't exactly pleasant. I could tell by his tone of voice alone. He spoke quickly, his words clipped and the only name I caught in their conversation was “Mathilde”.

Rory's fingers dug into my side as if he was afraid I might try to flee. “Listen, I don't want to talk about this right now. We can discuss it another time when we are both more level-headed. The way I feel at this particular moment, I want to fucking kill you for your insinuations alone. Neither Trésor nor Mathilde have *anything* to do with this and for you to suggest otherwise is sheer lunacy. Are you listening to yourself?”

“Yes, brother, live in your dream world with your fantasy whore but if you think you can just walk away into the sunset and live a vanilla life with this bitch you are sadly mistaken. She will break your heart as sure as the sun rises. She cannot be trusted because she doesn't understand you and we both know what happens when her type freaks out because we've been down this road before.”

Severin strode to us until he and Rory were separated by mere inches. It was too scary and eerie. He placed a hand on his brother's jaw and said, “She's not right for you and you know it so why are you doing this to yourself yet again? I am tired of saving and protecting you. The next time you get yourself into trouble, I will make you dig the grave. I have my limits you know and I'm *tired* of being your keeper.”

Rory flinched and slapped his hand from his face. “Go home, Severin.”

“With pleasure,” he murmured before he walked past us and slammed his way out of the suite.

I forced a breath from my lungs and failed to realize I hadn't bothered to breathe the whole time they spoke. There was too much tension in the room and all because of me. I knew I wasn't the only cause but this time I had certainly been the catalyst and I felt paralyzed and shocked in my own skin.

Rory let me go and I walked back to the window. The view was gorgeous and I needed something to take my mind off the intense conversation I had witnessed between the two brothers. I almost felt like an

intruder who had seen something play out I had no right to observe and the feeling drove me mad.

I could feel my lover's presence behind me as he pressed a champagne flute in my hand. I looked his way before I sipped Cristal. "Isn't it a bit early for a drink?"

"What are you talking about? It's five o'clock somewhere and besides after what just transpired, you'd be lying if you said you didn't need a drink."

I turned away from the window yet again and faced Rory but he was a much more pleasant sight than Severin despite them being identical twins. "What was he on about? Why didn't you tell me Astrid was your cousin or that you owned Vogue Hotel, Casino and Spa? Hell, why didn't you tell me you gave up your interests in the clubs? He blamed *me* for that but you never discussed it with me."

Rory stared at me with determined blue-green eyes but there was something behind them. He didn't want to lie but he didn't exactly want to tell me the whole truth either.

He held out an arm to guide us back to the sofa and although I was a bit pissed off for not being as informed as I thought I had a right to be, I followed him anyway and sat on the sofa beside him.

I drained my champagne glass in a couple of swallows and set the flute on the glass coffee table. My arms immediately crossed in front of my breasts, a defensive position that clearly conveyed I was in no mood for bullshit. I wanted the truth even if he didn't think I deserved to know the dirty details just yet.

"I didn't give up my controlling interest in the clubs forever, I merely signed them over to Severin for the time being. He's a bit sore but it isn't as daunting as he probably made it seem. The clubs run themselves as there are employees and Gabriel oversees the payroll and all the tax shit so all Severin has to do is put in an appearance when ever. He enjoys hanging out there and for the moment, I would rather not be involved with anything remotely involving the clubs. The pain is still too raw and I don't want to be reminded of Trésor every time I walk into one of my establishments. Besides, I have you and I don't *want* anyone else."

He cleared his throat before he looked into my eyes again. "I suppose that is what he was going on about in German though you didn't understand the words or the implications behind them. He said I take *everything* to the

extreme and in the game of love, he couldn't be more right. There are no half-measures with me and he knew me and how I acted when Mathilde and I were together. I was madly in love with her and I haven't felt that way about anyone ever...until you."

I laughed out loud then. I couldn't help myself until I stared at his face and saw he wasn't playing along and laughing with me. He looked deadly serious and this caused my heart to skip a painful beat.

"Seriously, Rory, that's sweet. I know it has been very hard for you because the death of Trésor couldn't have been easy. I speak now because I understand you had very deep feelings for her even if you weren't in love but you don't have to try to serenade me to make me feel better. I'm thirty-two, not twenty-two, and what may have worked on me then sure as fuck doesn't work on me now. Call me cynical and old. You need to try that line with a twenty-something and she'll get all teary-eyed and probably believe you."

"This isn't...a joke, Aurélie. I don't fall in love because it isn't something I do and you know that. If I could have prevented this, I would have never taken you to Southampton in the first place. It was supposed to be a bit of fun. I wasn't ever supposed to feel anything for you but perhaps pity and a bit of disgust after my brother and I had our fun with you.

"Yes, he was always part of the plan even if I didn't tell you. I never do anything without him and sharing you was always something we planned to do together. He would degrade you physically and I would break you down psychologically. It's what we *do* and how we get our kicks. He kept up his end of the bargain but I haven't kept up mine because I don't want to do that to you. Can't you understand that?"

I wanted to slap him in the face and walk away but I couldn't. I allowed myself to fall too deep and what did this mean for me and the rest of our time together?

He knew my one and only true love had been Renaud. I wouldn't ever allow myself to feel that naïve or taken in by anyone ever again. I was too old and always questioned the motivations of *everyone*. It was part of what made me so damned good at my former occupation.

However, I knew he was deadly serious and what hurt me most? The fact that he had admitted he and his brother had used me or I felt the same about him but he would never hear those words leave my mouth?

I couldn't and wouldn't ever confess dying love to anyone ever again.

But I do love you, Rory, I love you more than I have ever loved a man in a long time and perhaps I am falling in love with you too. The words never actually left my thoughts but perhaps he could see it in my eyes? It would have to do because to say I loved him at the drop of a hat would never happen. I wasn't the insta-love type and never would be.

Even now, I blamed our unusual circumstances. Our feelings seemed to form overnight because we both had lost someone who was very special to us. His lover and my sister and over this unique bond we'd come together naturally and found solace in each another.

It was so very easy for feelings to form because we spent so much time together. He was a very accomplished lover and he made me feel alive, more alive than I'd felt in years and thus I would *want* to feel something for him.

I was very fond of him and enjoyed his friendship, companionship and the sex of course even if it wasn't what I was completely used to. I'd had a lot more anal sex than I'd ever experienced in my life but he made it feel special and adventurous. There were little rituals I had to do to prepare and over those strange activities, he made me feel sensual, sexually alive and *normal*.

Most women would have been quite embarrassed about sharing their personal habits with their lovers but nothing about my body was a mystery to Rory. He knew my bowel habits and when I had my period. He asked me about my diet and what I'd eaten. He instructed me on what I should consume and what I shouldn't.

We'd attended his personal physician and I'd had my IUD removed and the doctor had put me on a low-hormone birth control pill as it would regulate my cycle and he could decide whether or not he wanted to have sex with me during those times.

I was ashamed to admit I didn't mind having sex while menstruating with Rory where as I would have balked out loud if it had been any other man. It was the same way when I had to clean myself out for anal intercourse though we both agreed to him wearing condoms regardless. I just didn't want him to have his cock back there and then inside me. I didn't care how clean I supposedly was after a 'cleaning out', I still found it a bit gross.

"You won't always feel like that. Eventually, it will become normal," he'd assured me.

And slowly, over the past three weeks, my life with him felt normal and okay and not strange at all.

I could understand how my sister had become so enraptured with him despite our age difference and her being in her impressionable twenties. I felt like I should have known better at my age but for some reason I didn't want to as I enjoyed everything we did together and the guilt ebbed away with each passing day.

Yet he stood there and he looked at me as if I had truly embarrassed and surprised him because I couldn't say I was in love with him too. It didn't feel right and perhaps one day it would but please God don't let him ask me to say it at that moment.

Rory didn't. He sighed out loud. "I think I need to get some air and take a walk. I'll be back a bit later."

"What about dinner?" I inquired.

"I'll get some takeout. Don't worry." He kissed my lips quickly and though I tried to hold on to his waist, he pulled my arms apart and left as soon as we physically separated. He couldn't get away from me fast enough.

What had I done and didn't he realize all I needed was a little bit of time he didn't want to give me? How was that fair to me? Why couldn't he give me the space I needed to process all of this before he gave up on me completely?

Chapter Fourteen



MOMENTS AFTER RORY LEFT, I walked to the spare suite and opened up the box which contained my sister's possessions. I had organized all her journals chronologically though I hadn't opened any of them to read any of her words.

I felt reckless and grabbed one of the notebooks out of order and allowed it to fall open to a page.

I used to put a date on these entries but what difference does it make when I am the only one to read them? I have decided to just talk about how much time we have been together and I think that is enough. It's been a little over a year and R. keeps amazing me and frightening me. I sometimes wonder if he does what he does to drive me absolutely batty or if he is trying to help me?

We have some pretty wild and amazing times together but none of that made me fall in love with him. It's the person he is when it's just the two of us and he is completely vulnerable and I can see the real him. I want to worship him and lay at his feet for hours but he eschews that kind of behavior. He says it is too much like how S. treats his slaves and he doesn't want that.

I don't even know their names because S. says it is unimportant and R. says it doesn't matter but it matters to me. I rather like the blonde number one. Blonde number two is his toilet slave and she freaks me out because she is such a beautiful package but she allows herself to be degraded like that.

Speaking of degradation, we have to go to Los Angeles to see S. and it gives me the creeps when we visit him. I don't like him and I hate he

purposely confuses me so I don't know R. from him. I wish I had the smarts of my sister because they would never be able to pull that shit on A. I feel bad I don't contact her or M. and P. but if I do then they'll just know something is different. For starters, I'm not on drugs and then they will ask questions about what I am doing with my life, who I am dating and I don't want to have to explain it to them. It would exhaust me.

Anyway, I have to go as R. is home and I can hear his shoes against the marble tile. He would be upset if I didn't meet him and kiss him. We haven't seen one another in a couple of days so I look forward tonight. I am the luckiest woman in the world.

I flipped through several entries, stopped and began to read again.

Ugh, today has been such a shit day and it was a shit day for R. too because he is a total prick. I would get twenty lashes with the cane for that but this is my special place and he would never read these so it's cool and besides, if I don't write this crap down, I'd believe I dreamed it all up.

He degraded me because he brought that bitch, A., home and he knows how much I hate her. She wants to possess me and make me her own but I would rather die than be with her. Anyway, he was angry at me yet I have done nothing and when I began to cry as he whipped me with the flogger, he told me, "I beat you now because you cry about not deserving a beating."

I couldn't win for losing. Especially when he was done, he handed the flogger to A. and she had him turn me over. She used it on my breasts, stomach and thighs. My whole body felt like it was on fire. If that wasn't bad enough, after she finished beating me, she hiked up her skirt and shoved her asshole in my face and told me to tongue her deeply.

The thought makes me want to puke now and I only hold the bile down because I can write this shit down. Then I had to watch him fuck her and I was left there, my hands secured by handcuffs and my clit on fire with desire. He wouldn't touch me. He didn't even acknowledge me. After he came inside her, she made me eat all his come out of her pussy and I thought I would be sick.

I swear to fucking God I feel like I am living with Jekyll and Hyde or something. R. would usually never do that to me. Part of my brain wants to believe it wasn't him but S. instead. First of all, I have asked R. if he ever had a sexual relationship with his cousin and he said no. He actually looked

a bit taken aback as if I were the sick one for suggesting it but if that was him fucking her then why lie about it?

It's days like this I feel like walking away but then I think about the money and the sweet side of this man and I can't do that to him. Not now. Perhaps one day I will have the strength but I think not. I am a sub and this is what I am supposed to do and everyday isn't going to be great but it will get better. I truly believe that. I have faith because it is the kind of person I have always been and I won't let anyone take that from me.

A tear dropped and hit the filament paper. I closed the notebook and began to sob for my poor confused sister. She couldn't have known but I knew that incident happened with Severin and not Rory. He would have never done that to her. He didn't particularly get off on humiliation and that definitely was up Severin's alley.

If Trésor had let me in, I would have been there for her and perhaps I could have given her some advice. My career was too important to me. So fucking important I had gone almost a year without speaking to my sister and didn't think it was strange at all.

There was always the next huge story that was about to break and I would have plenty of time to catch up later. It was always not at that particular moment, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. If I'd known how much time she had left, would I have been so blasé about getting in touch? Probably not but that was the beauty and the frightening part about life. We weren't given exact dates when everything just stopped and our world as we knew it was no more.

The tears came again whether I wanted them to or not and I sobbed right there on the floor, my face half buried in the crux of my arm and half pushed into the Persian rug.

The sobs echoed throughout the suite and I cried until the tears stopped and my eyes rubbed raw with emotion but at least I felt better. By the end, I didn't know whether I was crying for my sister anymore and whether the cry had taken on a "Woe is me" tone.

I sat up and covered my face in my hands. I only hoped Rory would come back soon because I missed him already and though I wouldn't dare admit to being in love with him, I would express how much I cared about him. He bruised easily and for a man who called a community that seemed to be able to handle pain and agony quite well, he wore his heart on his

sleeve for me. I'd basically thrown it on the floor and stuck a six-inch heel in a major aorta just to prove the point I so desperately wanted to make.

As soon as I had a modicum of calm, I wiped the tears angrily from my face and began to sort through other items in the box besides the journals. I hadn't bothered beforehand because just seeing my sister's handwriting had been painful enough.

My heart wrenched as I set the journals on the floor and began to pick up other belongings which had once belonged to Trésor. There was an iPod Classic which held a shitload of music as I turned it over to discover it was a one hundred and sixty gigabyte model. The one she'd been found with in her cage had been an eighty gigabyte model but they were both silver. Unlike the one confiscated by the police and held in evidence, this one was perfect and blemish free.

I turned it on and discovered not only was it fully powered but she had some great artists' listed on various play lists she'd created too. I stopped on Joss Stone and pressed play. The young English singer's sultry and soulful voice came through the earbuds and I immediately placed them in my ear as I started to focus on the heartbreak in her voice rather than my sister's demise.

There was also an iPad in the box and I removed it and turned it on as well. I looked through her Google history and the documents she kept stored on the device which were mostly personal in nature. There were also many films uploaded, most of them recent releases along with a few classics like *Goodfellas*, *Casino* and *Cape Fear*. Trésor had been a total Scorsese film junkie and loved all his work. She also seemed to have every film Jared Leto and Leonardo DiCaprio had ever made loaded in her film library as well.

It was interesting but nothing earth shattering so I turned it off and replaced it back in the box. She also had the latest Kindle Fire and I immediately turned this on as it must have been the device she used to read books. There were also films loaded on this electronic device but mostly books and many of them were BDSM in nature.

Not only did she have the particularly cheesy *Fifty Shades Trilogy* but she also had most of the mainstream novels which had done well from the whole trend including *If I Were You*, *Bared to You* and a few others. There were also hardcore BDSM novels like *Comfort Food* by Kitty Thomas, *As She's Told* by Anneke Jacob, *Captive in the Dark* and *Seduced in the Dark*

by CJ Roberts along with all of the books Annabel Joseph had ever written. It looked like she had been in the middle of reading both *Mercy* and *Burn for You* as neither had been completed yet.

I did a search and started to see what other books she had on her Kindle but most of the novels were either sexual or violent in nature. She had a lot of books which would have been classified as mystery and thrillers or horror but most of the novels listed were found primarily in the erotica section.

It felt like such an invasion of privacy, I turned off the Fire and put it back in the box before I piled her journals on top of it with the one I'd recently read a couple of passages on top. It would definitely help if I understood what was going on before I went charging in, speaking to friends of hers about what her life was like.

I'd never approached a project blind and I didn't plan for that to change now. She was too important and her death had already been a slipshod operation of the police wanting to close the investigation as soon as possible and not really caring what had happened to her. She'd made her bed and as far as they were concerned, she'd laid in it too. It had cost her everything, including her life, but they had real crimes to solve and my sister's wasn't exactly at the top of the list.

"What are you doing?"

I turned around, startled but relieved to face Rory. His eyes looked concerned but he was much calmer now than he had been earlier. Obviously the walk had done him a great bit of good.

I stood and walked towards him before I slid my arms around his waist and buried my head in his chest. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have acted the way I did earlier and I can only hope you won't hold it against me. This is all so new to me. Real emotions with someone I care about and I don't want it... sullied by false promises of love and forever. I don't know if that makes any sense but we have a real chance at making this work and...I can't screw it up again. I won't be able to take that kind of heartbreak."

He tilted my head up to his and I gazed into his mesmerizing aquamarine eyes. "Is that why you have been pulling away emotionally? You might have thought I didn't notice but there isn't much that escapes my attention. Is that why you can't say you love me?"

"I pulled back emotionally because we will be burying my sister soon and I need some fucking closure," I responded as we separated and I slowly

backed away until I hit the wall. “I can’t say I love you because it’s too soon and I know that sounds like utter bullshit but it’s just how I work. To be honest, I don’t think I ever told Grayson I loved him. I admitted to being very fond of him but fondness isn’t love. He didn’t need to hear it so it worked between us because he respected my boundaries.”

Rory strode to me and pushed my wrists against the wall with brute force. “Don’t you get it yet, Aurélie? You have no boundaries, no walls, no emotions I can’t penetrate? This isn’t your perfect ‘fake’ relationship because everything between us is real and always has to be or there is no ‘us’, do you understand? I know everything about you physically but now you have to let me in emotionally and if you don’t do it with compliance then I will do it by force. Is that what you want?”

I felt the walls closing in on me and I began to panic. My eyes began to water but he was having none of it. He shook his head as if to say the moment I cried would be one of regret.

“I don’t know what you want from me, Rory.”

“It’s quite simple and we both know it. I want everything, not what you have to offer. I want you naked in front me not only physically but emotionally and psychologically. I swear to God I don’t want to have to break you down to build you back up but I can and I will to keep you.”

He didn’t have to explain because I knew what he meant. He would take me to the depths of humiliation just to bring me back from the brink and although I was of sound body and mind, I would let him.

I had traveled down the rabbit hole because he’d made it so easy with sex and lots of lavish gifts and plenty of affection. I was already his yet he wanted me to prove it time and time again.

“They’re just words,” I finally managed to say. “Why are they so important? People say they love one another all the time and it means nothing. You should be able to feel my emotions and see them in my eyes. Must I also grovel to you vocally as well? Perhaps I’m not what you need and Severin is right...maybe we don’t belong together.”

Rory forced a brutal kiss against my lips and damn it but my body didn’t fight him and my lips opened on their own, allowing him full access to my mouth. He pulled away just as quickly. “Severin knows nothing about us. He knew nothing about my relationship with Trésor either but he thought he did. She should have known when she compared me to Jekyll and Hyde something was wrong but she couldn’t or really didn’t want to

see. Maybe she thought I approved and wanted to share her with my brother but she couldn't have been more wrong.

"I hate what he did to her and how she constantly doubted me even if she did love me. Perhaps that is why I could truly never fall in love with her because how could I when she didn't even know the real me? She couldn't see what I was and wasn't capable of and I would have never humiliated her in the way Severin did because I know what it's like and I could never do that to another human being ever again."

Rory let go of me and my body crushed against his anyway, despite no longer having any physical restraints to tie us together. "Are you trying to tell me you have done it before?"

"Yes, but we'll save that for another day. Not here and not now."

I stared into his eyes and sighed. "I care so much about you...but if you truly love me as much as you say you do then you have to let me in too. This can't be a one sided affair, Rory. I could give all of myself to you but you have to share with me too. One day I won't take 'some other day' for an answer and when you bring up painful events in your past, you are going to have to tell me about them.

"I'm not naïve and I know you have done some questionable shit in your past but I would rather find out from you than someone else. Do you understand what I am saying? The moment you're ready to open yourself to me will be the moment I declare true love to you but not before then. And yes, you can break me down but do you really want me that way? Is that how you envision our life together?"

"Not at all," he whispered, "but often times desperate people are capable of extremely detrimental and irrational schemes which defy common sense and rational behavior to hold on to something...or someone they have no wish to ever let go. I would rather have you here as a vegetable than not by my side at all."

I had to talk him down as I felt we were playing one up and no one was going to win. It was just going to escalate until one of us said something we would live to regret.

However, Rory wasn't like other men and what I would have said to a normal vanilla guy would have never worked. I finally replied, "I'm not going anywhere. Surely you must know that by now?"

"Should I?"

“Yes, in your heart you know you do. I’m starving and I know you must be hungry too so why don’t we dig into that takeout you brought home?”

His aquamarine eyes glared into mine coldly before the moment of tension broke between us before he grabbed me by the waist and buried his face in my hair. “What are you doing to me? Most of the time I don’t recognize myself anymore or this pathetic, love-sick person I have allowed myself to become though I’m not sure if I could have stopped it—the events, they were so beyond my control. I desperately want to believe I am not in this alone. Why do I feel like I am the one bottoming out in this relationship?”

“Maybe because you are but I’m there with you. I’ve always been there with you and that won’t ever change,” I responded in a soft tone as I wrapped my arms around his neck.

“Fine, you win. Let’s eat.”

I smiled as we looked at one another. “I thought you would say that.”

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Chapter Fifteen



I'D NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD be happier than when my mother called and told me the New York Police Department had given the okay and released Trésor's body into their care. Finally, we could mourn her properly and hold a funeral for her. Rory took care of all the arrangements and had the body shipped to France. The following day, he came home with airline tickets and promptly told me we would be leaving the following afternoon.

I had good news as well but I wasn't sure how well it would go over with Rory. He knew I had something to tell him but I didn't know if it was the right time or perhaps I should wait.

"Go on then, tell me what's on your mind?" he inquired in a probing tone.

"Well, I started to read Trésor's journals and they are fascinating. I have thought long and hard about it...there is way too much information here for a simple article. I want to give my sister something she would have always wanted but never could have gotten on her own. I want to write a book."

His facial expression spoke volumes when it changed from pleasant do downright hostile. "Are you crazy? You can't do that and...you can't talk about what Severin and I do or what happened to your sister. Don't you understand the police results were inconclusive? They can't prove she killed herself but at the same time they can't disprove it either. All it takes is one crazy District Attorney to come in and decide to re-open the case and there is no telling where this could lead. There isn't a statute of limitations on murder."

It was my turn to feel somewhat indignant. "Yes, I know that. I would change the names of people and places that I would write about so no one

would know I was talking about the club or the people who frequent your establishments—”

“That’s not enough. The right people would know and that would put a target on your head. Have you not forgotten that if your sister was in fact slaughtered by someone, they are still out there? If they did it that time and got away with it, don’t you feel you’re being a bit naïve to think they wouldn’t come after you? And I am not talking about after the book has been published, I am talking about while you are writing the book.

“You’re putting your life in danger and I cannot allow you to do that. Trésor is dead but you are very much alive and if anything happened to you...it would destroy not only me but your parents as well. For once, think about someone else other than yourself and your precious career. Are the lives of everyone else of so little of importance to you that you feel like this book has to be written to exonerate your sister? She did *nothing* wrong.”

I had never felt so selfish in my life but I couldn’t give up my brilliant plan without a fight. I had spent too many restless days and sleepless nights thinking about it.

“Okay, what about if I only focus on her career? I think it would still make a great book! She would have had a fabulous career if she’d lived and we both know it. For God’s sake, she had a photo shoot with *Vogue* and they are going to feature her on the December cover. Does that not mean anything to you? They called up my parents and specifically asked permission. Can you imagine my mother’s shock when she answered the phone and personally spoke to Editor-in-Chief who offered her condolences?”

“If you wanted the Editor-in-Chief to call your mother, you could have asked me. My parents know her and I would have been quite happy to make the call,” Rory said as he played with his personal phone, *the* ridiculously expensive Ulysse Nardin.

He’d bought me one too and I was so embarrassed of a phone that was worth more than the average American made in a year, I refused to take it out of my purse in public unless he was calling. He called me a “silly little fool” who was “not ashamed to carry around an eighty thousand dollar Hermès Birkin but too afraid to pull out my fifty thousand dollar phone”.

Yes, he had turned me into a walking cliché with all his fucking money and endless presents but at the heart of it all, I was still the woman who was amazed my mother had finally treated Trésor’s career with some respect

now that she was dead. It was all my sister had ever wanted while she'd been alive but better late than never.

I decided to change tactics. "If I promise to stick to her career, will you at least think about it? All the private research I do about her death will be stored somewhere else and I won't broach the subject in the book except to say she used to date you. I don't think there is anything wrong with that."

Rory set his phone down on the elegant coffee table in front of the sofa before his blue-green eyes drifted my way with an air of exasperation. "You keep forgetting something very important and the heart of this matter. How will you get around her death? She might have killed herself—according to the Medical Examiner—but she was still found by the NYPD and the Coroner in a locked cage, naked save for a bizarre chastity belt and her throat slit. What was she doing in that cage in my home? How will you answer the questions people want to read about her sex life? They don't give a shit about the modeling stuff, they'll buy it for the titillation and you'll be panned by the critics for misleading people about the real aim of your sister's biography when all they will want is salacious gossip and outrageous supposition. Meanwhile, the publisher will be upset because you failed to deliver the tabloid biography they expected to make megabucks on instead of some kind of dreamy non-fiction masterpiece."

"Is that fair? I'm hardly a tabloid journalist and this is my sister we are talking about. Maybe I don't want to *explore* her love life—"

"Could that be perhaps because you're fucking her lover? You don't think they will find that the least bit strange? Me and you, shacking up? And if I did all that shit to Trésor, what's to say I am not doing it to you?"

"Okay, you've got a point." I pulled my hair off my shoulders and held it with both hands against the nape of my neck with prolonged frustration. "I'm not doing this for the money, Rory. I want her story to be told. That's all. What if I elect to do it for a small French publishing house? I can write it in French and I will never write or publish an English language version."

"You're assuming no one else out there can't translate the book into English and ask you to sign over foreign rights for a shitload of money. I said it once and I'll say it again. You are playing with fire and you are bound to get burnt. Leave...it...alone."

I stood and grabbed my Birkin before I checked for my ultra expensive phone. "I need some air."

"I made us reservations for Tavern on the Green."

“I’ll be back in time.”

I couldn’t get out of that place fast enough despite all the open and airy spaces, I literally felt suffocated. He’d made up his mind and decided my book was a stupid idea and a serious waste of time but I had no intentions of backing down. I would write it anyway and not tell him about it.

I still had my personal iBook laptop though he’d bought me a top of the line one. I would just keep it there and perhaps get a small portable safe where I could store my important papers, documents and jewelry. I could stuff the laptop in there too and it would be a win-win. Rory would think I had decided to drop it and I would still get my book I wanted to write about Trésor.

The air was frigid and crisp but felt great against my skin. I looked up at the trees from a bench I sat on in Central Park. It was a beautiful day with a pale blue sky and white clouds. It was supposed to snow later that night. We were only a few weeks from Christmas though the holiday season had officially begun.

From the outside, one could judge my life to be perfect. I was sitting on a park bench in Central Park with an expensive wool coat to keep me warm, designer jeans and a vicuna sweater underneath, my stupid Birkin handbag and my even more outrageous Ulysse Nardin phone that buzzed incessantly to notify me I had a call.

I struggled with the bag, opened it and took out my phone before I looked at the number. It was a French number but that meant nothing. I answered it anyway.

“Hello?”

“Aurélié? It’s Nicole. How are you?”

“I’m fine,” I said as my heart thundered in my chest. “How did you get this number?”

“Oh, it’s a bit complicated,” she began in French. “I called Grayson and he gave me the number to the Waldorf Towers where you are staying, I spoke to Rory and he finally gave me your mobile number after twenty questions. I suppose he didn’t believe we were best friends especially after...” she trailed off.

Yes, Nicole and I were best friends but she was also the woman who had married the ex-love of my life, Renaud, and therefore we weren’t exactly on speaking terms though that did not end twenty-eight years of friendship.

“You didn’t mention—”

“I didn’t realize you hadn’t told him.” She cleared her throat. “Listen, I know Rory and that is probably why it took him by surprise. He probably didn’t think *my* Renaud was...well, at one time, had been *your* Renaud.”

“Speaking of, how is my beloved?” I inquired and it felt good I could honestly ask without wishing his death.

“He’s good. He’s really busy at his job—Papa has him working crazy hours as he’s just landed a promotion that has come with a lot more responsibility.”

“That’s nice to hear. Still no little Renaud or Nicole yet? I thought you two would have at least one new addition to the family.”

“Nah, I don’t think it is for us.” Nicole sniffed lightly before she cleared her throat again. “What the hell, if I can’t tell you then who can I tell? We have been to all the best fertility specialists and I can’t have children. Non-specific ovarian failure. Renaud and I are...not a good match...for making babies.”

“But...can’t you harvest your eggs and Renaud’s sperm and hire a surrogate?”

“Yes, we could but I don’t think it’s for us at this juncture. We aren’t ruling it out but...I don’t want another woman to carry our child, Aurélie. How do I make myself okay with that while not trying to feel like an utter failure? Am I being selfish to Renaud?”

“No. He loves you, Nicole. He was always one who could take it or leave it when it came to children. You two should be okay.”

“Anyway, I didn’t call you about that and I hate we started discussing my problems at all as that is just so tacky. Rory told me you two are coming into town and we should get together for dinner—all four of us. We can go shopping and hang out again. Of course, I realize why you are coming and though I feel the circumstances are particularly cruel, I can’t say I haven’t missed you like mad for all the years you have decided to call the States your home.”

I smiled though I knew my best friend couldn’t see it. “I missed you too. More than you could ever know. I really need you right now and I am just glad you called. I know...why we stopped speaking in the first place but...I just want you to be happy and I hate I let my stubbornness come between us. You didn’t steal Renaud, he didn’t want me and that has taken me a long time to get over. I’m so sorry.”

“It wasn’t your fault. All these years I know you weren’t jealous of us or the situation but what he did to you. I suppose I helped him as he ended up with me but...I was so naïve at the time. I truly thought I could marry him and it wouldn’t change the friendship between you and I. What a fool I have been all this time,” Nicole explained.

“Let’s agree to allow bygones to be bygones and begin again, shall we? Just promise me we won’t go this long without speaking again.”

She laughed on the other end. “Of course we won’t especially now that you are in a relationship with Rory. You do realize what kind of... predilections he has or is he hiding them? He’s always been upfront with the women he has made his lovers before in the past so I find it hard to believe he would leave you in the dark.”

“Yes, I am aware of what he likes. My sister was found locked in a cage in his Upper Eastside Penthouse apartment wearing a specially designed chastity belt and a black leather mask covering her eyes before she supposedly stripped it off, remember? I am very much aware what he and Severin are like,” I replied though I hated the way my voice instantly became guarded. If I couldn’t be honest with my best friend then who could I be honest with and tell the truth to? God knows I didn’t want to start a damn journal.

“Well, it is nice you are so...accommodating. I had a relationship with Severin for a while...if you call what he did to me normal relationship behavior but what he subjected me to, I can’t undo and now I won’t be in the same room with that monster. He’s a sucker for blondes you know but... something makes me feel like he would find you very special.”

I laughed at my best friend this time. “Now I know you are deluded. The man hates my guts, Nikki. I don’t know what to do about him, exactly, and I am just waiting for the other shoe to drop with Rory. I don’t like how much control Severin has over him and something tells me whatever exists between them and binds them together is...I don’t know...intense.”

“He controls Rory because the man can’t live without control. He’s like that with everyone in his life. Control is power, is it not? Either way, I don’t know if he was Marquis de Sade or Machiavelli in another life—I’d like to think he was both—but after being with him, he made me a believer in religion. I never read Dante Alighieri until we broke up and I never wanted someone to experience the nine circles of Hell more in my life than *him*. Stay away from him, Aurélie, he can’t be trusted.”

“Well that is going to be hard, seeing as Rory and I are together. He doesn’t exactly leave us to our own devices and I have a feeling he will show up in France soon after we have left so there is no getting away from him,” I began in a frustrated manner.

“So, this is serious? Rory and you, I mean.”

“Yes, we’re very serious. Not marriage serious as I don’t think he is the settling down type but...serious enough that I am living with him.”

“Promise me something,” Nicole began on the other line in a voice so soft and low I had to strain to hear her. “Promise me you’ll take care of yourself and no matter what happens, you won’t end it because of *him*. Severin enjoys inflicting pain, not just on those who he loves to hurt but everyone around him. I’ve seen him push women out of Rory’s life. I’m not calling him a murderer because honestly, I don’t think he had anything to do with Trésor’s—what did the Police call it?—death by misfortune.

“He takes too much pleasure in the torture part to kill and he never liked getting his hands dirty, hence the psychological games. You know one of his slaves killed herself just because he commanded her to? That is what I am talking about when I discuss control and power, Aurélie. He’s a sadistic son of a bitch but he’s too smart to get himself caught and thrown in jail. It just wouldn’t be his style to do what happened to Trésor. If anything, it looks like a crime of passion but I still don’t think either of the Krieger twins were involved.”

“Neither do I,” I confessed, “but I still think it could easily be someone in their circle and that is going to take a lot of digging. I need to convince Rory to let me write the book but I am still going through with it. I just won’t tell him.”

“Please don’t tell me you are seriously thinking of blowing this wide open with a book. Aurélie, you have been in America too long and think you can do anything with impunity. Once you get here, it won’t work that way and the person who murdered your sister will make a go for you,” Nicole explained in fast-paced French.

“I’m not afraid. I think one of the first lessons being apart of this lifestyle has taught me is that there are much greater fears than death.”

“Like what?”

“Like desiring a person so much you don’t want to be without them ever again. I promised myself after what happened between Renaud and I that it wouldn’t transpire again. I would never fall in love, never cede control,

never be a victim and what do you know? I'm right back in the shit and I hate it, Nikki."

"*Mon Dieu,*" my best friend said softly. "There are worse fates in life than being in love but if you feel that way, tell him and never let go."

"I can't do that. He might use it against me and then what would I have? The best thing about our relationship is my ambivalence because if he knew what he had, he would just take advantage like every other man would."

"That's bullshit and we both know it but...alas, I will let you decide for now and we'll talk soon. *Je t'aime.*"

"I love you too, Nikki."

"Goodbye for now but I will see you soon."

"Not soon enough for me."

Our call ended shortly afterward. I stood and began to walk back to the Waldorf Towers in the frigid cold.

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Chapter Sixteen



I OPENED THE DOOR WITH my card key and stepped inside the suite.

I wanted to call out for Rory but I decided to surprise him instead. It was me who got the surprise when I walked into the kitchen to find my beloved cooking. I suspected he knew how to cook but I never thought I would get a homemade meal out of him.

He was hard at work and I stood in the doorway and just watched in awe. He seasoned a pan of thinly sliced potatoes marinated with garlic, onions and bell peppers. From where I was standing, I could see fish in the broiler. I could barely believe it but it also looked like he set out a dish of sauerkraut, one of my favorite ways of consuming cabbage.

I whistled and he turned toward me and smiled. “You didn’t seem all that enthusiastic about going out so I thought I would cook for us on our last night in Manhattan.”

“You make it sound like we’ll be gone forever and will never return, not even for a visit,” I began softly.

His blue-green eyes were filled with barely hidden lust and I realized my whole body tingled. There was barely a night that went by we didn’t have sex but still he was capable of sending my body into a frenzy. I was spoiled, I knew that. Most relationships didn’t start off with mind blowing sex the day after you met someone. This was usually referred to as a one night stand and it usually was awkward and best forgotten about.

However, we had bonded, beaten the unbelievable odds because a romance like ours only existed in fiction. He would have never given me a second look and yet...somehow it had turned into something more. I never wanted him to look at me any other way because behind that lust was shock

and awe. He'd bottomed out to me and I had all the power even if we played games in the bedroom.

Was it no wonder why the poor man was afraid of me? He didn't give of himself and like his brother, didn't treasure the loss of control but he'd done it for me all the while making me think it was I who constantly gave in to him. It was a brilliant game plan and one no less than a master could have pulled off but he had and I had no wish to give his game away, least of all to him.

"You look like you want to eat me alive," I whispered to him.

He'd read my lips over the sizzling of the potatoes and turned the stove top to the off switch. "I do. Suddenly I am not very hungry for food at all but you in my bed...now."

"This spread looks awfully delicious."

"We can eat it later. Take your clothes off. Now."

I knew he meant right there and then. I slipped off my coat and let it fall to the floor. My vicuna sweater clung to my body and teased my achingly hard nipples.

"Faster...or do you need help?"

He talked about the removal of my clothes like most people would have discussed the weather.

"I don't need help but I desperately want some."

He slid the potatoes to the back of the stove and popped the lid of the pan over them before he strode over to me and before I could say anything, his mouth devoured mine in a soulful kiss which had my arms wrapped around his neck immediately.

Rory's tongue tasted delectable and as he maneuvered my mouth into the perfect position and tilted my head back slightly, I felt weak-kneed and breathless. His hands traced down my sides before his warmth invaded my skin and I felt his fingers against my skin before they tweaked my nipples in a painfully pleasurable way and I surrendered to him without another thought.

Slowly, he lifted my sweater over my head and let it drop from his fingers. He caressed my breasts again before he whispered into my ear, "Get on your knees."

I complied without a thought and undid the button on his expensive black jeans before I slid the zipper down and grabbed his erection with my right hand. His cock was hard yet yielding under my smooth, practiced

touch. His breath caught in his throat and it was then the feeling of complete domination swept over me. It was true, I was the one on my knees but I had all the power and we both knew it deep down.

It was so easy to look at his manhood as a separate section of his body as it felt warm and smooth against my fingers; a rock hard testament to what I could do to him so easily and I hadn't even used my mouth yet. I traced his length with careful hands and pre-cum covered the bulbous tip. It was so easy to flick my tongue over the head of his cock and give him a quick swipe before I opened my mouth and began to take him into my warm sanctuary inch by throbbing inch.

"Fuck, Aurélie..." he trailed off as I began to swallow him whole, his manhood bobbing past my tonsils and expanding my throat in a deliciously painful and obtrusive way.

I withdrew his length from my mouth and began long strokes with my tongue up and down his shaft as my left hand massaged his balls. He was at my complete and utter mercy; the sheer power of the situation left me dizzy with anticipation as I felt my sex drench and flood the seat of my skimpy thongs. As I began to take him into my mouth again, he sighed and surrendered to the pleasure I offered him.

My fingers worked down further past his balls and caressed his perineum which I teased mercilessly with several selected fingers. The sensitive strip of flesh caused his thighs to slightly shake under my expert touch. His anus clenched in anticipation but it was so easy to slide two fingers inside him and caress his prostrate.

He'd known what would happen between us all along and had prepared. It was one of the few reasons why I didn't feel guilty about the cleansings I had to endure before anal intercourse because he always did them with me too. It was to prepare for our anal games which always went both ways now.

I was comfortable with my sexuality and I didn't mind his own bisexual label even if he didn't actively seek out men to fuck. It just felt good to be with someone who didn't feel there was a "right" or "wrong" way to have sex but what ever felt good and pleasurable and fulfilling.

My mind was completely occupied therefore when hands, which couldn't possibly belong to Rory, cupped my breasts and caressed them sensually it was an utter shock and surprise. Rory had his hands in my hair

but the touch was familiar enough I knew who it was before he spoke into my ear.

And then I heard the voice, low and seductive in my voice as he whispered, “I’m sorry we got off on the wrong foot. I am sure I can make it up tonight. I promise?”

I only smiled slightly at the sound of Severin’s breath along my ear. His talented fingers squeezed my nipples harder than Rory ever did but to be honest, I was looking forward to a consensual ménage à trois between the three of us.

I looked up at Rory and he gave me a look before one of his hands traced my jaw line. “Don’t be angry, my love. I invited him over to join us for dinner. If you don’t want him to participate then I will send him away and he can go jerk off in the guest room.”

No, that wouldn’t do. I didn’t want him rifling through Trésor’s personal effects as I hadn’t closed them the last time I was in there.

“It’s okay, he can stay but no anal sex for me tonight so you will have to find other ways to use my body to amuse yourself,” I responded before I tackled Rory’s manhood again.

“Oh, I can do that, believe me,” Severin said as he peeled down my jeans and slowly maneuvered me out of them while I continued to pleasure his brother.

He continued to pinch my nipples as he began to kiss down my back. His hands and fingers halted at my ass and he spread the globes in a provocative manner before I felt the warmth of his mouth against my anus. He teased me a bit with his tongue before one of his hands slid further down and caressed my clit, tracing the hard nub with circular motions.

My body responded immediately whether I wanted it to or not. My sex flooded with warm juices and as he slid two fingers into my soaking sex, I felt heady from all the wonderful sensations. They quickly found my G-spot and he worked his fingers in and out with expert precision. It didn’t take me long to reach my pinnacle but when I did, it was hard to concentrate on orally pleasuring Rory.

“That’s enough,” my lover said in a voice dripping with sex. “Since you said no anal, Severin will just have to use that beautiful mouth of yours.”

I smiled in a wicked fashion and couldn’t believe I allowed this to happen yet again. I vowed never to allow Severin’s hands on my body again and here he was, touching me in the most intimate places I’d believed

belonged to Rory alone. I was so confused and conflicted yet I decided to go with the flow. I could always discuss it with Rory later on. I still wasn't sure I was a "sex with multiple partners at the same time" type of woman but it sure felt good at that moment to do something so sinfully decadent.

I stood on shaky legs before Severin picked me up with little effort and guided us into the bedroom. He laid me on the bed, and before I could get comfortable, Rory had spread my legs and gave my clit a ferocious swipe with his hot tongue. I moaned out loud before I bit my lip to silence myself. He loved giving me head and he was more talented than most men. Soon, my whole body became one object and my nerves seemed to be attached to that place of pleasure between my legs.

Severin climbed on the bed and from that angle, he straddled my face. It was easy to grab hold of his cock and guide him into my mouth. Though the whole act meant pulling his manhood in a downward angle, he reveled in the pain and the pleasure of my act. He never said a word but I could tell by the tiny tremors that vibrated in his thighs he was close to being on edge.

Rory stopped pleasuring me just as I was on the verge of yet another orgasm. He got off the bed and went to a drawer where he pulled out our favorite toy, the nipple clamps with a chain like a rosary where a single clamp at the end for my clit. I couldn't see him but I could hear the clink of metal and then his weight on the bed as he applied the appendages.

"That should keep you from coming on us prematurely," Severin said to me before he withdrew his manhood from my mouth and got off the bed.

Rory slid me over onto my stomach and made me get on my hands and knees. "When you feel her close to orgasm, pull and that should focus her attention."

"Thanks but I think I am better at this than you," Severin replied from somewhere behind me. "I taught you the ropes, remember? I can handle her."

"It's a tag team so that means you don't get to fuck her until you come but in intervals. Don't take more than a couple of minutes and then we'll switch until we come, okay? And also, you can't come inside her. If she allows you to, you can come on her tits or in her mouth but not inside her, got it?"

"Okay, fine."

"I'm just laying the rules down and remember, no matter how tempting her ass looks, you can't fuck her there. She said no."

“Will you shut the fuck up so I can get started? I’m not an idiot you know. We’re just having a cozy little ménage and nothing else. Very vanilla but I need a little less kink in my life at the moment.”

I could feel the weight of the bed shift as Severin got behind me and teased my anus with his fingers while he thrust his cock inside me. I gasped at the fullness of him and he waited until I adjusted to his size. For identical twins, I found out the hard way they were not the same size. Severin had an inch on his brother and the feel of him inside me wasn’t the same as when Rory took me.

He began to move inside me and I tried not to cry out as every few thrusts, he would pull on the chain and my clit and nipples became alight with fire. It was painfully pleasurable and would leave me sore for days afterwards but it was worth it for the orgasms alone.

Rory crawled toward me from the front and he grabbed my head as he brought me in for a sensual kiss. Feathery soft and sweet, it turned demanding as his tongue connected with mine before he claimed me.

He pulled away suddenly. “Go with it, don’t fight it and it’ll feel so much better,” he whispered into my ear.

I allowed my body to completely relax and just as I started to feel pleasure in the painfully slow strokes in and out of me Severin was doing with his cock, he pulled out and got off the bed.

Rory turned my body around and he plunged into my depths with such force, I had to brace myself. Though he was initially rough, his touch became soothing and I didn’t feel like I was being fucked by him as much as he was making love to me and it felt delicious and decadent.

Severin grabbed me by the back of neck and murmured into my ear, “He’s good, isn’t he? I’m not used to the whole ‘love’ thing as I merely feel a pitiful affection for my slaves but he genuinely cares about you. If you fuck this up then I will come back and fuck you up and believe me, it won’t be pretty.”

He covered his tracks by nibbling on my ear before his mouth claimed my own. His kiss was different: brutal and passionate at the same time. Our tongues didn’t so much dance but devour one another and the delicious taste of his mouth was almost too much to take.

I don’t know how long we were like that but at one time during our ménage, one of the men removed my clamps and I was allowed to come and it was earth shatteringly beautiful. There was rest, a tangle of three

naked bodies with me in the middle as neither Rory nor Severin wanted to cuddle one another.

“Have you two ever...you know...with each other?” I asked Rory after I assumed Severin had fallen asleep.

“For the love of Christ, that is just...wrong,” Severin responded out loud. “No, we haven’t. We don’t mind sharing women but no, I don’t want to suck his cock and he doesn’t want to suck mine. Nor do I want to know what my brother feels like. We are identical twins you know. I think we shared enough time together in utero. It has strictly been a ‘share and share alike’ policy but we don’t do anything *to* one another.”

“Well, what is this between us?” I inquired. “I’m not good with a polyamorous relationship—”

“Relax, you won’t ever be in one,” Severin cut me off. “I have people I am involved with...even if the relationship is a bit one sided but I am very happy with my slaves at the moment. Claudette is gone and the beautiful Ingrid has taken her place. She is absolutely perfect and believe it or not, she and Hans get along quite well.”

“So, what will this be?”

Rory turned my face to meet his. “It is what it is, Aurélie. It never has to happen again or you can demand it when ever you like. The whole purpose is for you to get off. It’s not so much about us. I think my brother needs to be...reacquainted with an experience that does not revolve around his own pleasure. He likes you, leave it at that.”

I turned toward Severin and studied him as he looked back at me. “Do you really like me? I mean, as a person or...do you still think I am trying to erase my sister’s memory from your brother’s mind?”

“What I think doesn’t matter. You make Rory happy and all the other bullshit is none of my concern—”

“Yes but you did think it was your concern not too long ago. I want to honestly know where I stand with you. I want to be with your brother but if you are constantly going to try to sabotage us then this will never work,” I explained rationally.

“True but your relationship with my brother doesn’t truly affect me, Aurélie. I have to trust Rory’s decisions and he knows who he likes and loves. Everything else is incidental. You have my promise I will never interfere in your affair with my brother.”

I knew he avoided my probing questions on purpose but at the same time, I couldn't make him answer anything he didn't want to therefore I let the whole discussion go.

“Listen, this has been great but I have to go. I have a slave at home to train and what not. Thanks again for the good time and have a wonderful evening you two.”

Severin slid out of bed, grabbed his clothing and walked out of the bedroom door.

I wanted to continue the conversation with Rory but when he grabbed me in his embrace and held me in his arms, I melted and all my fears dissipated. We were together and that's all that mattered at that moment.

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Chapter Seventeen



RORY AND I SAT AT the dining room table in robes and ate dinner.

It was by candlelight and there were several bottles of Cristal champagne to accompany dinner. I found the food as heady and intoxicating as Rory's lovemaking or perhaps it was the alcohol. Either way, I loved spending time with him so much it was just as enjoyable to share a meal with him as it was to be in his bed.

"Compliments to the chef...this is one of the best home cooked meals I have ever had. Thank you." I smiled and although it must have been outrageously goofy, I couldn't help myself.

The smile grew as he grabbed my hand from across the table and held it in his own. "You're welcome. I realized you've cooked for me but I have never made a meal for you until tonight. I know it's silly and I should know better at our age but I feel like I have to constantly remind you this isn't just about the sex. I enjoy your company, your mind, your soul and your heart. Sex could never keep me tied to anyone but all the others keep me tied to you and you sharing your body with me is a lovely bonus."

"Does this extend to me sharing my body with Severin?" I wondered out loud.

Rory drained his champagne flute and set it on the table. "No, it doesn't. He came by earlier after you left and asked if he could join us as he'd been an incomprehensible bastard and he wanted to make it up to you. I told him you would be allowed to make all the rules and if you wanted him to leave, he would have to respect your wishes.

"I know...it is hard for you to understand. How do I share you with another if I am in love with you but...to me, sharing you with Severin isn't

so much giving you to another man but allowing you to see another part of myself. We're identical twins, that is we were conceived from the same egg and the same sperm which spliced and formed two different people. The bond we share is indescribable. If I could explain this in layman's terms, I would but there are no words to make you comprehend how close we are and how much we mean to one another."

He paused before he continued, "*Liebling*, what you have accomplished...combined with your limited knowledge of this lifestyle in such a short time is amazing. I would be the first to admit it was never my intention to ever be in a relationship with a BDSM novice. It just isn't done but what exists between us is so much more than the lifestyle and the community."

"So, are we in a BDSM relationship or not?" I inquired. "What I really want to know is am I submissive to your dominant?"

"Yes and no." Rory re-filled his champagne flute. "Understand that in most male homosexual relationships, there is no 'top' and there is no 'bottom'. That is not to say one partner won't bottom out more than the other but he will be a top also because the relationship is considered equal.

"A true Dom/sub relationship works much the same. There isn't a Dom or a sub to the point where it always works that way unless it is a twenty-four-seven arrangement. Ours isn't. We have sex and often you take the submissive position but tonight, you were the Dom and we were your subs. Did you humiliate us? No, but true submission isn't about humiliation and you have to understand that.

"So, to make a long story short, when you want us to indulge with Severin then we can but when you don't, that is fine and not part of our relationship. I don't need to involve my brother to get off and if you are not comfortable then he doesn't and he won't have to participate ever again."

"Well, what about monogamy? Does that ever factor into the relationship?" I sliced off a piece of salmon and chewed before swallowing. "I have always thought it was a bit overrated—monogamy that is—but at the same time, there is a special kind of reassurance to me that we will be all right. Even if it is purely an illusion."

"I have never been the monogamous type but then again, I have never been in a relationship with a woman who demanded it from me because she was always in the life as well. I practice safe sex when I sleep with someone outside of our union but that hasn't happened since we have been

together...officially, I mean. To be honest, I don't crave anyone but you. I don't touch my brother during the time we have indulged with him so if anyone has been unfaithful, it is you but that is purely a technicality. It was something I wanted to happen as much as you and since I was there, I got as much out of watching Severin have sex with you as when I made love to you."

I finished the rest of my champagne for liquid courage. "I was going to tell you before everything started between you, Severin and I that I received a phone call from my best friend, Nicole. She said she spoke to you—well, you had to otherwise how did she get an unlisted number you procured for me? The point is now you know the truth and what I never told you about. It was Nicole who ended up with Renaud and I don't want you to ever hold that against her.

"She's a good person and she wants us to have dinner once we settle in Paris. Nikki also told me you two knew one another and she was in a previous relationship with Severin though it certainly doesn't hold good memories for her. I want you to know I have rekindled our friendship—not that we were ever not friends but...I crave her companionship again."

Rory finished his food before he wiped his mouth with a cloth napkin. "That's good to know. I was thinking just my company and your sister's death might start to drive you off the deep end. I hope you have forgotten that book nonsense as it would be an utter danger to all of us, Nicole included."

"Yes, I know and I will continue my research but I promise not to share any results or findings with anyone but you," I lied smoothly.

"Good. And to answer your question, yes, I do know Nicole quite well. Her mother is German after all and her father, a French industrialist billionaire. Our families are quite close but her mother is also our mother's second cousin."

"So, Severin dated his cousin?"

"She's our cousin, three times removed. There isn't much blood left over and that is hardly considered an incestuous relationship. It is the same with Astrid. I have never had sex with her but Severin has but she is our *second* cousin. We probably wouldn't have anything to do with one another if we didn't share the lifestyle. Our family was a bit strange where outside presences were concerned. Yes, we attended family get-togethers with our

grandparents and attended by children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and others but...neither one of our parents' are all that close to their family.

“Mother was particularly ashamed as her father had a major position in the military during World War II. He had her whilst he was in his late thirties. He was born shortly after the great-war but Mother wasn't born until 1956. It didn't matter our grandfather was very young and probably stupid enough to fall for what was popular at the time...all Mother could think about was the humiliation of having Nazis for parents.

“She was the eighth child born to Lars and Gertrude Kreutenheimer. Her father was actually part of Operation Valkyrie but it wasn't discovered by the high ranking officials he worked for because he hid his involvement very well. After the war, he was treated like every other war criminal and perhaps this made him bitter and turned him into the cold-hearted sadistic son of a bitch he became.”

I re-filled my fluted champagne glass. “Were you and Severin ever...left in his care?”

“Once, when we were both eight years old, and I remembered it like it was yesterday. Seven was being particularly bad and found the old Man's war medals he kept secretly. Our grandfather was absolutely furious with us when he found us holding his precious metals and we both were taken down to a strange dungeon and whipped with a black leather strap.

“Our mother found out and Hell hath no fury like an over-protective Mother. She cursed out her father and told him he would never see us again. I remember the old Man smiled and said he was glad because we were both brats who had been ruined by her. ‘You're a disgrace, Lorelei, and I hate your mother ever gave birth to you.’ Mother cried but she kept her word and we never spent any time in the old Man's presence again.”

“Why are you telling me this, Rory?” I wondered after a bout of silence plagued us without preamble.

“Well, I'm just making conversation, *lieblich*. We should be able to share childhood stories with one another, shouldn't we? It has nothing to do with the reason why I am into BDSM but every incident that happens in our lives shape us into the people we become, don't you agree?”

“Of course.” I wiped my mouth and set my napkin on the scant remains of food in my plate. “Is this where I am supposed to share with you and confess all my dirty little family secrets?”

Rory shook his head before he kissed my palm. “No, not at all. You share what you want to and I ask nothing from you in return. I only tell you what I have because I feel like I can trust you. When I am ready, I will tell you my secrets but not until then, do you understand? If I don’t think you can handle a simple story of a beating at the hands of my grandfather then I certainly wouldn’t share something with you that would eventually drive you away. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I do. More than you think.”

“Good then it’s about time we went to bed. We still have a lot to do and our flight to Paris is tomorrow evening. I don’t want you to forget anything and it also gives you a chance to say your last goodbyes before we leave.”

Miraculously, I didn’t fight with him. Instead, I stood and allowed him to interlace his left hand with my right one and guide us to the bedroom. Once there, we both removed our robes and got into bed. He spooned me from the back which was quite a reassurance. I enjoyed the heat and the lean hardness of his body. I felt safe and it allowed me to close my eyes.

Before a single coherent thought could form in my head, I was asleep.



ALTHOUGH I SHOULD HAVE BEEN preoccupied with double checking I’d packed everything to make our trip to Paris, I had already done it over a week ago. My Kindle Fire, iPad and iPod were already packed in my carryon bag along with a change of clothes, a few sample toiletries and a change of undergarments.

Most of our luggage and important items, including all of Trésor’s personal effects had been shipped over to the house in Vaucresson. All I had kept was a journal from my sister’s personal items as it was a guiding tool to help me along with the first part of the book I had decided to write regardless of the warnings given to me by both Rory and Nicole.

I knew they meant well but they hadn’t lost a sister either—I did—and I was going to do what I wanted to do whether it was right or wrong. All their warnings had done amounted to stirring the journalist inside of me into action. I hated injustice and I despised cover-ups. Who ever had done my sister harm would pay for their crime though I was unsure whether that would be at the hands of the criminal justice system. If worse came to worse, I was not above vigilante justice or hiring someone to take care of it

for me. I didn't believe in the Bible but in this case, I certainly considered an "eye for an eye" mentality quite sufficient and just.

I'd barely written more than a few pages as it wasn't very different from writing a book than an investigative article except length. I would divide it into chapters later on. For the time being, I was merely focused on getting the story documented and would also talk about her relationship with Rory and how it weaved into her modeling career.

I hadn't gotten anywhere near the whole situation with Rory and his brother as I was still writing about her earlier career. I knew I probably wouldn't broach that part of her life until after the funeral and that gave me a sense of solace I didn't have to tackle it at this point when it still lingered in my mind constantly. It gnawed at me and I no longer felt comfortable talking to anyone about it because everyone else had moved on. Though they would listen, I couldn't burden anyone else with my problems. It just seemed wrong; my guilt ate away at me and it was my cross to bear alone. I had done Trésor wrong and I had been selfish therefore it only made sense her death would affect me so deeply.

If I had been a good sister, I would have made her tell me about her life. I would have picked up the phone and called her. She wanted to share so much and I'd decided not to be there because we had plenty of time to repair our relationship. Many minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years because we were both young and nothing would ever happen to us before our time. Yes, we'd had lots of time until we had none and I couldn't turn back the clock, unfortunately.

My Ulysse Nardin phone rang and I immediately assumed it was either Rory or Nicole therefore I didn't bother to check the caller ID.

"Hello?" I answered after a few seconds.

"Aurélie?" a female voice inquired.

"Yes?"

"It's...Kaysa. I was wondering if you would like to come by to have lunch with me? If you prefer not to meet here at the apartment then I could schedule us a table at Tavern on the Green. It's convenient for both you and me," she explained in a rushed voice.

"Lunch at Tavern is fine, sweetheart. Is...everything okay?"

"Never been better. I just wanted to see you before you left for Paris. I'm sure Jason and I will be there for the funeral but he also has business in France so we will probably pop in and out. We might not see each other."

“Okay. Well, what time do you want to meet?”

“One o’clock all right for you?”

“Yes, that is okay.”

Kaysa cleared her throat. “Good, I will see you then. Goodbye.”

I set my phone down and wondered how she’d managed to acquire my number but what difference did it make? I had a feeling this would be a major breakthrough in the case and hopefully work towards pushing me forward in my investigation. I needed all the help I could get at this point.



I DRESSED EXTREMELY CASUAL FOR lunch at Tavern on the Green or as casual as I could get without sticking out like a sore thumb. I wore an asymmetrical Versace dress, tights and black Chanel booties that were only four-inches as I had no wish to slip and fall on the icy streets of Manhattan.

A cab dropped me off shortly before one o’clock at the ostentatious restaurant and I immediately consulted the Maitre D’ who gladly showed me to our table. “Mrs. Compston should be with you shortly.”

“Thank you,” I replied as I shrugged off my black wool coat and hung it on the back of my chair.

I sat down and our waiter immediately came to the table. “Would you like anything to drink while you wait?”

“Yes, an Evian over ice is fine,” I replied before I began to peruse the menu.

Although Tavern wasn’t one of my favorites, it sounded as if Kaysa expected me to agree with a public meeting. What the hell was she hiding or did she know something about my sister’s death I didn’t? I couldn’t quite figure it out.

I didn’t have much time to wonder as I spotted her walking towards our table followed by the Maitre D’. She looked elegant and chic as usual in a beige Chanel classic suit, sheer white thigh highs and beige Mary Jane Tribute pumps. Her blonde hair, sleek and pale, was cut into the perfect bob and complimented her alabaster complexion and cerulean blue eyes. She looked every bit the society wife and no one would have suspected the lifestyle she truly lived with her husband and the man who would have been my brother-in-law had I stayed with Grayson.

I smiled brightly as she sat down before she asked the hovering waiter for a Bellini. She looked at me with my Evian water and stopped him as she said, “Can you make that two Bellinis, please?”

“Wow. Are you ordering for me now, too?” I inquired though my voice continued to be light.

A look of trepidation passed through her eyes. “I’m sorry...if you didn’t want one—”

“Kaysa, it’s fine.” I placed my hands in my lap as I met her gaze. “How have you been?”

“Fine. Jason is out of town on a business trip and when he’s away, he allows me to be myself. It’s a break from the twenty-four-seven TPE and I can feel like a human being again,” she explained as she traced the table cloth with a perfectly manicured finger.

“So, you’re still in tact? Your mind, I mean?”

She laughed a little though her blue eyes wandered away from mine. “Barely. I manage but it gets hard. Sometimes, I disappear inside myself and it gets harder to come back from the brink when I finally have freedom. I am so afraid one day I will wake up and realize I have lost my mind entirely. It’s a scary reality to contemplate.”

“Why did you set up this meeting, Kaysa?”

Her eyes finally met mine. “Did you know I graduated from the University of Heidelberg? I have a degree in Social Sciences and there are just huge gaps in my brain where I don’t remember what I studied? The classes I took or the students I befriended in Germany? Sometimes I slip into German when I am speaking to Jason and he gets so angry...I honestly don’t know how much longer I can live like this, Aurélie.” She grabbed her gold choker chain/collar. “I don’t know how much longer I can wear this before I start having full panic attacks about getting someone to remove it from me once and for all.”

Her tone deeply disturbed me. “I don’t know what you want from me, Kaysa.”

She reached down to her beige Birken and pulled something out of it before she grabbed my hand underneath the table and pressed it into my palm before closing my fingers over it.

“I know Rory doesn’t want you to write the book about Trésor. I heard him and Jason talking a couple days ago, just before he left for his business

trip. They talk all the time around me—him and his friends—because they think I am a blank slate already.

“I don’t want your pity, I *chose* this life. I have to keep telling myself that. It’s not the same as being a sex slave or being abducted from some far off Republic in the Caucasus. I grew up in a Western country to a middle-class family with good humanistic values who loved me and treated me with the utmost respect. Everyone is damaged in some way once they become an adult and I just put my own situation down to...faulty wiring. There must be something wrong with *me* if I want to live this way.”

Kaysa paused as the waiter set down our Bellinis’. “Ladies, feel free to consult the menu and I shall be back to take your orders shortly.”

I swigged from mine as I watched Kaysa down hers in several gulps. “Don’t worry, I’ll order another one when he comes back.”

“What’s on this—” I looked down at the device in my palm, “—flash drive, honey?”

“It’s my journal. I have kept one religiously since I began...my journey...with Severin. He’s still the love of my life you know. I miss him even now. I would rather be his toilet slave than to stay with Jason but he has refused to take me back for such purposes. His last toilet slave, Ellie, she turned him off them for life. The stupid bitch killed herself because he told her she disgusted him.”

“I’m sorry...toilet...slave?” I inquired out loud.

Kaysa pursed her lips. “Use your imagination or better yet ask Rory when you get home. Just don’t tell him you had lunch with me. I don’t want it to get out we were seen consorting with one another like a couple of close girlfriends. You are a reporter after all and I am giving you something that will make you millions of dollars. It’s my life story you can turn into a book. As long as you change all the names and hide enough about my family background they won’t find out it was me. All I ask is that we split the proceeds by half and I trust you to be honest with how much money you make?”

I sipped from my Bellini again. “What do you plan to do with the money, Kaysa?”

She leaned over towards me and said in a soft voice, “I plan to get away. Buy a little place in Sweden, maybe Denmark and just disappear. I don’t want to live my life like this anymore. I’m tired...and I am starting to get old. Soon he will dispatch me anyway.”

“How old are you if you don’t mind me asking—”

“Thirty-eight.”

“I would have never known,” I replied before I attempted another smile.

“I have good genes and have never had to resort to plastic surgery. Needless to say, I am done with this whole life. I want to start again.”

The waiter came back. “Are you two ready to order?”

“Yes, we are. I will have the Lobster Bisque and another Bellini, please.”

I merely looked at the menu as I said, “I will have the Maryland Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes please.”

He grabbed our menus and I waited until he was out of hearing distance. “Listen, I inherited some money from Trésor. I can get you enough now to get away. I can continue to wire you money once you are settled somewhere. Why wait? Plus, once this book comes out, don’t you think people in the community are going to put two and two together? They aren’t stupid, you know that. It might just be too late.”

Kaysa looked around the restaurant in anguish. “Where would I go?”

“Do you have access to your passport?”

“Not my American one, no.”

“Then use your German passport or go on down to the Swedish consulate and get one from them. Isn’t your father an ethnic Swede and don’t you still have your birth certificate? Can anyone there translate your birth certificate from German to Swedish?”

“I can, I speak both languages, but I don’t have to because I still have my German passport and it is valid for another year—”

“Then use it as soon as we end our lunch. Go to the airport, purchase a ticket and leave with the clothes on your back. You have my phone number and it isn’t going to change. Just keep in touch.”

“But...I don’t have any money other than Jason’s credit cards.”

I reached into my purse, pulled out three separate checkbooks and immediately wrote her a two thousand dollar check from my Chase account. I then wrote her another two thousand dollar check from an account I had at Bank of America and yet another account I had at Manhattan Credit Union.

“That’s six grand which is nothing. That is why as soon as you figure out where you are going to live, I need your info so I can wire you fifty thousand euros—”

“—kroner, you mean. Denmark doesn't use the Euro and has no plans to adopt it as far as I know.”

“So you're going to Denmark?”

“Yes, there are plenty of places to hide there and I don't have any family ties. The first place Jason would send a private investigator would be Germany or Sweden. I can't go back to either of my native homelands.”

The rest of lunch, we spent planning her escape and she promised me she would cash the checks and go straight to the airport.

By the time I arrived home from our lunch, I rushed to my laptop and immediately booted it up. I began to check my accounts and true to her word, the money had been removed from all three. I immediately plugged the flash drive in a USB port and clicked to open it on my computer. There were MS Word documents, almost one hundred of them, chronologically arranged by month and year. I opened the most recent month and realized with stunning clarity she'd documented everything that had happened to her at the hands of Jason Compston. Her last entry was dated that very same day.

My phone vibrated and I grabbed it before I stared down at the text message: *“Able to get same day flight for cheap. Only a third of what you gave me. Haha. Will be in touch with account and router number ASAP. Thank you. K.”*

I smiled and couldn't help as a tear slid down my cheek. I still planned to investigate my sister's murder and would continue to actively work on it but for the time being, I'd helped someone who was still alive and able for me to save.

I knew this wouldn't bring my sister back but it sure as hell felt good to *do* something instead of just talking about an issue. My conscience felt better, lighter and clearer than it'd felt in years.

Chapter Eighteen

Rory



RORY CAME HOME TO FIND Aurélie in a particularly good mood. She embraced him and kissed him on the lips and he buried himself in her scent. He still loved everything about her even now.

“So, are you ready to leave for France, soon?”

“Absolutely although...well, Manhattan has kind of become my adopted home and I will miss the frenetic pace and the crazy people.”

“Paris has crazy people too so not much changes other than the language and you happen to be fluent in it so it shouldn’t be too big of a deal,” he replied as he ran his hands through her silky tresses.

“It’s not. What about you? Are you looking forward to getting back to Europe?”

“Yes, very much. I always start to miss it after a while.”

“And what about you?” Her green-gray eyes were bright as she leaned into him. “Do you know the ‘language of love’?”

“Both the international one and French...fluently I might add in both cases.”

Aurélie raised a perfect eyebrow. “I didn’t know that.”

“You didn’t ask but I am telling you now so why are you trying to make a big deal out of something trivial? Fine, I know German, English, French and Catalan fluently. Catalonia is my favorite region in Spain and I have spent extensive time there. Plus, I make it my business to know the languages fluently where I have businesses.”

She turned away from him and walked to the window that overlooked Central Park. “So you don’t have any clubs in Scandinavia?”

“I do but Gabriel is half-Norwegian so it makes it a bit easier for me. He and Severin handle the Scandinavian clubs as they are clubs he decided to open on his own though we both have equal ownership of everything. He is much more language savvy than me. He, in addition, to knowing German, English, Catalan, Castilian and French also speaks Danish and Swedish. Norwegian is a breeze for him because the languages are so much alike: Danish and Norwegian that is,” he replied as he walked over and held her from behind.

“I’ve decided not to pursue the book.” Aurélie turned toward him and smiled shyly. “I don’t want it to open old wounds and it simply isn’t worth the headache it would cause.”

“I’m only glad you are starting to see sense. I loved Trésor with all my heart and although I was not in love with her, I don’t want all the hurt and pain caused by her death to start eating away at us. Does that make sense?”

She slipped her arms around his neck and looked deeply into his eyes. “Yes, I understand where both you and Nikki are coming from but that doesn’t mean I have to like it. She was my baby sister and I know I need to let this go but writing her story would have been extremely cathartic and a healthy way to say goodbye...and finally let her ghost rest. I would have let her go. I don’t want her haunting our relationship for as long as we are together. The thought would be unbearable.”

“I agree whole heartedly. It’s part of the reason why we have to leave here. There are too many memories and it would be nice to be able to start again.” He ran his hands through her hair before he touched her face ever so softly. “I am not trying to erase anything that happened between your sister and I—please, don’t get me wrong—but I don’t want what we have constantly marred by what I shared with her either. Do you understand?”

“You have to know you and I are not the same as Trésor and I. To be honest, this is the first time I have ever been a relationship like this so you have to allow me to make errors and mistakes. I don’t always know what I am doing but I promise you I will try my best and when ever you don’t like something I do, just tell me. Remember our safe word is ‘no’. Please don’t ever doubt I won’t have your best interests at heart all the time.”

Aurélie smiled again before she melted into his warm embrace. “You make me so happy. Thank you.”

“Now, before you start the waterworks, remember we have to leave in an hour. Our flight is this evening but thanks to the unpredictability of New

York traffic and an impending snow storm, it's better to be safe than sorry," he responded as he held her close, inhaling her perfect and seductive scent.

"In that case, I am going to check my bags again just to make sure I haven't forgotten anything important."

She dashed off and Rory was left with his own thoughts again.

He could barely believe what he had allowed to happen but it was what he truly wanted. He'd been in love with the idea of possessing Aurélie for so long, now that he had her, his only thought was he might lose her over bullshit.

She was an amazing woman with a gorgeous face and body, an intelligent mind and someone who wasn't afraid to stand up to Severin or himself. In truth, the wholeness of her mind, body and soul wasn't what fascinated him but what kept him tethered to her. The sheer control she held over herself seemed to translate to the power she had over him and he found himself transfixed, enthralled and enraptured with everything she had to offer.

The material gifts he lavished upon her meant nothing because money had never really had any intrinsic value. He'd grown up surrounded by it and when he became of age, he and Severin were obsessed with keeping it to cultivate the lifestyle they chose to live. The clubs, his hotel in Vegas, Severin's hotel in Monte Carlo—all these ideas seemed like no-brainers to them. They were both highly intelligent, as if two halves of one human being and because they worked in tandem, everything came together effortlessly and smoothly.

Rory's only hope was Severin would never blame Aurélie for something that had happened naturally. Although once an enthusiast, he didn't find the whole bondage and sadism part all that appealing anymore. He loved the domination and submission but purely for bedroom purposes only. It gave him great pleasure her life didn't revolve around his and she very much had her own friends and interests and could think for herself.

He'd warned her against writing the book, not because he wanted to be a dominating asshole but because he truly thought her life was at stake. The imbeciles at NYPD and their Medical Examiner's office had officially ruled Trésor's murder "Death by Misadventure" but he didn't buy this for one moment.

Her body had been shipped to France and his own private team of doctors, both consisting of French and German physicians he'd attended

university with, were going over her body with a fine-toothed comb. Already, they'd found out she was six weeks pregnant but the report he received from the NYPD Medical Examiner's Office had not listed anything about this predicament.

When Rory called to complain to both Detectives' O'Reilly and Wozniak, they were pretty glib about the situation. They didn't have the Medical Examiner check for pregnancy because he insisted she was on birth control.

The pregnancy itself was a reason alone someone might have murdered her and thus he'd given samples of every male he knew who'd ever had contact with Trésor to his team who were doing their own autopsy in France.

Rory's Ulysse Nardin began to ring and he quickly picked it up. "Hello?"

"Hey, it's me. What time are you and Aurélie leaving for the airport?" Severin inquired in quick German.

"In about an hour...why do you ask?"

"I want to come by and say goodbye. Is that a crime?"

Rory felt a migraine coming on. He always had a migraine when he spoke to Severin and they were getting more and more frequent. He'd seen his doctor earlier that month to make sure he wasn't going to have a stroke or didn't have a brain tumor they were starting to occur so often.

Alas, his doctor had called him only to tell him it was all in his head—literally—and prescribed the latest pharmaceutical drug to cure migraines before he'd sent his American medical insurance carrier a hefty bill. He would check with his European doctor when they arrived in France just to make sure his American one hadn't missed anything.

"Listen, I need to take my new migraine drug but feel free to come over. We're on a tight schedule and we *must* leave in an hour. When are you going back to Los Angeles?" Rory wondered off hand.

"Soon but I feel like I should stay around here for a while. You left quite the mess when you stole Grayson's fiancée and your little fix-it solution didn't work. Now I have to find him the perfect submissive because he doesn't *want* Claudette," Rory explained in a sarcastic voice.

"*Scheiße. Was zum Teufel ist los mit Claudette?*" he questioned his brother in angry German.

Severin laughed wickedly. “What *isn't* wrong with Claudette, Rory? She's too blonde, too French, *too* submissive. I am afraid I have ruined her but...alas, Jason said he would take her.”

“What? Why does Jason need someone? He has Kaysa for Christ's sake!”

“He *had* Kaysa...she isn't at home and once her lunch date went over the allotted time, he received a phone call from his head of staff. She didn't come home and doesn't plan to...sounds to me like she did a runner but none of the money in their bank accounts is missing. She had to have help,” Severin explained in a neutral voice.

“How is he so sure she won't come back?”

“Well, someone of her likeness was spotted at the airport. I had our little hacker do a little rundown and she found her leaving from Newark International Airport. I didn't ask her to do a trace because it's about time she got out of the life. She's tired...she was pretty exhausted when I handed her over to Jason but she thought he would be a way out...not degrade her more than I ever did.”

It was Rory's turn to laugh as he grabbed his migraine prescription bottle. “I find that hard to believe.”

“The difference is huge, brother. She was in love with me but she never loved Jason. You'd be surprised how much you will put up with for someone you love that you wouldn't tolerate under normal circumstances. Take your little princess for instance. Why doesn't she object to you sharing her with me? Do you think if Grayson had suggested they have a threesome with his brother she would have been as eager?”

Rory swallowed his pill with water from a bottle of Pellegrino. “Point taken. Listen, I have to go but remember, we are on a tight schedule—”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it. I'll be over shortly.”

He hung up the phone and turned to notice Aurélie as she breezed through with a slight smile on her face. “Do you mind if Severin stops by? He just wants to say goodbye.”

She stopped walking and looked at him intently before she rushed over and touched his head. “Another migraine, huh?”

“Yeah. I told him he could because we won't be seeing him for a while and I didn't think you would mind,” he replied.

Aurélie played with strands of his hair. “I don't but...promise me when we get to Paris you'll have this whole ‘migraine’ thing checked out? They

can be dangerous you know.”

“Yes, I am aware of that. My doctor here did an MRI and he said it came back clean. People in my family are prone to them but other than the occasional discomfort and inconvenience caused by them, I feel great. The doctor said it’s probably stress...the death of Trésor, et cetera. You know how my brother can be...sometimes he’s too much for me to handle and—”

“I said it was fine. The real ‘fine’...not the fucked up, insecure, neurotic and emotional kind, okay? We won’t be seeing him for a while and you’ve spent a lot of time together lately. Let him say goodbye.”

Her soft hands slipped to his face and he grabbed them and held them in his own. “Are you sure? Shit, I just asked you that but...it would kill me if this interfered with anything.”

“His visit has nothing to interfere with, Rory. We’re leaving for the airport in less than an hour. Why don’t you crack open a bottle of Cristal and we can share it and toast to new memories before we leave for the airport? We’ll wait for Severin and all have a drink before the driver gets here,” Aurélie suggested in a seductive voice he couldn’t possibly say no to and immediately made him melt like putty.

“Fine, I’m off to the kitchen to crack open the champagne. Can you get the door when he comes then? I had a feeling he was already on his way.”

“Sure, I’ll get the door and I’ll check to make sure you’ve packed everything you planned to take in your overnight bag too.”

Rory walked to the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of Cristal from the fridge. Sometimes, like at that very moment, he couldn’t believe how lucky he’d gotten. He truly had the best of both worlds with a sophisticated and intelligent—not to mention drop dead gorgeous—woman in public and the perfect submissive in the bedroom.

Life couldn’t be better and he had a hard time believing anything that happened in Paris could spoil their life together because they were truly made for one another.

Chapter Nineteen



I'D JUST FINISHED DOUBLE CHECKING all of Rory's personal effects when the doorbell rang. He and Severin were twins after all therefore he must have known his brother had been in transit when he'd made the phone call to him.

I tried not to listen in but the more I was around them, the more German I heard and it brought back swatches of Alsatian for me. When I really thought about it, the dialects weren't so different after all. It was just odd because they'd been raised in Munich, the biggest city in the Bavarian region of Germany but they didn't speak the dialect. Instead they spoke high German, a version of the language understood in every part of the country and could reasonably be understood in not only every part of the country but in Austria, and most of the German-speaking region of Switzerland.

It was quite distinct and I'd grown up with an ear for it as my father spoke Bavarian, Alsatian and French to us as children though neither Trésor nor I cared to learn Bavarian therefore my knowledge of the language only extended to a few pleasantries and that was it.

I ran to the double doors and opened them before I greeted Severin with a kiss to a cheek and ushered him inside.

His right hand grabbed my left arm and he frog-marched me to the guest suite as soon as the front doors closed.

I snatched my arm from his grasp and turned to him as he gently closed the door. "What the hell is this about and who do you think you are treating me like one of your slaves?"

“Don’t play stupid with me,” he hissed. “Kaysa had help and I know it was you! Did you help her get away?”

“Is that what this whole melodramatic episode is about?” I inquired. “Yes, I did help her. She asked me to meet her for lunch. We dined at Tavern on the Green and she proceeded to tell me she couldn’t take it anymore. I felt bad for her and so I gave her some money. She still had her German passport—why is that? I assumed Jason would have taken it from her for that very reason.”

Severin stood against the door and watched me with cold blue-green eyes. “He did but our safe word *was* her German passport. I accompanied her down to the Consulate myself and we got it replaced. I vouched for her and told the Consulate people it was stolen. The passport Jason has isn’t valid so it makes no difference and no way is the German Consulate going to give him any information on one of *their* citizens, regardless whether they were married or not.”

“She didn’t go back to Germany.” I looked away from his gaze. “Kaysa didn’t tell me where she was going and I didn’t ask. I just gave her a few checks from different bank accounts. She cashed them and disappeared. I received a text from her when she was at the airport awaiting her flight but that’s it.”

“I really don’t care she’s left Jason. He’s an incorrigible bastard and the poor woman wasn’t getting any younger. He planned to have her sterilized next week after yet another ‘oopsie’ on his part.”

I finally met his eyes. “She’s pregnant?”

“Yes, but the baby isn’t his—it’s mine.”

I held my right hand in my left fist to prevent myself from showing any unnecessary emotion. “I...I can’t tell you where she is but she will be in contact with a bank account I can wire money. If...I mean, I don’t know if you trust me but...I would give anything you gave me to her and I wouldn’t keep any of it—”

“Don’t worry about Kaysa, she has a fund I’ve kept for her and I will allow her access when she decides to contact me. You tell her to call me and she will follow your instructions. She’s in love with me and has been for a very long time. She also knows I wouldn’t dare force her back into a situation that has made her uncomfortable. It isn’t my style.”

I walked toward him though I stopped several feet away. “Why did you act so angry with me if you...approve of what I have done?”

Severin shook his head. “I don’t approve of anything—it’s a one off. You can’t become some kind of savior to these women, Aurélie. This is the life they have chosen for themselves and you’re no Mother Teresa. I allowed you to get away with it this time because of the mitigating circumstances but if you do something like this again, there will be no mercy for you...and remember, with me you don’t *have* a safe word.”

“Are you threatening me?” I wondered in a cool tone.

He laughed out loud as he opened the door and we both faced Rory, a concerned look on his handsome face.

“You two okay in there?”

“Just fine,” Severin said before he walked by his brother and strode to the sitting room.

Rory walked over to me and handed a champagne flute to me. “What was that about?”

I walked over to the elaborately made-up bed I had never slept in and patted a spot beside me as I sat down. He strode over and proceeded to sit next to me. Our thighs touched and I could feel the heat reverberate through his body.

“Listen, I don’t want this to come between us so I am just going to tell you now.” I paused and decided to keep the USB flash drive Kaysa had given me to myself. “I had lunch with Kaysa today at Tavern on the Green and she...well, she seemed extremely depressed and close to losing a firm grip on reality. Her frame of mind was downright suicidal and she couldn’t stand being with Jason for another minute. I gave her six thousand dollars to get away and she left right after our lunch date. I know where she went... vaguely but...I can’t tell you that.”

Rory took my hand not holding the champagne flute into his own and kissed my beautifully naked fingers. “Well, you did what your conscience told you to do and that is always a good thing. What’s wrong and why do you feel like you’ve done something unsavory?”

I looked into his warm aquamarine eyes. “I don’t feel like I have done anything wrong but...Severin disclosed to me she was pregnant and Jason planned for her to have an abortion and a tubal ligation next week. He also told me the baby she carried—sorry, is carrying—belongs to him. He’s the father of her unborn child.”

Rory stared back at me and a ripple of dissatisfaction passed through his face before it disappeared. “Well, that’s certainly interesting. I didn’t realize

they were getting together for old time's sake although...as she was his slave before Jason's wife and the man wasn't exactly the most careful with whom he allowed to fuck Kaysa when they had their numerous orgies, it doesn't surprise me."

"Don't the couples usually use protection?"

"Sometimes...technically, I'm supposed to tell you that safe sex is *always* practiced but human nature, common sense and drugs don't usually mix. Jason is, more often than not, always high on something. When I first met him, his poisons were marijuana and cocaine. He's been through various stints of rehab and although he no longer does cocaine, he injured his shoulder playing tennis and the doctor immediately prescribed Vicodin along with physical therapy. I don't have to tell you how that went especially since the injury happened over eleven months ago and he is still refilling his prescriptions regularly," Rory explained before he ran his hands through his silky hair.

I leaned over and kissed his lips softly. His fingers circled around my long slender neck and brought me closer to him as he deepened our kiss which just a flicker of tongue. My whole body felt alight and if we weren't less than twenty minutes from leaving for the airport, I would have allowed him to take me regardless whether Severin waited patiently for us in the sitting room or not.

I broke our kiss and he clutched me to him in a grip that had me spellbound. This man was more than attractive and sexy, he made me feel human in a way no one had done in a very long time. He recognized the spirit inside me that wasn't much different from his own and somehow, we managed to work. I loved him indescribably and he moved me in so many different ways, I couldn't list them all.

Yes, he had his flaws but underneath, he was a decent human being and I thanked what ever deity was responsible for bringing us together for surely we needed each other, now more than ever.

I cleared my throat. "Well, we better say goodbye to your brother before we leave. It's the least we can do, huh? We have plenty of time to explore one another's bodies one hundred different ways when we get to Paris, don't you think?"

His slender right index finger traced my jaw. "Absolutely. Let's go."



RORY AND I ARRIVED IN Paris on a cold, December day and a blanket of snow.

The driver packed our carryon into the trunk while we waited in the backseat, clinging to one another, feeling jetlagged and a bit worse for wear. It was an exhilarating emotion to be back in the land of my birth and on home soil. My parents had invited us over for dinner and as it was late morning, we had more than enough time to get settled and rest a bit before that occasion.

We lay back in the private car Rory had hired while he stroked my hair lovingly. “*Liebling*, if I tell you something, will you promise not to get angry?”

“Why would I be upset? If it’s a...secret of some kind then we’ll just deal with it together, won’t we?”

“Yes, we will but it’s not that kind of a secret.” He continued to lazily stroke my hair and as I leaned into his body, I couldn’t see his eyes but his body language told me everything I needed to know. He was slightly tense and a bit on edge but nothing earth shatteringly different was wrong with him.

“I’m waiting,” I teased in a low voice.

“I had another autopsy done on Trésor’s body. Now, before you start screaming at me, I didn’t feel like the NYPD did all that great of a job and as the County is overworked, facing budget cuts, and what ever else is happening in the city, I wanted your sister to be checked from head to toe,” he explained in soft, cultured French.

“*Pourquoi serais-je fâché?*” I inquired as I slipped right back in my second native language. “You’re just making sure the Medical Examiner’s Office in the States did a decent job—that is hardly a reason for me to be angry or displeased with you.”

“Yeah but...they’ve already found things we innately knew. For instance, neither one of us fell for the whole story Trésor killed herself. It turned out she didn’t, not unless she was right-handed and she wasn’t. Based upon the knife wound, the killer was right handed. That comes from a hand expert I attended school with who is consulting on the case.”

I finally sat up and turned toward him to see the worry on his face, etched in strained lines across his forehead and his usually sensual mouth

turned down in a look that conveyed worry and concern for me.

“Are they sure? She couldn’t have possibly...?”

“No. My expert is ninety-nine point ninety-nine percent sure the knife wound was *not* self-inflicted.” He paused and his fingers pinched the bridge of his nose. “There’s something else.”

“What is it?” I wondered out loud.

“She was...pregnant,” he whispered though his eyes didn’t meet mine.

My hands went to his and grabbed them before I squeezed tightly. “My God, Rory, I am so sorry.”

My lover stared at me as a lone tear trailed down his left eye. “What are you sorry over? The baby wasn’t mine. It was Severin’s.”

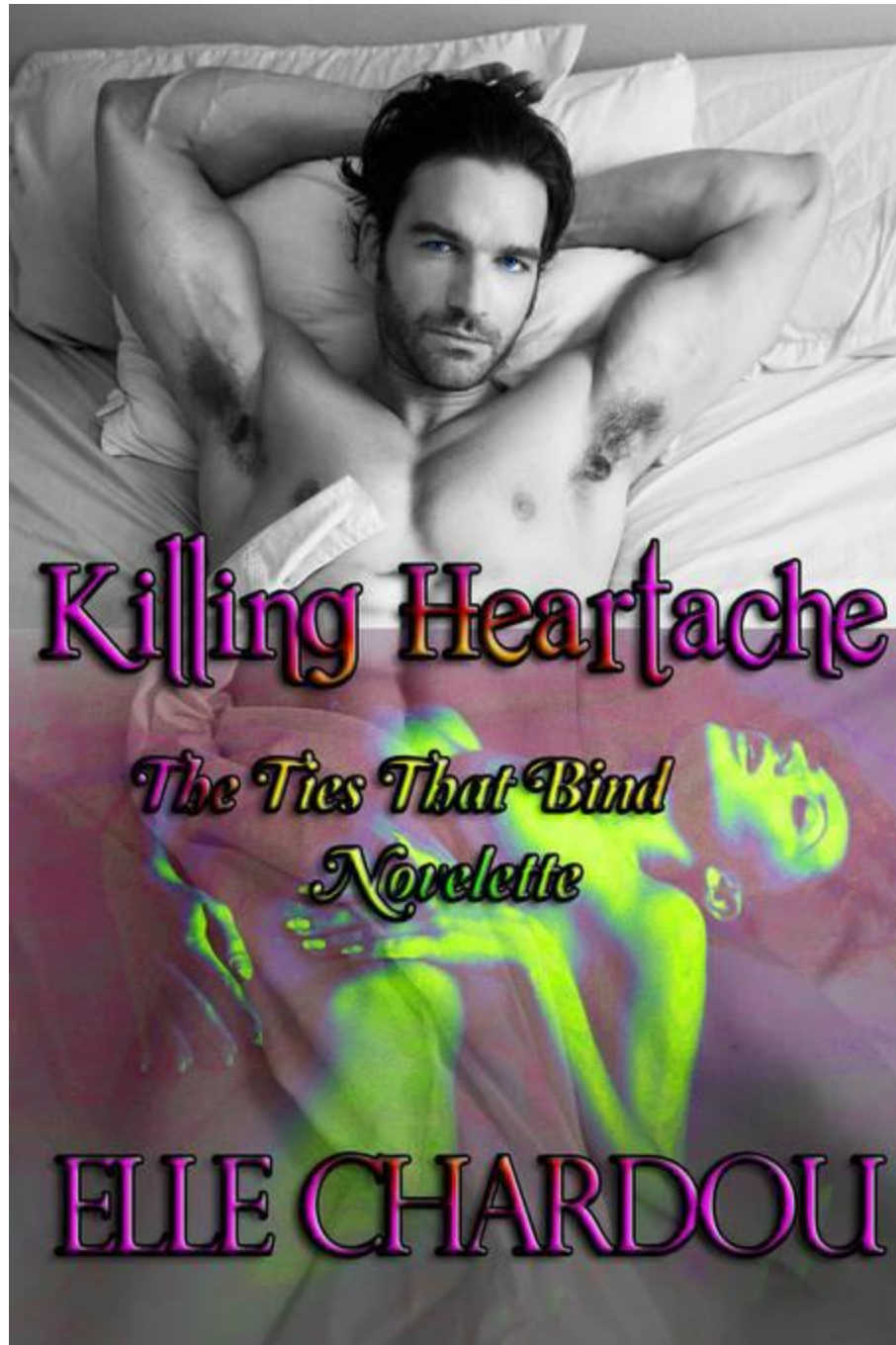
I clutched my chest as my heart thundered inside. “What does this mean for us? Do you no longer trust me to do something like that to you too?”

Rory slid his arms around my waist and pulled me close. “Don’t be silly. Nothing changes between us. I don’t even know what the circumstances were behind the pregnancy or what happened. They’re scientists and doctors but they can’t tell us the complete story from tests and DNA samples. To be honest, there are only two people who know what happened and one of them is dead. Severin might be willing to tell but I’m so angry at him right now, I don’t want to know enough to contact him and ask about it.”

I clung to him and inhaled his seductive masculine scent. This could destroy us if we let it but I was determined to hold on just as steadfast as him. How could he have held it together knowing what he knew? It couldn’t have been easy for him and although I wanted to bury any thoughts of the investigation in the back of my mind, it came to the forefront yet again. It widened the net for those who could have been responsible for my sister’s death and Astrid was no longer the lone suspect.

There were so many questions bombarding my brain, and it became crystal clear there was so much more to Trésor’s story than met the eye. In fact, I had a feeling I had barely scratched the surface on my sister’s lifestyle. However, I had a feeling all the answers to my questions were buried right under my nose and within her journals.

Killing Heartache



OceanofPDF.com

December

Vaucresson, Ile-de-France



OceanofPDF.com

Aurélie



ALTHOUGH THE RIDE FROM CHARLES De Gaulle airport should have been awkward after Rory released his bombshell, it wasn't. All the questions which had swirled through my mind after he'd told me what had happened and what the tests had proven, it only made me curious as to what kind of relationship Trésor really had with both Rory and Severin.

I was tempted to ask if there had been some kind of shared arrangement but my sister's funeral was scheduled in a couple of days and it just didn't seem like the right time to probe such questions. Regardless what I managed to find out, she was still dead and the killer, free as a bird. He or she might even have the gall to show up at her funeral and I would be none the wiser.

Once the driver reached Rory's home in Vaucresson, a very wealthy western suburb in France, the actual residence took my breath away. It was three stories and built of off-white, sand-washed brick. It was an older piece of property he'd bought and upgraded on his own.

We walked inside and I was greeted with a large foyer followed by an open-house plan which included a gorgeous dining room and sitting room, an unbelievable kitchen, and a terrace perfect for entertaining or watching others as they frolicked in the outdoors heated swimming pool.

It had begun to snow several days before we arrived therefore Rory had the pool covered but the house itself was still a beautiful and unique piece of architecture never the less. As if the backyard wasn't a revelation enough, there was also an in-built movie theater, a comfortable den filled

with a library full of books, and a two car garage which housed a black Porsche Cayenne and a silver Range Rover.

Upstairs, there were five bedrooms, including a master suite which came with its own bathroom that included a deep sunken bathtub, a separate shower which could fit two people quite easily, his and her dressing areas and an enclosed toilet. The place had recently been cleaned from top to bottom and there wasn't a speck of dust or an item out of order.

Rory took me on a tour and informed me one of the bedrooms was a mini-gym, filled with a treadmill, an elliptical machine, one state-of-the-art stationary bike and a few pieces of weight lifting equipment I would probably never learn how to use. He saved the last bedroom to show me as the pièce de résistance. The whole room was made completely of glass and would be my new office.

He'd recently purchased a whole new bureau and desk set, Persian carpets were laid throughout and there was a comfy cream sofa in the corner for when I just wanted to rest and observe the view.

"Do you like it?" he inquired expectantly with aquamarine eyes that danced like a child's.

I could never get sick of looking at all that male perfection. Though he was dressed in completely black, his body was still something to behold. It suited his healthy alabaster skin, dark brown hair with its natural black cherry highlights, blue-green eyes and model features.

I embraced him and held on tight. "I love it. I can admit to suffering from envy as this is Nicole's world and she grew up surrounded by all of this but never in my wildest dreams did I ever believe a home like this would belong to me...here in Vaucresson."

My words caught in my throat before I cleared my air passage and breathed deeply. The smell of freshly cut flowers assailed my senses and although the "glass room" as I liked to refer to it, was perpetually colder than the rest of the house, I knew it would be the perfect place to do my research.

We walked back downstairs and a tray of mini-baguette sandwiches along with two mugs filled with mulled wine greeted us in the sitting room. I sat down next to him and he handed me my mug which I immediately managed a tentative sip only to find out it was the perfect temperature for drinking.

“Listen, I know you are jet-lagged and very tired. Perhaps I should not have taken the liberty but I know it has been a while since you have seen Nicole. I invited both her and Renaud over to dinner tonight. I expect we will spend tomorrow with your parents as we need to discuss the details of the funeral arrangements. Your mother would like her to be buried next weekend. Do you think I was out of line for making such arrangements?”

I shook my head. “No. I thank you for doing this. It makes this whole situation that much easier on me. I thought just being here would allow everything to set in. The whole issue of my sister being dead and the funeral but being back here makes everything so much worse. It’s a lot harder than I thought it would be.”

I began to sob and Rory held me until my tears abated and felt like myself again. I had so much to look forward to. I hadn’t seen Nicole or Renaud in years and it would be nice to spend time with my French friends. Surely everything wouldn’t be horrible? I had to keep telling myself that lest I go crazy in the process.



AFTER A LONG SOAK IN the tub, I dressed in a gorgeous cerulean blue cap-sleeved bandage dress Rory had recently bought me and a pair of black Tribute Mary-Jane stilettos. I brushed my damp hair out and after fiddling with it for about five minutes, I finally decided to arrange it in a French Twist.

Rory walked into the bedroom and knelt behind me before he kissed my cheek softly. “Our guests should be here shortly but before you go downstairs, I wanted to let you know something that displeases me greatly but unfortunately, there isn’t much I can do about it.”

I turned around to face him. “What is it?”

“Well, you’re not going to like it any more than I do.”

I began to panic. Had he heard from my parents’? Were they okay? Did they not agree to the cremation? Had Trésor’s body been lost in transit to the Alsace-Lorraine region?

I stood to my feet. As I wore six-inch heels, we were almost at eye level. “I don’t understand.”

“Apparently Severin believes everything in New York is taken care of. Claudette is safely ensconced with Jason, Grayson is back on the market and all is well with Club X-Tasy. He isn’t needed there so he has decided to come back to Europe...indefinitely,” Rory explained as he ran a nervous hand through his hair. “I thought we would be free of him for a while but it just seems like the more I want to separate myself and form a life with you, the more people from my past keep popping up at the most inopportune moments.”

I breathed a sigh of relief and embraced Rory. “Is that all? It’s not your fault, *chéri*. He is a free man and did you really believe your brother would stay in Manhattan indefinitely? Regardless whether everything is settled or not, you’ll never know and to be honest, it isn’t our concern.”

“That’s not really the point. I have always needed my brother for support. In a way, you could almost say he’s always been my Dom if you like. For the first time in my life, I am perfectly happy and sated with you. I do not wish to have any outside interference. Believe me, if that is what I craved, we would be living in Munich right now near my parents’ instead of here in France.

“All I want is you. I want us to be happy and a self-contained unit. When I crave action at the club, we can visit together and what goes on between us stays between us. I do not wish to share you and I will never make you do anything you don’t want to but for the time being, that itch has been scratched. I don’t want to visit the clubs because we can play here at home. I have all the toys and devices needed for us to be quite happy when we’re in the mood for a little extra.”

“So how does this change if Severin is here?” I wondered out of genuine curiosity.

Rory had a habit of going off on a tangent but never really saying what he wanted to and I needed him to be clear and concise with me on this issue.

“Everything changes, *liebling*. All the sudden, we will be going to Club X-Tasy and my brother will insinuate himself into our lives. His home is in St. Cloud and that is only miles away from here. He’ll expect us to visit him and that new slave-whore he’s decided to bring along for kicks. I didn’t like Ingrid when I met her in New York and I sure as hell don’t like her now. She’s even worse than Kaysa and if she ever feels she will be in a position of power, believe me she’ll use it. You can’t trust women like that. They

play out the role of the victim but underneath they're like a goddamn viper snake. They're all ice and money is the only god those bitches pray to."

The doorbell rang and we both knew what that meant. "I suppose we will finish this conversation later."

"Yes, that would probably be best."

Rory smiled and when he did, he turned on the charm. My heart beat a little bit faster and that made me wish for the dinner to pass all the more quicker so I could finally enjoy him and he could have me any way he wanted.



"*CHÉRIE*, YOU LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL. I am so happy to see you again, you have no idea."

"Thank you, sweetheart. You look gorgeous and happy as well," I responded before I embraced my best friend.

Nicole had never been a slouch in the fashion department and black was the major color of her wardrobe. That night, she wore a fashionable black sheath dress which barely skimmed slim thighs and knee-high, leather stiletto boots which from the trademark red shoe soles were obviously Christian Louboutin. A slave to French fashion, her dress was no doubt Christian Dior, Chanel or Yves Saint Laurent.

Her honey blonde hair was worn in a high ponytail and the severe hairstyle made her ivory skin glow, her cerulean eyes that much deeper in color and her delicate yet eye-catching features that much more ethereal.

Renaud helped her slip out of a long black and luxuriously elegant fur coat. I almost gasped when I read the label: it was Jil Sander from her ready-to-wear collection.

"What? I have broadened my horizons in the fashion department," she replied casually. "It's goat and it was only several thousand euro. Most people assume it is faux-fur. I wouldn't dare wear my chinchilla. I would just die if one of those crazy PETA people splashed it with paint."

I smiled and realize although the years had passed and neither one of us were naïve young women in our twenties, my friend had barely changed. She still thought the world revolved around her and had little to do with people who weren't as offensively wealthy as she was. It always surprised

me when she'd married Renaud. Yes, he was good looking but her family had not liked his financial situation at all.

Though he worked for her father's family, he commanded twice as much as anyone else would have received for the job he did. This was mostly to keep him from trying to get a hold of any of her money. Her parents' were shrewd and they would protect their only daughter at all costs, even it meant employing her husband and him doing a job he was seriously under qualified to do.

We all sat at the dining room table, which sat six, for a formal dinner prepared by Rory's chef though he did not reside in-house. None of his help were live-in and they all worked part-time though he paid them for full time work so they would be eligible for their full pensions once they reached retirement age.

It was small details like this which made me love him all the more. He truly cared about people and despite his harsh exterior, once you reached his heart, he was pure emotion. It made it understandable why he let so few people into his life in the first place.

We made small talk, mostly about the French economy and avoided personal subjects at all costs. The death of Trésor loomed over dinner like a black cloak none of us could shake but not one of us brought up her impending funeral either.

"I hope you plan to be around for a while. You two aren't thinking of going back to the States any time soon?" Renaud inquired in polite French.

The king of double-talk, I knew exactly what he meant. He would have made an excellent politician had he been intelligent enough to apply to one of France's elite universities. Unfortunately, he'd gone to a mid-level university and had a degree in general business but he was far from the sharpest tool in the shed. His looks had always helped him through life and he'd thoroughly used them to his advantage.

Although he was of average height and just shy of six feet, he had a beautiful body from years of swimming. Crystal blue eyes complimented sandy brown hair, a peaches and cream complexion and perfectly masculine yet classical French features.

I'd never told my best friend but I knew for a fact he'd worked his way through university as a male escort despite not needing the money as he was on a full scholarship. Although I could have ruined his engagement and later, marriage, to my best friend with the embarrassing news, I kept it to

myself. Whether or not Renaud was bisexual had not ended our relationship though his lies and social-climbing arrogance had.

I knew right away Rory did not like him because he'd avoided conversation with my ex-boyfriend and Nicole's husband all evening.

"We don't know how long we intend to stay however our comings and goings are no one's business other than our own," he replied as the maid brought out dessert.

I sliced off a large slice of Soufflé a la Vanilla and quickly placed it in my mouth to avoid adding anything further to what Rory had already said.

"But...I thought you would be here for a while," Nicole responded in a weary voice.

"Listen, I am here as long as the research permits me to be. Remember, this trip isn't about settling anywhere. It's about solving my sister's murder and if I have to make somewhere else my home base after six months here then so be it," I said in a quiet tone.

"Well, that is disappointing to say the least." My best friend eyed me with cool blue eyes. "I was led to believe over the phone we would have a chance to let bygones be bygones. I desperately want your friendship again but it is quite hard to maintain such a friendship if we never see one another."

"Perhaps this isn't the best time to discuss this." Rory set his fork down, obviously hungry for something but not dessert. "After the funeral, you two will have plenty of time to discuss your friendship."

That was the end of the conversation and I was grateful it was over.

Shortly after the conclusion of dessert, Nicole and Renaud left. Rory closed the door behind them and turned toward me with a devilish look in his eye.

Rory



RORY COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL NICOLE and Renaud left his premises. He didn't even bother to wait until they'd walked to their vehicle, a late-model pale cream Range Rover, instead, he closed the double doors and locked them.

His personal chef, Jordane, had left shortly after he'd prepared dessert and the maid had followed after she'd presented dessert. The dishes would be taken care of the very next day when she arrived for her shift so there was nothing for either of them to do other than go to bed.

Well, not bed exactly as they wouldn't be sleeping just yet. He'd purposely chosen her outfit because it reminded him of the first time they'd had intercourse with one another. Granted that first time had been quite painful for her, unfortunately, and in hindsight he regretted his rash decision. He'd initiated her into his world by giving her the first lesson in proper anal intercourse while it had been quite pleasurable for him.

However, tonight would be different.

He'd make sure they were both pleased in every way and to be honest, he never wanted to see her in pain, not really. It was a very difficult precipice where he found himself these days. It had only been a short while since he'd shared her with his brother, Severin, for a second time, but lately, he felt himself becoming more possessive and jealous.

Rory couldn't admit to Aurélie how much he loved and desired her. She was no longer a plaything or a mere submissive though he sometimes liked to treat her as one. He truly felt his admiration of her courage, intelligence and beauty down to his very marrow. She was his to control but not to use or abuse. It had gone past the simple relationship a usual Dom shared with

his sub. He never wanted her to be frightened of him and to know she trusted him implicitly was paramount to their arrangement.

Unfortunately, he wasn't sure how much longer he would be able to keep her as a simple lover and girlfriend. She had begun to symbolize someone greater than that to him and he cherished her more than anyone or anything in the world. No, he wouldn't be satisfied until she was his wife and he knew he owned her completely: mind, body, heart and soul.

To do that, he had to vanquish the memory of Trésor and their relationship from her mind. He was willing to let her go on her fishing expedition to find out who murdered her sister because he found himself to be curious as well but that was as far as it went. He'd never been in love with Aurélie's sister and the ultimate betrayal she caused cut deep, all the way to the bone.

Trésor had played him for a fool, a weak Dom and bottomed him out like she mastered a game of chess. He'd never been anything to her but a meal ticket and the key to his brother's affections. She'd gotten pregnant with Severin's child and they'd decided to get married. How his slaves would have taken this was anyone's guess but she would have definitely liked the feeling of controlling others' the way she had allowed herself to be manipulated and controlled.

This wasn't just a hunch or a feeling, it was sheer intuition. She played the wanton sex kitten and sub to the hilt but underneath it all was a quiet strength waiting to be released. No doubt Severin planned to teach her to become his sub-Dom to control his slaves and she would have had a lot of fun with both Hans and Ingrid.

Now that she was dead, he could see his brother slowly and irrevocably start to fall apart. Instead of a continual progression, Severin had started to regress. There was no way a sub like Ingrid could replace a beauty like Trésor. Not only couldn't she hold a candle to the young woman in the looks department but she didn't possess Trésor's cunning skills and that would eventually become a major point of contention for Severin.

Rory sighed as he climbed the stairs. It was none of his business what happened in his brother's life as long as Severin stayed firmly out of his. Though with them living so close to one another, Rory thought the situation might turn out to be tenuous and impossible to manage although he would do his best to keep his twin at bay.

He entered their bedroom to find Aurélie at the vanity table removing her makeup with cold cream. She'd just scrubbed the last of it off and turned toward him in an expectant manner with those gorgeous green-gray eyes of hers. They were one of her best assets but unlike many women, she was equally stunning without makeup as she was with it pasted on.

She was quite lucky as her skin was smooth and the olive tone would leave her ageless for years to come. She'd never suffered from acne as a teenager and her pores were still small and tight. Although a lovely package on the outside, it was the inside that counted, and she had most women beaten in spades *there* too.

Every orifice on her body was nice and tight. She had the qualities of a young teenager as opposed to a thirty-two year old woman. Nothing about her was loose and if he wanted to wax poetic about how wonderful she was on the inside, she was also a truly decent human being. She tackled every project or obstacle with gusto and gave her all in everything she'd accomplished throughout her life. There were no half-measures with her.

There wasn't a deceptive bone in her body and that made her all the more wholesome and pure. Her former fiancé, Grayson Compston, understood she'd never loved him though she was "fond" of him and he'd been willing to marry her anyway. She would never profess something she didn't feel or think was true and hence the reason though he'd begged her on quite a few occasions, she'd yet to say she loved him and that bothered him deeply.

Not because he knew it to be untrue but because he knew she did love him as much as he loved her and due to the treacherous cretin whom had turned up at his home, it might be a while before she admitted her feelings to him. Renaud had deeply scarred her in such a way she would never be all right and though she might have once or twice said she loved him, it wasn't said with real feeling. It was always something *about* him she loved but she'd yet to declare the words, "I love you". Only half-hearted measures in the heat of the moment meant to placate him yet that was no longer good enough for a man like him. He wanted her to say it and feel it in her bones the way he felt his love for her and nothing less would suffice.

Hence the reason why he so carefully had planned that night; he wanted to show her something he'd only partaken in with one other woman: his first love, Mathilde. Although a first love, the feelings he had for Mathilde were downright immature and adolescent in comparison to the way he felt

for Aurélie and if there was a God above that could truly explain why, he would be terribly interested in hearing His theory.

But Rory did not believe in gods or anything man had created really. He believed in himself, in logic and in the humanistic qualities of what knowing people had shown him over the years. Human beings were, by and large, intrinsically evil and would happily do and enact ways of hurting their fellow humans just because they could. Sometimes animals were better because at least when they loved, it was pure and true. They acted out of sheer instinct and self-defense where as humans could be cruel just because they could be and with no real reasoning behind their actions what so ever.

Aurélie smiled as she stood and strode over to him. She'd taken her shoes off but still wore her dress. She knew him well enough by now to know he'd want to remove it when he was ready.

As she sat on his lap, she slipped her arms around his neck and kissed his lips ever so softly. "My darling heart has a secret he wishes to share?"

"Maybe but only if it's something you feel like you truly want to know about me."

Aurélie's eyes never left his. "I wouldn't ask if I didn't want to know. You understand me well enough by now to know games and I aren't the best of friends. What ever you want, you know I will do so why play coy with me now?"

"Okay," he began softly. "Remember when you dominated Severin and I?"

"I don't quite remember it that way as I didn't get to use a cane or a paddle on your ass but if you say so then yes, I do. My memory is far from failing me at the moment."

"I want you to dominate me. Tonight."

Her gray-green eyes lit up but there was a searching quality behind them. "Dominate you...how?"

Rory stood and walked over to the armoire. It was a special bureau filled with toys, lube, and various sexual devices; everything was neatly organized. He took out an expensive nine inch penis made of glass. Although it was made of such a material, it was very realistic, including down to the bulbous head and the bulging veins. He grabbed a bottle of vanilla scented anal lube and set the two items down on the bed.

"Undress me," he whispered to her.

She did as she was told and first slipped off his dress shirt, unbuttoning all the way down until his flat stomach and chest was displayed before she slipped it off his shoulders and set it on the chaise lounge at the foot of the bed. Then her hands went to work on his pants yet her movements were fluid, seductive. Her fingers didn't shake and as she knelt down and gathered the pants which had fallen to his ankles, she picked them up and also set them on the lounge though she remained in a kneeling position.

"Very good, my beautiful *chérie*," he whispered. "Now take my cock into your mouth but you control your movements. The way your tongue glides over my skin and how much of me you decide you want to taste and touch."

Aurélie leaned forward and kissed his flat stomach, inhaling his scent before she grabbed his cock with her right hand and slipped the mushroom head, oozing with pre-cum between her perfect lips. She sucked hard and teased the head of his cock with her tongue.

God, she gave the best head jobs and if he could, he would have her swallow him whole but that wasn't the point. This was just a warm up for the real show to come.

She slipped her mouth off his cock before her tongue began to tease the veins along the side, making him harder. Then her tongue flicked underneath and ran up and down the length of his cock and he thought he might explode from the pleasure of her warm, wet tongue working on his manhood alone.

"Stop now."

Aurélie stopped before she stood before him and looked into his eyes expectantly. He wanted to rip the Hervé Leger dress from her body but he knew she would be disappointed as he was supposed to be in control at all times and if he were in control, he would remove the item of clothing like a gentleman.

He unzipped the dress from the back and slid it down her body. She wore the barest of bras underneath, her nipples on display and hard as proverbial rocks while her small silk thong was just a swath of material he could easily tear away.

Rory slipped her thong to the side and admired her sex, moist and ready for him to do what ever he wanted. Her clit was hard and as he rubbed the padding of his thumb over the nub, she moaned and began to massage her nipples, pinching and pulling at them.

“Oh yes, I almost forgot about you.”

He stood, walked over to the armoire and grabbed a pair of nipple clamps with a silver chain between them. They were a bit harsher than what she was used to but she could adjust accordingly or he wouldn't have decided to use them in the first place. He slipped the clasps over her nipples and she sucked in a breath.

“Uncomfortable?”

“Deliciously so,” she responded.

“Do you want to rub that pussy of yours for me?”

“Yes.”

“Then take off your thong, get on the bed, spread your legs and masturbate for me.”

Aurélié did as she was told and the moment her fingers began to play with her nub, he watched with amusement before he climbed on the bed, and pulled her closer to him by her waist. He spread her ass cheeks and tongued her asshole as she pleased herself. Her face, completely flushed and in the throes of ecstasy, he stopped pleasuring her and pulled the chain. Her eyes flew open and she looked at him.

“That's enough. Now it's my turn. Take that lube and the dildo. I want you to stick it all the way inside of me to the base and then I am going to fuck you while that dildo is pressed against my prostate. It produces very pleasurable orgasms for me without involving a third party.”

She grabbed the lube and the dildo as he turned over onto his stomach and got on all fours.

“Does it disgust you I want this? Do you think me less of a man for wanting to be pleased like this?”

“No. I have always known the prostate is a very pleasurable area for men so it doesn't disgust me at all. And you did mention you have been with men both before and after the Hamburg incident. To be honest, I find it kinky and sexy.”

“That's what I wanted to hear. If it somehow displeased you or made you feel inadequate—”

“How can I feel inadequate when I don't have a penis, Rory? I can't pleasure you like that anyhow and besides, I would rather we use toys than involve someone else. It's no one's business what we do in the bedroom and you know how important discretion is to me. What we share, what we do does not go beyond these walls, ever. I don't have to explain myself to

anyone and you don't have to answer to me or anyone else. It's our business and I intend to keep it that way," she explained casually as she teased his anus with her finger.

In preparation, he'd cleaned himself out earlier that day. There would be no accidents as the thought of anal play and excrement were a huge turn-off to him. He had never indulged in those types of games within the community and thought the idea of human toilets and the like a most repulsive idea from which he could never rectify in his head. His bowel movements were his own private business and he had no wish to share them with Aurélie. It went both ways as when they did indulge in anal intercourse, he had shown her the proper way to cleanse herself too.

That evening, before she'd taken a bath, he made sure she had done the ritual though all he'd planned to do was give her a good rimming. He had never planned to have anal intercourse with her but at the same time, when he rimmed her, he wanted to make sure she was absolutely clean.

Due to the nature of the sex with which they involved themselves, he was particularly fastidious and insisted she be the same though that had been easy enough for her to get the hang of since she had been a very clean woman before they'd ever set eyes on one another.

Aurélie spread his ass cheeks and she tongued him. He thought he would go mad as he was expecting warming lube and felt her tongue instead. She worked several fingers in and out of his anus carefully as she had nails and was careful not to scratch the sensitive membrane tissue. She then applied a generous amount of lube directly to his back passage as well the toy itself and she slowly worked it into his ass.

The pain was great at first; he hadn't indulged in anal intercourse since the Hamburg incident though he'd fucked more than his fair share of men at the club when the feeling took him. It was just easier with men because they had that prostate gland which made anal sex very pleasurable. It could take months, years to train a good female anal slut. And even then, she got off more on the pain of the act than the pleasure as she had no prostate to stimulate.

Before he knew it, she'd pressed the toy inside him to the hilt. "Is that comfortable?" she inquired out loud.

The pain was just a pin prick in relation to the pleasure. God, yes, it felt so fucking good. She began to toy with it and worked it in and out, fucking

him in a slow teasing way that had his hips bucking to get his fill. He felt like a greedy little boy but he knew she was enjoying it too.

Finally, she slammed it back into his ass and slapped him a couple times with her hand for good measure.

“All better now?” she teased lightly.

Rory shook his head. “Get on the bed, you little cum whore, and spread your fucking legs.”

She laughed out loud but she crawled in front of him, lay on her back and did as she was told. “I want you to fuck me hard and rough.”

“Don’t worry,” he whispered. “I am going to fuck you so hard and pull at that chain you’ll have multiple orgasms before we are through tonight.”

His cock was so hard, he had to ease it off his belly before he could work it into her slick sex. She was so moist, he slid right in and began to pound into her. She wrapped her legs around his waist and he settled between her legs before he grabbed her by the throat and brought her in for a brutal kiss. She tasted like heaven and as their tongues met and caressed one another, he fucked her harder until she felt her muscles clench around him and she came, flooding his cock with juices.

Due to the dildo, he could go at this for hours because the moment he came, he felt himself grow hard within a few thrusts inside of her. His prostate was in a constant state of pleasure and thus his cock kept getting hard every time he thought about having her yet again.

“I want you to fuck me in my ass now,” she said as she turned onto her stomach and got on all fours.

Rory realized her poor sex probably needed the relief but every time he touched her clit, it was hard to the touch. He grabbed the lube and stuck two fingers in her ass, massaging her gently. Then he added a third and fourth to loosen her up.

“That’s enough. I want to feel your cock inside me,” she begged out loud.

He gave into her and slammed his cock inside her a great deal rougher than he intended and she bucked against him in both pleasure and pain. Slowly, he worked his way in and out of her before he slid his fingers over her clit and massaged her gently. She moaned out loud as he developed a teasing rhythm that brought her to the brink of orgasm before he tugged on the silver chain which held her nipple clamps in place to stop her from coming.

This last orgasm would leave them both spent and he delayed as long as he could. He unclasped the clamps from her nipples and she sighed in both pain and pleasure as blood rushed back to the ultra sore spots on her breasts which sat at attention. Then he thrust into her several more times before the orgasm poured over her first and her ass clinched around his cock. Then he came from the friction of her tight ass and the pleasure of the dildo buried in his own backdoor passage. It was pure and unadulterated satisfaction the likes he had never experienced before.

After he came, he immediately withdrew and she stood and strode to the bathroom. She came back with fresh damp towels and removed the dildo before she began to clean them both.

He loved watching the way she worked so expertly and effortlessly.

After they were both clean, she gathered the toys and the clamps, filled a basin with cleansing solution and put the toys into the water to soak before she placed the lube back in the armoire and finally climbed into bed beside him.

Rory was spent, beyond tired but he spooned her and whispered in her ear. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

Aurélie laughed but it was a sexy chuckle that came from deep within her throat. "I'll heal if that's what you're worried about."

He gripped her tighter before he whispered in her ear, "I love you so much, you know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, which is the precise reason why I can forgive you for calling me a 'cum whore'."

Rory turned her around and she faced him. His aquamarine eyes were bright with sincerity. "No, I mean, I *love* you. It's the only reason why I can be myself because I trust you implicitly."

She couldn't manage the words, not even now but she responded, "*Chéri*, I trust you too. Otherwise I wouldn't allow you to have complete control over my body...even when you tell me I am in control."

"But you were," he murmured in a sexy voice.

"Was I really? Or was it a case of you controlling me by making me believe I had control when it was always yours all along?"

He kissed her lips again and she opened her mouth as his tongue sought hers out. "Believe me when I tell you I bottom out to you much more often than you think I do."

She had no words for this so instead, she turned on to her side, allowed him to spoon her like he wanted her to and minutes later, he fell asleep.

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Aurélie



AFTER RORY'S CONFESSION, IT TOOK a long time for me to go to sleep. In a few minutes after our conversation had ended, he was knocked out and dead to the world.

It wasn't so easy for me because my wine haze had worn off hours ago and now I felt restless and uneasy. I slid from underneath his grip and padded my way to the bathroom. The place was as big as an average person's master bedroom therefore we had his and her sides. I opened my medicine cabinet and grabbed a two milligram Xanax, popped it in my mouth and washed it down with sink water.

I waited for it to take effect and several minutes later, that peaceful feeling of drowsiness and an urge to lay down hit me gently and in soft waves. I strode back to the bed and slipped back into Rory's embrace.

"Are you all right?" he inquired in a sleepy voice.

"Sure, I'm fine."

"Can't sleep?"

"I couldn't turn my mind off."

"Did you pop a Xanax?"

I paused before I answered, "Yes."

"Then you'll be able to rest. Just know I will put up with your use of a controlled substance because I realize your sister's death devastated you but I won't allow you to take them indefinitely," he explained in a soothing tone.

I felt like a child being chastised but somehow, my head bowed and I whispered, "I know."

"Good. Then in the meantime, let's go to sleep."

Rory still beat me to the punch and was asleep before I drifted off into that inevitable place which quietly called me.

I knew what the issue was between us and it wasn't even the fucking Xanax. Yet again I had missed a perfectly good time to tell him I loved him and yet again, I'd choked, panicked and said nothing at all.

Yes, I had told him I trusted him but he would have to hear the words from me and they terrified me so badly, I felt like I was being asked to take a dive from the Empire State Building. Wasn't the act of falling in love a bit like that in the end?

I knew in my heart he wouldn't wait for much longer. I would have to tell him or risk losing him and everything we'd worked so hard to achieve against unbelievable odds.

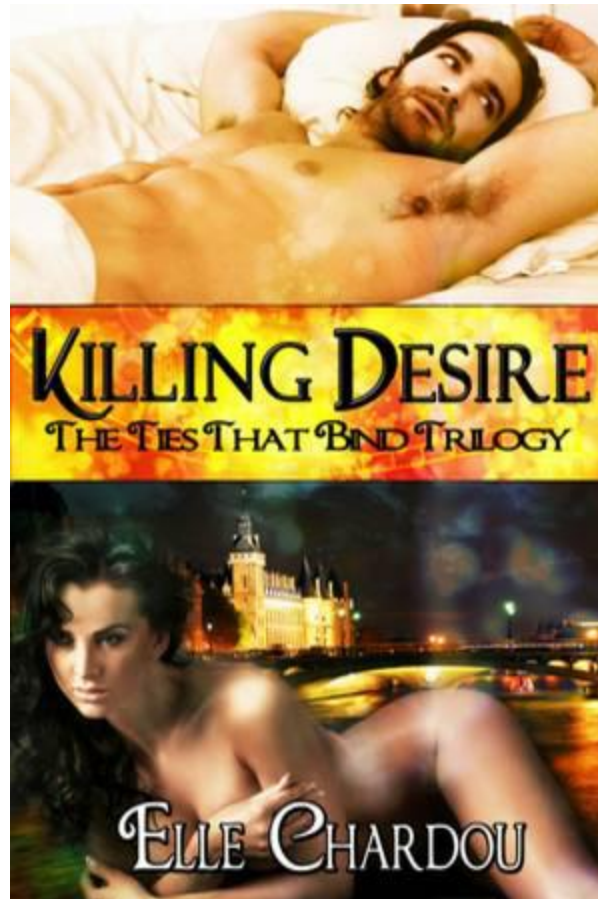
I had to make the jump and the answer was obviously expected sooner rather than later but the bigger question for me was what would happen once I admitted my feelings for him and would he still love me as much as he did now?

Deep down, I knew the answer, but love, like life, was never easy or cut and dry. It was a chance I was willing to take but the question was when exactly?

I finally allowed myself to drift to sleep and in my dreams, I murmured to Rory I loved him and for that one moment, everything was absolutely perfect and the way it was meant to be between the two of us.

Now, if I could only make it happen in real life, I could finally kill off heartache for good and make both of us content and happy again.

A preview of *Killing Desire*, the second novel in
The Ties That Bind Trilogy!



Chapter One



THE FUNERAL FOR MY SISTER, Trésor, was just as sad and depressing as I thought it would be. Rory was nice enough to rent out rooms for everyone

who'd decided to stay overnight in Colmar at the Hostellerie Le Marechal, a grand hotel that looked like a large restored estate in some quaint German town though we were in France.

The whole feel of the Alsatian region was a cool blend of French ambiance and German efficiency that I didn't mind at all. As I knew Alsatian, it was nice to speak the language with the locals and Rory surprised the hell out of me when he began chatting with a few of the locals in the dialect I spoke so well.

It certainly took my mind off the funeral which was held in Herrlisheim-près-Colmar located on Rue de la Gare where a new cemetery had replaced the old one which had closed in the mid-nineteenth century.

Trésor's body was laid to rest and afterwards the guests had hors d'œuvres and cocktails at the hotel. Many of the guests I had never seen before and could only assume they were friends of Trésor's and Rory's while we did have a smattering of family from my father's side who attended as well. They still lived in the area and were happy to make it though of course sad it was the death of a relative which had brought us all together again.

I found the whole situation a bit awkward, especially after Severin showed up with his new "girl-toy", Ingrid as she was known. She was his slave-in-training so she could still use her name to introduce herself to people but he was doing quite the job breaking her down as quickly as possible.

A tiny young woman, she couldn't have been more than five feet and perhaps eighty-five pounds soaking wet. Her long flaxen blonde hair, clear skin and bright sky blue eyes spoke of youth in its prime. I flagged her easily as being no more than twenty-two if a day.

After what Rory disclosed in the car that day we'd arrived in France, I didn't know if I could view the man the same ever again. How could he have gotten my sister pregnant when she was supposed to be on birth control? How could she have allowed something like that to happen?

The arrangements for the funeral had happened so fast under the direction of Rory, I still hadn't the time to look through her journals again. It'd taken us about a week and half before we'd comfortably settled in Vaucresson, an ultra-posh western suburb of Paris, and the next we were boarding a plane for Alsace to formally say goodbye to my sister once and for all. I hated funerals with a passion yet the timing was practical for

another reason. No one wanted the maudlin occasion to affect their Christmas plans therefore the funeral had taken place the weekend of the sixteenth of December.

The flower arrangements were beautiful, the food delicious and the alcohol exquisite but I smelled and tasted none of it. Again, I was numb and it had nothing to do with the icy cold weather.

I wore a tasteful black, long-sleeved, fluted-hem sweater-dress by Yves Saint Laurent with a pair of thick tights and a pair of Alexander McQueen suede shoe boots which were perfect for the occasion though the five-inch heel did make me ponder why I had chosen them seeing as the whole valley was covered in snow.

It was pretty depressing as everyone wore mostly black and the somber mood never dissipated. Both my parents seemed a bit shell-shocked by the whole experience but neither cried, at least not in public as that wouldn't have appeared dignified and above all, they had their pride if nothing else.

Half-way through the reception, I walked up to the room I shared with Rory and sat on the bed. I'd snuck away as quietly as I could because I didn't want to see the looks of pity from anyone, let alone my best friend or Rory who always glanced at me as if any moment, I was bound to fall apart.

They would have never known how right they were about that assessment because it had finally hit me. It had taken a trip half-way around the world to allow the whole ugly incident to sink in and on that bed, I collapsed and sobbed quietly. I dabbed at my eyes repeatedly with tissue, pulling away makeup and mascara with every wipe.

I buried my face in a wad of tissue and screamed as loud as I could for all the mistakes I'd made, all the opportunities I'd allowed to pass me by and a relationship that would never have proper closure. Then I beat my thighs repeatedly with the balls of my fist, if only to feel the physical pain as much as the mental anguish tortured and pulled at my psyché day after fucking day.

No one had to explain it wasn't my fault and I had nothing to feel guilty about but I did and it was literally eating me alive from the inside out. The feeling of knowing perhaps her murderer walked around downstairs, ever so cool, calm, and collective knowing they had gotten away with their heinous crime. They would never understand or empathize with how their crime had torn a fragile family apart nor would they care. I didn't know if that was the worse part of all but it felt as if my whole life teetered on the edge of a

goddamn precipice and I hated it...wanted it all—the pain and the feelings of guilt and shame to be over and done with me.

So self-absorbed was my self-pity, I barely heard the door open and close. I knew it was Rory by his stealth movements and he immediately knelt in front of me.

“*Liebling*, what have you done?” he inquired softly.

His gorgeous aquamarine eyes—a mixture of ice blue and pale green—were mesmerizing as usual. He’d shaved for the occasion therefore his perfect features including a strong, masculine chin, perfect cheekbones, a lovely patrician nose, lips meant to be devoured and exquisite forehead crowned by dark brown hair with black cherry highlights. Not only was he an extremely handsome man but his looks were combined with an irresistible sexual magnetism that made women weak in the knees, myself included.

The body that went with the face was no less than stunning. Tall and lean with hidden muscles and the purposeful stride of the ultra-wealthy, he was indeed a perfect package. Unfortunately, I’d inherited him by default. My sister had been his lover before me and she was a devoted slave to her master though their relationship was in fact more of a dominant and submissive. He’d explained to me my sister didn’t do well with half-measures hence the terms he used for them to her but she wouldn’t know the first thing about what it felt like to be a slave.

I sniffled as he slipped my hands into his own and held them tightly. “The pain...it became all too much and I just had to have a good cry and I’m fine, really.”

His gaze upon me never wavered and it made me feel nervous as if he knew I had something to hide. “Lay down, rest. No one is going to fault you for having a weak moment, Aurélie. Your sister is dead and you are allowed to grieve. I don’t know how I would act if anything happened to Severin...” he trailed off.

I took his advice and lay back on the bed. He slid my boots off and reached under my dress to take off my tights. I knew his actions weren’t the least bit sexual as he would have made his intentions a lot more obvious but neither he nor I were all that interested in sexual intercourse at the moment.

Rory’s deep intake of breath gave me pause and I sat up partially, using my elbows to lift my upper body as I glared at him, annoyed. “What’s the matter with you?”

“Shouldn’t I be the one asking you that question?” he inquired.

I looked down at my soft olive-skinned thighs and saw the purplish bruises as they began to form. He touched the largest one which drew a whimper from me. Funny how they didn’t hurt nearly as much when I’d self-inflicted them only minutes ago but now I felt an intense fire and throbbing pain every time he touched one.

“I didn’t realize...I was just in so much pain, I began to pound my fists against my thighs and I couldn’t have known...”

“You do realize you can’t wear anything slightly revealing until these bruises heal? You’ll have people thinking I am beating you and I have never been a big-time sadist who has ever wanted to leave these kinds of marks. You look like a domestic violence victim, sweetheart.”

I reached out for his face and smoothed his hair out of his eyes. “Yes, I know I do but you have nothing to worry about because you didn’t do anything to me. I promise to keep my legs covered until they heal, okay?”

“Good—”

“Aurélie, *chérie*, I have been looking everywhere for you!” Nicole exclaimed as she burst into the room though she drew in a breath and covered her mouth in horror when she saw my thighs.

Her large cerulean eyes drifted towards Rory in accusation “*Fils de pute*—what the *hell* have you done to her?”

Rory stood and backed away from the bed slowly. “It wasn’t me.”

“Liar! How could you...I thought you were better than Severin, Rory, but you aren’t! You two are so much the same it is ridiculous. How could you even think about sex when we laid your girlfriend and your unborn child into the ground today?”

My lover stared at me with an odd mixture of surprise and regret before he met Nicole’s gaze again. “It is true, I laid my lover in the ground but the child didn’t belong to me, Nikki. It isn’t your business whose baby it was but I will tell you once more: I didn’t touch Aurélie—not like that. There was nothing sexual about the way I touched her in any way, shape or form. I was merely undressing her so she could get some rest and that is when I saw the bruises.”

“It’s true,” I finally responded though my eyes began to close on me involuntarily. “I did it to myself and he was just as dismayed and disconcerted to see the bruises as you are now.”

My best friend walked toward me with her arms tucked against her small bosom and her long blonde hair flowing around elegant, slim shoulders. “What is wrong with you? How could you do that knowing how much self-harm Tresor was involved with? Have you lost your mind?”

“I sometimes think that is a strong possibility,” I replied before my eyes closed yet again and no matter how hard I tried, they refused to open again at that point.

Somewhere in a dark recess of my mind, I heard their conversation continue in a quiet manner but they’d both slipped into high German and the words blended together. I no longer understood what they were discussing and if I was honest with myself, I didn’t want to know what they were saying either.

My body succumbed to sleep and it was the best feeling in the world at that very moment.



THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, EVERYONE WHO hadn’t left began to leave and it was only a handful of us guests who decided to stay an extra day including Rory and I, Severin and his new slave and of course my best friend Nicole and her husband, Renaud.

Renaud and I had a complicated relationship to say the least. Before he’d been my best friend’s husband, he’d been my lover, best friend and soul mate. He was the first man I’d fallen in love with and he was also the only one I allowed to inexplicably break my heart into a million pieces. I’d never thought I would feel anything remotely close to the feelings I felt for him until Rory had come along.

I would have been lying if I implied everything was copacetic between us because it wasn’t. I didn’t want to be his friend and merely tolerated him because he was married to Nicole. Other than that, I would have been perfectly happy if we’d never crossed paths ever again.

Although the weather was freezing, all the men decided we should have lunch on a shaded terrace which overlooked a flowing river that ran through town. It was easier to focus on the river than the political discussion Nicole, Renaud, Rory and Severin had decided to start in rapid French. Ingrid looked bored and uncomfortable, both wearing layers of clothing and sitting

at the table. I suppose it wouldn't have been kosher for Severin to have her naked next to the table in temperatures not too high above freezing.

I suddenly wished we had gone back to Paris, back to Rory's opulent home in Vaucresson because I wouldn't feel as naked as I did at that moment. I could feel Renaud's eyes rake over me every now and then and coupled with Severin's weathering glances, it all became too much. I felt an anxiety attack coming on, a major one and the last mistake I wanted to make was embarrassing myself at the worst possible time.

Rory never made me feel strange or not normal for having them, not like Renaud. Severin, on the other hand, seemed to revel in them. He enjoyed pain especially my own and I wouldn't give him that, not now, not ever. Without thinking, I stood and strode back inside the warmth of the hotel just as it reached its pinnacle.

My heart raced with a burning intensity and I felt a cool sheen of sweat coat my skin as my breathing became frantic and erratic. I continued towards the stairs knowing that if I took the elevator, it would make the feeling worse than it already was and I couldn't handle that. This one was a tough enough panic attack on its own.

Halfway up the second flight of stairs, I felt a warm hand brace my arm and I turned to face the first love of my life: Renaud. He looked different, somewhat older and his looks held less sway and charm over me but his presence didn't ease my anxiety.

"What are you doing here?" I exclaimed in angry French. "Go back to your wife before she suspects something is going on between us."

His eyes, so incredibly clear and a glorious shade of crystal blue pleaded with me for understanding. Though his hair was sandy brown, it'd always suited him and once he'd married Nicole, they became known as more or less the "golden couple". His skin was clear as always, a natural peaches and cream complexion which complimented classic Gallic features, a toned body that went perfectly with his height of 5'11". Although I wore four-inch heels, I still had to look up slightly to him and this didn't make my heart slow down the least bit.

"Aurélie, don't do this to me. Please don't act like there is nothing between us."

I laughed out loud. "My God, you're delusional. There is nothing between us, Renaud. You're married to my best friend and I am in a

relationship. What makes you possibly think I am interested in sloppy seconds? Go. Back. To. Your. Wife.”

“Goddamn it, I refuse to believe you are happy with that...that *fiils de pute!*” he exclaimed in anger.

“Does it feel better now that you have said it? It’s the second day in a row someone has called Rory a ‘son of a whore’ when he’s done nothing wrong. Whether you choose to believe it or not, I am very happy with him and I won’t break up a marriage between you and Nicole. My God, what has gotten into that brain of yours? Are you on drugs?”

Renaud let go of my arm as if I’d burned him and held his own at his side. “Listen, I am not trying to make you angry and I never said *anything* about *leaving* my wife. I’m worried about you. Your eyes have this hard-edged look to them and you seem so angry at the world—”

“Perhaps it’s because I am,” I responded flippantly and began to walk up the staircase again.

He followed me at a relatively safe distance until we reached the floor where our suites were located. “I don’t want to fight with you and I know you don’t have to treat me with any kindness but...I only wish for you to be happy. I don’t see how that could ever be possible with Rory Krieger. The man is a...well, his sexual practices are quite unique. Surely you don’t like being tied up and having pain inflicted upon you. I know what they are into and it’s a world you don’t want to know.”

I turned toward him finally and we faced off, merely several feet away from one another. Our fight had made my anxiety attack retreat rather quickly and I felt calm and less shaken than I had earlier.

“Listen, you don’t know anything about me. We had a relationship with one another almost a decade ago and I’m not the same person I was. I haven’t been that naïve young woman in a very long time, Renaud. All the sudden, you approach me and wish to know I am safe and secure but to be honest, it truly is none of your concern.”

He cursed softly under his breath in French before he said, “How could you go there when you know he was with your sister before you? Don’t you feel the least bit shameful by your outright wanton behavior? How do you know he isn’t using you as a place holder because he doesn’t have Trésor anymore?”

“You’re a beautiful, vibrant and vivacious woman but do you really think you could hold a candle to your sister if she were still alive? Trésor

oozed sex appeal and she was gorgeous and seductive. She had everything you will never possess because she had a genuine love and fascination with life. It truly is a pity she's now dead."

Renaud's words shocked me as if I had been slapped in the face. He always could bring me back down to size with his cruelty. It was something he excelled at and I was not ashamed to say it but he was best at belittling a person. It was what kept me tethered to him for so long even after I knew he no longer was in love with me.

I wasn't going to pretend I knew how he felt about my sister. Perhaps at one time he was attracted to her or maybe they'd had an affair. It no longer mattered as we weren't a couple and what he did with her was inconsequential. She was dead but his words still stung and I couldn't help if my eyes watered a bit.

"Sweetheart, is everything okay?" a male voice inquired.

I looked past Renaud to see Rory approaching and the breath I'd held on to for dear life slowly escaped my lungs. "Yes, everything is fine. I just need to lay down. I don't feel very well."

My lover walked past my ex-boyfriend as if he weren't standing there and turned me around in his arms so I faced him and he faced Renaud. "I have a migraine from hell and I came up to take my medication. We should both lay down." He looked up and murmured, "See you at dinner, Renaud."

With that, he swept me into our suite after he unlocked the door with the card key and we both walked inside.

I leaned against his firm chest and melted in the heat and scent of his embrace. "Thank you."

"For what?"

"Saving me back there...it was very sweet of you. My ex was just about to wax poetic about all the different ways my sister was much better than I was and I just knew I would have probably vomited all over the carpet. He's always been such an asshole but sadly, I never realized that until now."

Rory grabbed my face by the chin with warm fingers and tilted my face towards his. Every time I looked into those hypnotic aquamarine eyes, I fell that much more in love with him.

"He can't tell you anything about Trésor because he didn't *know* her. No one did except me...and Severin." He added his brother's name with a particular bitterness and it was then and there I knew he would never forgive his twin for what he'd done.

There was no way my sister should have gotten pregnant in the first place. She was on birth control so what happened? Had she been skipping days or was it something Severin had carefully planned while pretending to be Rory?

My poor sister could never tell the difference between the two brothers as they were identical twins and classic manipulators. I knew only because for me, it was in their eyes. Identical in every way but there was a soulless quality in Severin's that Rory lacked entirely. He had life and love in those beautiful eyes and he hadn't lost his humanity the same way his brother had.

Whether he'd freely given it up or it had been taken from him was anyone's guess but he didn't have the same heart and soul as Rory and to me, Severin could never have fooled me into believing he was Rory.

However my sister wasn't quite as good with subtleties and would have never noticed. I had read enough of her journals to know she thought Rory might have been a sociopath because of his night-day mood swings but what she didn't know was there wasn't anything remotely wrong with Rory, psychologically speaking. The difference in attitude strictly came from the difference between the brothers' personalities and nothing else.

Rory hadn't even been in the country when she was murdered because he'd never administered her punishment in the first place, Severin had and all the while, she'd been ignorant enough to think it was Rory she'd greeted that fateful night she'd gotten home from the modeling job and not Severin.

Their relationship intrigued me and frightened me. I didn't really like nor would I ever understand why they remained so close they were interdependent on one another. There wasn't much they didn't share, including bed partners, and although it was against my better judgment, I had slept with the both of them not just once but twice.

Under ordinary circumstances, I would have been the first to admit what I had done had been the behavior of a tramp and someone who suffered from low self-esteem. However, Rory had slowly taught me some of the most basic rules of the BDSM community and one of the first rules one learned was there were no rules in terms of sharing if that is what the submissive wished to happen.

The second night I shared my body with both Rory and Severin, I had not been under any duress and there wasn't a shred of dubious consent involved. I'd done it because I had been in control and they'd bottomed out

to me so for that one night, I was the dominant one and they were my two submissives. I didn't spank them, tie them up or order them what to do but they voluntarily gave their power to me and allowed me to make the rules.

I hadn't found the experience degrading at all but rather liberating and although I had no wish to share my body with Severin in the near future, I would never rule it out from happening again. Already, the life sucked me in and what was so strange and unusual to people from the outside looking in slowly started to become all the more normal to me.

It reminded me of an old saying from the film, *Eight Millimeter: When you dance with the devil, the devil doesn't change—the devil changes you*; the sentiment couldn't have been more appropriate in regards to my particular situation. Rory hadn't molded his lifestyle to fit me, I was slowly molding my life to fit his lifestyle and what frightened me most of all was I had begun to like it.

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