



His Sacrifice

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Category: Erotic, Adult, Fantasy, Horror

Description: A terrifyingly titillating Halloween treat from Celia Aaron.

I've sacrificed my social life for a job as assistant to Ted McGovern, CEO of McGovern Enterprises. He's hot, loaded, powerful, and best of all? He asked me on a date for my birthday. Everything is lining up perfectly for me. It's the best night of my life. Or, it was until I woke up drugged and bound for a sadistic, bloody ritual.

Celia's Note: This is NOT a romance friends. Beware. Trigger Warning -> all of them. A Halloween treat that may not have an HEA, but will leave you smiling. (This story was originally part of the Twisted Sacrament anthology.)

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Chapter One

Cate

Celia's Note: This isn't a romance. I promise. It has a happy ending of sorts *sly smile* but definitely not a romance. Turn back now if you're looking for love, friends. (But if you're looking for a trigger-filled terrifyingly titillating tale, step right up.)

Mr. McGovern strode out of his office, his muscular frame perfectly wrapped in an expensive suit. Casting his dark blue gaze in my direction, he gave me a secret smile, his firm lips twisting up just so slightly at the corners.

I leaned forward and put my elbows on my desk. "You have one more meeting this afternoon."

He walked over to me, his long strides eating up the polished floor. "One more obstacle before the night is ours. Are you ready, birthday girl?" His eyes lingered on my face, then glanced lower to the v-neck top of my deep crimson blouse.

A tingle went through me, excitement reaching to the tips of my toes. "I can't wait." My voice came out breathy, and I had to press my thighs together to quell the sensations rushing through me. I'd finally bagged the boss. Me, a lowly personal assistant with no pedigree and no movie-star looks. I wasn't ugly, but there was no way I could compete with a lot of the other assistants around the building with their perfect hair and nails and eating disorders. A little plumper, I enjoyed food and spent my time on pursuits other than salons. But it didn't matter! Mr. McGovern only had

eyes for me. I couldn't stop the smile that spread along my lips.

“That's what I like to see.” He ran his finger down my jawline. “I want to see more of it tonight. All of it, in fact.”

Lucky. That's the only word for it. I was the luckiest girl in all of McGovern Enterprises. First, I got the assistant job despite the competition, then I'd caught his eye. At thirty-eight, he was ten years older than me, but still so handsome and powerful and, oh my god, wealthy. Tonight was going to be our first—and best—real date. Best birthday ever.

My phone buzzed, the receptionist letting me know Mr. McGovern's four o'clock had arrived.

“See you soon, beautiful.” He straightened and returned to his office, his broad back sending another wave of anticipation through me.

“Yes sir.” I stood and welcomed the businessmen into Mr. McGovern's (or Ted, as he told me to call him) office, then sat back and daydreamed about how perfect my night was going to be.

I had such big dreams for my future, and Mr. McGovern—with his hotness, money, and prestige—was going to make them all come true. Squee!

Chapter Two

Ted

We made our reservation on time, and I enjoyed Cate's wide eyes as we waltzed into one of the finest restaurants in the city.

“Oh my god, it’s so fancy!” She grabbed my arm, a huge grin on her clueless face.

I’d never met such a country bumpkin in all my life. Still, her hips swayed nicely as she maneuvered through the tables. So, it wasn’t a hardship.

“If this is acceptable.” The host waved us to a booth in the back, the black lacquered table lit by a single candle and the cool evening lighting overhead.

“Wow.” Cate smiled, then slid onto the seat.

I joined her on the same side, throwing my arm around her shoulders as she gawked at the thick wine menu. “Like it?”

“I love it.” She ran her fingertip along the edge of the dinner menu.

“I’ll order for you.”

“Um, okay.” She nodded and turned to the server who appeared at the edge of the table.

“We’ll have a bottle of Chianti Panzano, pork belly appetizer, the Wellingtons, whipped potatoes, and asparagus.”

“Very good.” He took our menus and hustled away.

“All I caught of that was potatoes and asparagus.” She blushed slightly, the color pooling in the apples of her freckled cheeks.

“Stick with me, kid. I’ll show you the ropes.” I reached up and loosened my tie, then undid the top button of my shirt.

She followed the movement, her eyes hungry.

I pulled my arm from her shoulders and eased it down to my side, running my palm onto her thigh.

Jumping a little, she gave me another starry-eyed look.

Her skirt was a little long for my tastes, but it would be gone before the end of the night. God, this was too fucking easy. But that's what I liked about it.

I adopted a concerned look. "How are you feeling about spending your birthday with me instead of your family?"

She placed her palm on top of my hand. "You are so kind to think about me like that."

"I can't imagine how hard it is to be all alone in a big city without any family to watch over you. I want to make this day as special for you as possible."

"It already is." She squeezed my hand. "Tonight, with you, anything is possible."

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I licked my lips. I'd planned her evening down to the second—how it began, the fun in the middle, and its not-so-delightful end—but she didn't need to know that. Why would I spoil the surprise?

"I'm flattered you think I'm that great of a date." I gave her my easy smile, the one that melted panties. "I hope you haven't told all your friends about me."

Her face turned more serious. "No. I did exactly what you said and kept it all to myself. What's between us stays between us. I don't want anyone interfering."

"That's my good girl." With all the formalities taken care of, it was time to start the evening. After all, I didn't want to make it all work, work, work.

I leaned closer, my lips to her ear. "I have one more little question for you."

Her breath hitched. "What?"

"Are you wearing panties?" I ran my hand farther up her skirt to her inner thighs.

"You told me not to."

"Good girl." When I touched her hot, wet pussy, I slid my finger down her slit. "Always following instructions."

"Mmm." She let her head rest against the leather of the booth.

I delved farther, my finger pressing inside her. "Tight little cunt." My cock jumped

against my zipper. I needed to take it slow. After all, this was just the appetizer. But damn, I hadn't expected her to be so responsive. Getting her thighs wide open would be a snap.

"That's ..." She bit her lip. "That's so ..."

"Sir?" The server reappeared with the wine bottle.

Cate tensed, but I didn't stop pulsing my fingers in and out of her searing cunt.

I nodded at him when he showed me the label. "Go ahead and pour."

Cate's breathing increased, her legs opening a little wider for me. Fuck, I couldn't wait to be balls deep in her.

When the server left, I moved my fingers to her clit.

She gripped my wrist. "Ted."

"What?" I circled the little nub.

"If you keep doing that—"

"You'll come for me?" I stroked her harder. "In this restaurant like a dirty girl?"

"Ted," she breathed again.

I didn't let up, my fingers playing her clit as she panted next to me. The server arrived with our first course right as she began to hold her breath. Her nails dug into my wrist, but I didn't stop. As he set down our food, she tensed and moaned low in her throat. I pushed my finger inside her, feeling the compression and knowing it

would be squeezing my cock soon enough.

The server pretended not to notice and hurried away.

She was so responsive, her pussy creaming for me and her nipples hard enough to cut glass.

I pulled my fingers away and licked them as she gawked at me. Sweet and a little tangy.

I hoped her blood would taste just as good.

Chapter Three

Cate

Flashing lights. The sound of an engine. Movement. Where was I?

I tried to reach out, but my arm wouldn't budge.

"There she is." Ted's voice came to me from what seemed like a long distance.

"What..." My mouth wasn't cooperating, not even a little. I couldn't be sure anything came out besides maybe a mmm sound.

"Just relax, sweet little Cate. We're almost there."

Almost where? And why couldn't I feel my body?

Panic began to rise, shooting through me like acid in my veins.

“Shh.” I could feel a hand along my back, though the sensation was muffled, as if I were wrapped in several layers of fluffy coats.

Lying on my side, I couldn’t get my bearings.

“Everything’s going to be fine. You just had too much to drink at dinner.”

I blinked, trying to force my disorientation away. But it remained, and I still couldn’t see much of anything except pulses of light at intervals. Was it streetlamps we were passing? Some asshole shining a flashlight in my face? I couldn’t tell.

“She’s a little plumper than the last one.” Another man spoke.

Oh, hell. We weren’t alone. A chill shot down my spine.

“Who’s that?” I still couldn’t get out much more than a grunt.

“She’s got a tight cunt, that’s all that matters for the moment.” Ted’s hands became rough, flipping me over onto my back.

Another pair of hands ran up my inner thighs, then I felt the intrusion of two fingers.

“Hey!” My lips barely moved.

I squirmed, but Ted pressed down on my chest, keeping me still. My vision was clearing slowly, but I couldn’t see the other man.

“Fuck, you aren’t kidding.” The other man pressed his fingers in and out. “She’s already a little wet. What did you do at the restaurant?”

“Just a little finger play. Nothing major. She’s still un-fucked ... for now.” They both

laughed, and the stranger kept feeling me from the inside, his fingers delving deeper.

A thumping sound erupted nearby. They ignored it, even though I could have sworn I heard someone yell.

Ted's hand slid to the left, cupping my breast, then squeezing my nipple as the other man moved to my clit, his fingers pressing on the sensitive spot.

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“She’s responsive,” the stranger grated.

“You have no idea.” Ted shoved down the fabric of my top and my bra, then leaned over. His hot mouth drew a gasp from me when it closed around my nipple.

I struggled, my arms trying to push him off, but they just swatted against him and fell back, useless.

The stranger spread my legs wider.

“Don’t get too—” A mouth pressed against my pussy, and Ted released my nipple. “Jeez man, you can’t save it for your own bitch?”

“Just a taste.” The stranger pressed his tongue inside me.

No, no, no! My hips gave a half-hearted attempt to push him off. He just stuck his tongue in farther, his thumbs digging into my thighs and spreading me even more.

Ted pulled the other side of my shirt down and bit my nipple. My body was waking up, but it wasn’t going in the right order. Instead of my mouth working to scream for help, my pussy began to thump with need, each beat of my heart sending more heat between my thighs. The man focused on my clit, the broad side of his tongue swiping at again and again as Ted twisted one nipple and sucked another.

The man eased two fingers inside me again, and I moaned.

“She wants it.” Ted flicked his tongue along my breast, each touch like a spark of

electricity that sizzled down my body.

I turned my head, trying to deny the pleasure, to fight the need for release. But my body didn't care that I was being licked and sucked by a stranger, didn't care that I was in a strange car, didn't care about anything except the building pressure between my thighs.

I wanted to fight it. I couldn't. My body tightened, everything in me focused on the tongue lashing my clit, the hot mouth on my breasts.

My hips seized. I couldn't breathe. The orgasm hit me like a gut punch, and washed over me in waves of unexpected intensity. I moaned and trembled, my hands awake enough to scrabble against the car leather as my body turned itself inside out. A burst of pain twisted my pleasure. Ted had bitten down hard on my nipple, almost enough to break the skin. I couldn't catch my breath as the man finally let up, his silky tongue stroking me once more before his heat disappeared.

Ted released my breast from his mouth, but used both hands to massage me. "How was she?"

"I could eat that peach all day."

More thumps. Were they coming from the trunk?

"You have your own." Ted squeezed my nipples.

I finally had enough control of my hands to reach for my skirt.

"She's not sweet like this one. Trade you?"

I could see something, as if the orgasm had cleared the film from my eyes. My head

was in Ted's lap, his erection pressing against the side of my cheek, and my legs were still spread as the other man knelt between them on the floor of the limo.

"I kind of like how spirited yours sounds, Caleb." Ted slapped my breast, the sting coursing through to my brain. "This one is gentler. Hmm. I'll give you a go at Cate, but she's mine for the finale."

"Deal." The man, Caleb, scooted back and sat across from me, his dark eyes focused on Ted's hands as I shoved my skirt back into place.

When I tried to sit up, Ted slammed me back down. "We're almost there, little one. Just relax."

I shook my head, which meant my cheek rubbed against his cock.

"You want this?" Ted reached down and ran his hand along his stiff length, only the fabric of his pants separating it from me.

"N-no." I managed to form the word.

He and the other man laughed. "You're going to get it, but I was hoping we could wait until I got you inside," Ted slapped my breast again, then twisted my nipple.

The car seemed to slow, then stop.

"Let me go." I peered up at Ted.

"No." He returned to kneading my breasts.

"Please."

A grin spread along his lips, his white teeth glinting in the low light as the car began moving again. “Keep begging, Cate. It suits you.”

Chapter Four

Ted

Ten years had passed since I was last at the Vanth Estate, but it looked much the same—a winding drive led to a two-story gothic mansion, the windows lit with candles and the black front doors wide open.

“I promised myself I’d never come here again.” Caleb stared at the doors. “But here I am.”

“Ten years does a lot to dull the memories, I guess.” I shrugged. Unlike Caleb, I planned to show up here each decade and do what was necessary. Cate tried to push me away, but I pulled her up next to me and wrapped one arm around her.

“Don’t,” she slurred.

I ignored her.

Caleb sighed as the car stopped and the driver got out. “I didn’t want to do this, but we’re on the verge of taking the company public. Without Vanth, I can’t be sure it’s the right move.”

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“You don’t have to explain yourself to me.” I pulled Cate’s top back into place. “We all do what we have to do.”

He scrubbed his jaw, and a slight smile curved his lips. “I think I can live with it as long as I get a full taste of your little Cate before the night is out.”

The bitch in the trunk banged around some more.

“I can’t wait to meet yours. What’s her name?”

“Morgan. Hired her a couple weeks ago to be my maid. No family, no close friends. You know the deal.”

“Yeah, Cate doesn’t speak to her family. A real sob story.” I kissed her on the cheek. “Isn’t that right, little one?”

The driver opened my door.

“Let me go.” Cate tried to push away from me, but she was still too weak.

“Let you go?” I pulled her out of the car with me, then walked her up the front stairs as Caleb freed his girl from the trunk. “Why would I do something silly like that?”

Marie Vanth met me just inside the foyer, her black robe covering a sleek form, and a stole of raven’s feathers decorating her shoulders.

She smiled and gave me a slight bow. “Welcome back.”

“Thanks for inviting me.” I hefted Cate around to my front. “We’re ready. And the money’s already been wired.”

“I know.” She smiled, the slight crow’s feet at the corners of her eyes the only tell as to her age. Her smooth alabaster skin could be thirty or sixty, or even older if the rumors about her were true. “Everything is prepared. Please enjoy yourselves.” She stepped back and one of her servants, a young man with hair as black as Vanth’s, guided us down a dark-paneled hallway lit solely with black candles. He seemed almost familiar, but perhaps I’d seen him on my last visit.

“I want to go home.” Cate tried to dig in her heels, but I pulled her along with me. The drug hadn’t worn off enough for her to put up a real fight ... yet.

My blood heated and my cock thickened at how she would struggle when the ritual began. That was the fun part, the highlight of my trip.

Ten years ago, I’d brought another young, stupid secretary to Madame Vanth’s home. What happened that night was the only reason I shot to the top of the corporate world. From the COO of a shitty startup with zero potential to the man on the cover of Forbes—I had amazing good fortune. And all it took was a little sacrifice. The last girl was an easy loss. She was a shit secretary and an even worse fuck, but she bled out just fine. Cate was different, more alive somehow. I almost regretted how this evening would end for her, but not enough to change our path.

“Sir.” The servant motioned us into the ballroom along the back of the house.

We entered the room with soaring windows, black floors and walls, and a fire marshal’s worst nightmare of candles. Two others were already working on lashing their sacrifices to benches, beds, or the chains that hung from the high ceiling. Each cry and muffled scream sent a shot of adrenaline pumping through me.

“I can’t wait for you to scream for me.” I grabbed the front of Cate’s shirt and ripped it apart.

“Stop.” She slapped my hand, lost her balance, and fell back onto a deep emerald divan.

I made quick work of her skirt even though she tried to kick me a few times. Her shoes fell off during the struggle. When she was completely bare, I lifted her and perched her on the leather horse. She fought, getting stronger by the second, but I strapped her hands and then her feet.

“Let me go!” She yanked at the leather cuffs around her wrists, but she was held fast.

I plucked a ball gag from the small table set up beside the divan.

She shook her head. “No!”

“Open.” I stood in front of her.

She clamped her jaw shut and turned her head.

“Do you want me to hurt you? Is that it?” I grabbed her hair and wrenched her head around to me. “Because I don’t have to, you know?” I trailed my hands around to her ass, her pussy on full display from the back. Running my fingers along her wet slit, I stroked her as she writhed and fought. But it didn’t take long until she was panting, her hips moving against my fingers. She couldn’t help herself. Fucking hot. I returned to her face and strapped the ball gag on as she stared at me through a haze of lust and fear.

More people had arrived as I’d played with her pussy, the room set up for maybe half a dozen couples.

“Fewer people this year,” I called to Caleb.

“More good luck for us, I suppose.” He manhandled his girl—a fiery one with dark hair and angry eyes—onto a bed, strapping her wrists with leather cuffs.

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She screamed, but he hadn't removed her gag. Still, she was loud and angry, and I couldn't wait for my turn.

Cate yanked at her restraints and turned her head to pierce me with a searing glare.

"I thought you wanted to have some fun tonight." I unbuttoned my shirt. "This is just part of it. Happy birthday, Cate."

She tried to bite down on the black ball gag, but her teeth slipped right off.

"You're going to have to stow those teeth, sweetheart." I unbuttoned my pants and shucked them and my shorts to the floor. "I have something for you to suck on a little later. But if you bite me—" I slapped her ass hard, the resounding sting in my hand getting my blood pumping. "There'll be consequences. Ugly ones."

She shook her cuffs again, but had zero chance of freeing herself. I'd forgotten how much I loved the power, the sheer domination of this place. Here, I was a fucking god, and Cate was nothing more than a plaything. More than domination, this was the complete overthrow of her will, replacing it with my own. Not some silly BDSM game where she had a safe word and a way out, this was real. I held her life in my hand, and I intended to squeeze every drop out of her before I was done.

I gripped my cock, stroking myself slowly as I bent over to slide my tongue up her hot cunt. She jolted, but couldn't escape me.

Marie walked in, her dark-haired servants flanking her, and took her position at the head of the room. I gave Cate, her body now shaking, one more lick before walking

around to stand beside her.

Leaning down, I whispered in her ear. “I hope you’re ready.”

The best part? I knew she wasn’t.

Chapter Five

Cate

“Welcome.” The woman at the front of the room raised both her hands, her black robe draping around her. “This year’s ceremony is a bit more intimate than those that have come before.” Her low voice was almost hypnotic, but her eyes burned a trail around the room.

She paused for only a moment as she looked at me, then moved along to another helpless victim. “This ceremony is far more special than the others. Great power lies in all of you, and to make the most of it, we needed to bring only the strongest.”

I glanced at Ted. He smirked slightly, her words caressing his ego. Dark ink spread along his chest. I’d never seen him stripped like this, his muscled body inked with a thick, dark cross from his chest to his navel. Green snakes curled around the emblem, their red eyes seeming to focus on me.

The woman gestured to the men at her side. They walked to the back of the room and returned with a large black goblet, sized for a giant, and placed it on the floor in front of her.

“Communion, my friends. It is the one sacrament that binds us all, that draws us here, that combines the power of the group into a potent wine.” She pulled a silver dagger from her sleeve and pierced her wrist, then held it over the goblet. Blood dribbled

into it, and a faint green light emanated from the center of the black cup.

Goosebumps broke out all along my skin as I watched her sway, her dark hair luminous and her eyes flashing bright green.”

“This is the beginning of the blood rite. Do what you must to satisfy the needs of your flesh. Once that is finished, you will give your sacrifices to God, Lucifer, and all the gods in-between.” She stowed the knife and pulled her wrist back to her side. “What you do here tonight is between you and the gods, all of them. Satisfy yourselves, return to your basest needs, for you were formed in their image, and every action you take tonight brings more glory to them.”

The candles in the room burned higher, like torches, then settled down again as the woman retreated into the shadowy rear of the room.

“That’s my cue.” Ted ran a hand through my hair.

A cry ripped through the room.

I turned my head as far to the right as I could.

A nude woman was strapped to a black X a few yards away, her hands bound, her light brown body shaking as a man used a flogger on her. She wasn’t gagged, her full-throated screams echoing around the room as the man swung hard, leaving red welts along her ass and back.

“Aren’t you glad that’s not you?” Ted whispered in my ear.

I yanked on my restraints again, but the black leather didn’t even hint at giving way.

“Don’t be like that.” He trailed a hand down my back as he walked behind me. “This

doesn't have to be unenjoyable for you.”

A woman's breathy moan careened around me. I tried to crane my head to the left and find where the sound came from. All I could make out was a large man pumping his hips into a bound woman, her ass in the air, her face hidden.

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I jolted when Ted slid his finger along my sex again.

“For being so sweet and innocent, your pussy sure does like what’s going on here.” He pressed a finger inside me. “Wet doesn’t lie, Cate. And you’ve been wet since the car.”

He pressed a kiss to the top of my ass, his finger pulsing inside me. When he bore down with his teeth, I screamed against the gag.

“Just a love nip, Cate.” He pulled his finger out and pressed something much thicker to my entrance. I turned and glared at him.

The moans grew, skin slapping on skin, and more than one woman was screaming.

He gripped my waist. “I’ve been wanting this since you came in for your interview.”

I shook my head, my hair flying as my muscle tightened and I tried to cringe away from him.

“Shh.” He smoothed his hands up my sides and gripped my breasts, his cock pressing into me so slightly. “You’re going to enjoy it. I can tell.”

A cry stuck in my throat as he pushed inside me.

“Fuck.” He squeezed my breasts, his big hands barely containing them. “You’re tight.” Thrusting harder, he seated himself fully inside me.

I breathed in hard through my nose as the sensation of fullness washed through me. I was impaled, unable to do anything except take what he was giving me. Trapped by my restraints and his body, I clenched my eyes shut and tried to concentrate on my breathing.

But when he pinched my nipples between his thumbs and forefingers, my mind came back online, bursts of heat coursing through my veins at his rough touches.

He pulled out, then slammed back, my body rocking as he started a hard fuck. Grasping my hips, he leveraged himself deep into me, taking every last bit of space I had to give. Our bodies slapped together, my skin stinging, my pussy aching. Each thrust was punctuated by his masculine sounds—grunts and groans—and his fingers dug into me.

“Such good pussy, Jesus.” He pressed his forehead to my back and kept rocking into me, his pace slowing a little. “I want this to last, little Cate.”

“Save some for me.” Caleb’s voice cut through the screams and moans.

“Get some.” Ted pulled out.

My muscles relaxed, and I let my head hang. Caleb’s girl was spread eagle on a bed behind me, her body covered in pink bite marks and her pussy swollen and red. A flogger lay to the side. Her eyes bored into mine. She boiled with rage while I’d given up. Why couldn’t I be more like her?

Ted walked around to my front and pulled my ball gag free. “There’s no point screaming. No one will care.” He stroked my cheek. “Some would probably enjoy hearing it, to be honest.”

“You can’t do this.” I wet my parched lips with my tongue.

“I can do whatever I want with you, sweet Cate.” He laughed and fisted his cock, pressing the tip to my mouth. “Now suck me off.”

I bared my teeth.

“I wouldn’t.” He tsked and grabbed a handful of my hair, squeezing until all the pain receptors on my scalp lit up like a Christmas tree. “I can do much, much worse than anything you’ve seen so far. I promise you.” His glare sent a chill through me, his blue eyes icy and dark. “Now open.”

With a shaking chin, I opened my mouth.

“Better.” His grip on my hair relaxed as he slid his cock against my tongue.

I tasted myself and a hint of salt from his pre-come.

“Suck.” He pressed one palm to my cheek and kept the other hand in my hair.

Sealing my lips around him, I sucked on his head and stared at the snakes on his abs that seemed to hiss back at me.

When another hand landed on my ass, I tried to pull away from Ted, but his grip hardened on my hair, and he pushed his cock deeper into my mouth.

“Yours got a tight cunt?” Ted asked over my head.

“Very.” Caleb massaged my ass with both hands. “But I like to play the field a little. Then I’ll blow my load inside her. The grand finale will have to wait, though, because the night is young.”

“As long as I get my turn.”

“Sure thing. You tried her ass?” Caleb dipped a finger in my pussy and pulled the wetness to the tight hole between my cheeks.

“Not yet.” Ted pushed farther, his cock tickling the back of my throat.

I gagged a little.

He pulled out, then returned harder, choking me. “I’ll let you have first dibs on that.”

“Thank you, my good sir.” Caleb massaged my asshole, spreading more wetness along my puckered skin.

When he sank a finger into me, I tried to shake my head.

Ted gripped my hair with both hands and started fucking my mouth, his balls slapping against my chin as his cock slid along my tongue. I gagged, but Ted didn’t let up this time. He pushed past my tongue, the head of his cock lodging in my throat.

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I dug my nails into the leather horse and tried to breathe through my nose as panic welled inside me. My air was cut off, and Ted held me in place as Caleb pushed a finger into my asshole.

“I bet she’s a virgin.” Caleb pressed around the edges of hole, then added another finger.

“Her pussy took my cock like a champ, so I doubt it. Her ass, though.” Ted finally pulled back, and I gasped in air. “Maybe.” He pulled my head up to him, spit dripping down my chin. “Have you ever been fucked in the ass before?”

Caleb pushed his fingers in deeper, the feeling alien and nearing on pain.

“N-no.”

“Didn’t think so.” Ted pushed my head back down and shoved his cock into my mouth.

“Good.” Caleb pulled his fingers out, then spit on my hole. “I like being first.”

“Makes me jealous.” Ted pulled his cock out and slapped it on my cheek. “But I hate to give up this mouth.”

I winced as Caleb used his thumbs to spread my cheeks, then pressed his cock against my asshole.

“It won’t fit.” I tried to surge forward, but was met with Ted’s cock. He pushed it into

my mouth and rocked his hips.

“Suck me. I want to feel your tongue on my balls, pretty Cate.”

My breath stopped as he lodged himself in my throat. I kept gagging, but couldn't expel him.

He pushed deeper. “Tongue out.”

I eased my tongue over my lips, the tip tracing the skin of his balls.

He jerked back, then forward again. At least I could take a breath. But it was quickly erased by the searing pain in my ass.

“Jesus.” Caleb spread me even wider. “Her ass is tighter than anything I've ever felt.”

Tears came to my eyes as his cock entered me, then pushed slowly deeper.

I can't take it. I screamed, but the sound ended on Ted's cock as he kept my head still and face fucked me.

My ass burned, and my lips ached, but I couldn't stop what was happening. There was no way out for me.

When Caleb reached around my thigh and found my clit, I fought his touch. But arching my back only sent him deeper, his cock like a piston in and out of my ass. And when I tried to bow my back instead, Caleb pressed two fingers inside my pussy.

My eyes rolled back, the heat in my ass and the fullness in my pussy overwhelming me.

“She likes it.” Ted grabbed my chin and pulled my gaze to his as his cock slid against my tongue. “Don’t you, Cate? You like being treated like this.”

I shook my head, a weak protest as Caleb’s fingers returned to my clit.

“Fuck, you trying to make me blow on your pretty face?” Ted gripped his cock. “Stick your tongue out.”

I obeyed. He slapped his cock head on my tongue, then rubbed it back and forth, smearing wetness on my lips and chin.

I panted as Caleb fingered my clit, his cock a thick intruder in my ass.

“You want to come again?” Ted teased his cock around my lips. “I know you do.” He reached down and unstrapped one wrist, then the other.

I sat up and tried to swing at Ted, but Caleb pulled my arms behind me and slipped his arm through my elbows. He pulled me tight against him, his cock still in my ass, and my ankles trapped in the leather straps.

Ted eased onto the horse in front of me, then grabbed a handful of my hair and pulled my head back. Caleb’s mouth found mine, his tongue invading me in the same brutal strokes of his cock. Ted’s hot mouth circled one nipple, and he snaked a hand to my pussy.

“No,” I cried into Caleb’s mouth.

He thrust inside me and increased the pressure on my arms, forcing my back to arch so he could slide deeper.

Ted grabbed my chin and turned my face to his, taking my mouth in a scorching kiss

as he pushed two fingers inside me and used the palm of his hand to massage my clit.

Pressed between them like a flower in the pages of a book, I had no escape. Caleb kept fucking my ass, each stroke pain and pleasure mixed. Ted's fingers played me, continually stoking the heat that pooled between my legs and drenched my hot skin. His mouth was just as wicked, his tongue teasing me and stealing my breath. Keeping one hand at my throat, Ted squeezed, stopping my breath until my lungs burned. When he let go, euphoria cascaded through my blood.

He constricted my breath again, and everything inside me wound tight, my legs trembling as he continued working my clit. Each stroke from Caleb's thick cock had my eyes fluttering closed, the lack of oxygen making the edges of my vision go dark.

But when Ted let go, my release exploded inside me. I gasped as the pleasure sliced through me, cutting away my protests and drowning me. I moaned loudly as Ted bit down on my nipple, Caleb's grip hardening on my hips as my pussy pulsed.

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“Aww, fuck.” Caleb pounded me a few more times. “I can’t last with her ass squeezing me like this.” He pulled out as my orgasm finally began to dim, the aftershocks shuddering through me.

“Weak.” Ted laughed and brought his fingers to his lips, licking my taste from them.

“Shut up, man.” Caleb bit my shoulder, his teeth burning into my skin as Ted cupped my breasts.

I tried to catch my breath, to recover from the wrongness of the situation, but my head spun.

Ted leaned close, his dark eyes still hungry. “I know you liked that.”

Another series of screams erupted from behind me, but I couldn’t turn to look, not when I had predators so close on either side.

“Are you done? Can I go?” My voice quavered.

“Go?” He shook his head. “Why would you want to leave this party?”

My heart thumped so hard I could barely hear myself speak. “I just figured that maybe you’d be done with me, and I could go, and I swear I won’t tell anyone what—”

“Oh, sweet Cate. Look around.” He straightened and pointed at the woman still strapped to the wooden X. The man who’d been hitting her had dropped the flogger

and uncuffed her legs. With her spread wide, he fucked her like an animal, his grunts loud and the sounds of his impacts ricocheting off the dark walls. Her head lolled back, and I couldn't see her face. Then he pointed to another woman on her knees, a man choking her with his cock. Her hands were tied behind her back, and her legs were spread. Some sort of machine worked beneath her, and a dildo penetrated her pussy and her ass as she sucked and bobbed her head to the man's fierce rhythm.

"Did you really think I was done with you?" He rested his palm at my throat, his possession of me complete. "We've only just begun."

Chapter Six

Ted

I eased off the leather horse. My cock demanded I take the rest of Cate and finish what I'd started earlier at the restaurant, but it wasn't time. Not yet. I wanted to savor every second of the debauchery I'd earned.

Turning to Caleb's girl, I jerked my chin at her. "I'd like to go ahead and get a taste."

"Sure." Caleb grabbed Cate by the hair. "How about I bring this one over and we share."

"I like it." I leaned down and uncuffed Cate's ankle.

Her leg shot out, but I caught her ankle and bit down on her calf until she screamed.

"Be good." I smacked her ass as Caleb freed her other leg. "You're always so submissive at the office. I didn't expect this little rebellious streak."

She turned to me, an unfamiliar fire in her eyes. "Fuck you."

Caleb pulled her off the horse, one arm wrenched behind her back.

“Oh, my.” Vanth’s cool voice trickled down my spine.

I turned.

She perused me with one eyebrow arched. “Your sacrifice has a smart mouth.”

“Generally not, but I think the stress is getting to her.” I gave her what I hoped was my most charming smile. Being a guest here, I couldn’t afford to piss her off. Not to mention I needed what she would give me at the end of the night.

She stepped to Cate and ran a finger down her throat, stopping just over her heart. “He underestimates you.”

“Let me go.” Cate’s eyes glimmered with tears.

“I’m afraid that’s not possible.” Vanth smiled, her even, white teeth marked by canines that seemed preternaturally sharp.

“Please, I won’t tell.”

“Oh, I’m certain you won’t.” Vanth smiled and turned her dark eyes to me. “How are you faring this evening?”

“Wonderfully. Thank you again for having me.”

She smiled again, her dark eyes glistening like onyx. “I haven’t had you yet.” Her hand shot out and gripped my cock.

I stifled a groan as she stroked me slowly.

“I’m afraid I’m not allowed to partake.” She frowned, though merriment still lived in her dark eyes. “It would interfere with the ritual. But just because I can’t fuck doesn’t mean I can’t enjoy.” Her hand smoothed up and down my shaft, and I could swear there was the smallest hint of electricity in her touch.

“I’m sorry to hear you aren’t on the table.” I eyed the pale skin of her throat.

“Maybe some other time.”

Her touch was making it hard for me to think, much less engage in conversation.

“Remember, no blood until I say so.” She glanced at Cate. “Though yours looks like you’ve been treating her quite well. Though perhaps a little flushed.”

“I’ve been spoiling her.” I swallowed hard as she thumbed the tip of my cock. “Making her come.”

“Good. Though the pleasure is yours to take, giving will make the night easier for them. Make the end more bearable.” She gave my cock one more smooth pull before dropping her hand. “Any mercy you give isn’t wasted.” She glanced to the man reaming the woman lashed to the cross, a true frown turning her lips and narrowing her eyes. “Though like most lessons, it’s one some will learn the hard way.” She moved off through the room like a dark bird wheeling in the night.

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“Jesus. I don’t know if I’m turned on or terrified.” Caleb watched Vanth’s retreat.

“She’d definitely be worth a go.” I could still feel the slight tingle along my bare skin.

“What did she mean about mercy?”

“No clue.” I shrugged. “Doesn’t matter. We’ll just have to enjoy ourselves without her, won’t we?”

Caleb grabbed Cate by the hair. She seemed to crumple as Caleb dragged her over to the bed where his girl still fought her restraints.

I wanted to feel sorry for her, but nothing stirred in my heart. It had been dead since the first ritual all those years ago. I’d do what was necessary to protect my name, to make sure that my legend lived on long beyond my actual lifespan. What I was building was far more important than any of Cate’s tears.

Caleb shoved her down and shackled her next to the raging girl who gnashed her teeth as I approached.

“Don’t fucking touch me!” She arched her back. It didn’t help her escape, but it did give me an even more tantalizing view of her body. Slim and with a narrow waist that flared into full hips. I licked my lips. Her breasts—small but perfect—shook with her efforts, and her dark nipples were hard, begging for my mouth.

I sank between her knees and ran my hands to her hips. “Caleb already did a number on you.” She was swollen between her legs, the flesh red from the flogging she’d

endured.

“Morgan needed a little work before the fun could start.” Caleb shrugged and smoothed his hands down Cate’s curvy body. “But I don’t seemed to have made a dent in her wildness.”

“I’ll kill you.” Morgan glared up at me.

“That’s not how this night ends.” I leaned over and ran my tongue along her cunt.

Cate gripped the headboard as Caleb sheathed himself in her tight pussy with one hard stroke. Jealousy flared inside me, but I turned my focus to the prey in front of me as the bed began to shake with Caleb’s rough fucking.

I pressed my mouth to her slit and toyed with her as she struggled against me. “Why fight?”

She yanked one knee toward me, but couldn’t manage to do any damage. She was too tightly bound.

“Get the fuck off me,” she growled.

Cate breathed hard as Caleb ground into her.

“It doesn’t have to be bad.” I pressed my mouth to her pussy, my tongue tickling her clit. She writhed, but I didn’t give up. Instead, I sank two fingers inside her and continued to lick her sweet spot.

After a few moments, her body began to loosen a little, her hips rolling instead of straining. Subtle, but noticeable. I curled my fingers, looking for that small ridge inside her.

She arched, her heels digging into the bed. I had her. Pushing harder with my tongue, I stroked her until her thighs began to shake, her hips locking. She bit her lip, but I felt when she came, her pussy convulsing around my fingers as I ran the broad side of my tongue against her.

When she finally took a breath, her hips relaxing, I smiled up at her.

Her knee pushed against me in a hard knock, but that was all she could do.

Sitting up, I wiped my mouth and stared down at her flushed body. Hatred roiled in her eyes, but that made it hotter.

“Don’t.” She glared.

I put one hand over her mouth—just for fun really—and positioned my cock at her entrance. She tried to shake my hand off, but I clamped down and shoved inside her.

“Fuck!” I barked as her slick walls compressed me until I saw stars.

I pulled back and shoved home. She tried to bite my hand. Fucking hot. I gripped her shoulder with my other hand and shoved her down on my cock as I thrust forward. Each impact made my balls tighten up with the need to release, but I was saving that for my sweet Cate. But I’d enjoy the hellion until it was time. I fucked her hard, mercilessly. Her tits bounced with each impact, and I surveyed her captive form, the way she tensed and tried to revolt, but had nowhere to go. Having this kind of power over another was nothing short of intoxicating.

A low drumming sound began to fill the room. It was almost time.

“Trade me. I need to finish.” Caleb pulled out of Cate, her mouth open as she panted.

I hated to let Morgan's tight pussy go, but we were out of time. This part of the ritual was almost complete.

I climbed over to Cate, and Caleb took my spot between Morgan's legs.

"How could you?" Cate's eyes watered as she stared up at me.

"How couldn't I?" I slapped her breast and pinched her nipple.

"You're a monster."

I smiled and pushed inside her, her pussy still wet and hot. I'd blow in no time. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

“Ted, please.”

I shushed her and leaned down to run my teeth along her throat. Her sweat was sweet on my tongue as I slid in and out of her.

She shivered, goosebumps rising along her skin as I finally let go, fucking her just the way I wanted.

“Ted,” she gasped as I bit her throat—not hard enough to break the skin, but hard enough for her to feel my claim on her.

“I’m going to coat your pussy with me, sweet Cate.” I hammered deeper, taking every bit of her.

Her tits slid against my chest as I rode her, and Morgan moaned low in her throat as Caleb slapped her tits.

Just the sounds had my balls demanding release. The drumming sounds grew louder. It was time. I thrust hard into her. She arched and gripped the headboard. My load spilled inside her, each spurt pulling a rough grunt from me as I sealed this part of the ritual, claiming her body and soul as my own. I ground into her a few more times, getting every last drop of my come inside her, then pulled out and sat back, my chest heaving.

Chapter Seven

Cate

Ted sat between my knees, his breath coming in hard bursts. Caleb did the same, sitting up and running a hand through his hair. The matching cross and snakes on his chest seemed to move along with him, the snakes twining with each inhale.

Masculine grunts and groans sounded all around us—the men finishing in each of their victims.

“Are you going to let me go now?” My chin wavered.

Ted smiled. “Didn’t I please you?”

“Y-yes.” I nodded. “But I figured since you, you know, since you—”

“Came deep inside you that I’m done with you?”

“Yes.”

“No, Cate.” He shook his head. “There’s more.”

“More?” I shook my head. “I can’t take anymore.”

“Sure you can.” He stood and began unshackling me.

“Please, Ted. Please. I’ll never say a word.”

“I know you won’t.”

His words sent a chill through me.

“How can you be so cruel?” I yelped as he freed my hands and yanked me from the bed.

“It’s just survival.”

“Survival?” I fought as he dragged me back to the leather horse. “What about this is surviving?”

“You’ll see.”

“See what?” I reared back and swung at him, but he caught my hand before I could slap him.

“Power comes with a price.” He shrugged and fastened my hands to the leather horse, but left me standing. “And I’m always willing to pay.”

“What does that even mean?”

He pulled on a black robe. “It means that what you think of as cruel is just me doing what I need to do to keep my life on track. If I want to remain CEO, to keep shooting up the Forbes rankings, and to eventually settle down with a family that understands the sort of man I am, then this is what needs to be done.”

“You’re insane.” I cringed away from him as he stroked my hair.

“Like I said, you’ll see.”

The woman in black strode up to the front of the crowd again, her eyes surveying everyone. “The ritual of flesh is complete. Now, we move on to the ritual of blood.” She motioned to the dark area of the room behind her.

My knees went weak. “Blood?”

Ted patted my shoulder. “I didn’t want to give away the plot too soon, but—” He

sighed. “You aren’t leaving here alive.”

My eyes widened and I stared at him. “Ted, please—”

“There’s no going back.” He had the nerve to give me a small smile. “This was done from the minute you walked into my office for that interview. A girl with no close family or friends? A girl who no one will miss? A girl who hasn’t told anyone she’s been flirting with the boss? Come on, Cate, you may as well have had a sign blinking over your head that said ‘sacrifice me to your pagan gods.’” He laughed low in his throat. “Okay, maybe that last part was a bit over the top, but you see what I mean here. You’re perfect. You’re going to disappear tonight, and sure, maybe the cops will eventually come looking, but I’ll say you left work early and said you were going to meet someone for a date. No one will be able to link you to me or this place. I haven’t told a soul about you.”

My head spun. “The waiter at the restau—”

“The servers there see me with a different girl every other night.” His eyebrows lowered apologetically. “None of them will remember a thing about you.”

The men around us began leading the women toward the back of the room, the dark area where the woman in black had disappeared moments before.

Ted adjusted his robe and tied it, then unbound me and took a smaller red robe and wrapped it around me.

“Here we go.” He tied it at my waist.

I eyed the edges of the room, looking at the exits. Young men with dark hair guarded each door and fanned out along the walls.

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Ted pulled me forward. “You can’t escape. I’d catch you or they would.” He inclined his head toward the nearest guard.

My feet seemed to be caught in sludge, and I began to pull at Ted’s grip. “I can’t—”

“You can. It’ll all be over soon. Painless, I promise.” He spoke of my impending murder as if it were nothing more than a shot at the doctor’s office.

“Ted, please don’t.” Tears welled in my eyes.

He wrapped his arm around my waist and pulled me forward past the raised dais and into the gloom. Caleb and Morgan walked next to us, though her wrists were bound, the gag back in her mouth.

“Shh.” Ted dug his fingers into my side. “Over soon, I promise.”

He carried me forward. The huge chalice sat in the middle of the floor, a red pentacle drawn around it on the black floor. I shook my head and pushed against Ted, but he was too strong.

“Bring your sacrifices and prepare.” The woman motioned for one of the guards to set out smaller chalices at each point of the pentagram. “Five have been chosen,” she intoned. “Five to receive the blessings of the holy trinity, those that live below, and those who existed in the void long before man appeared on the earth. Their power cannot be measured, but it can be drawn upon and shared. You five have brought powerful sacrifices, lights that will go out so that you may burn even brighter.”

Ted eased me to the floor in front of a chalice. It was then that I saw the dark, curved blade sitting next to it.

“Please, Ted.” I turned to him, my eyes piercing his with my pleas. “Don’t do this.”

“It’s done, Cate.” He stroked my cheek. “There’s no backing out.”

Morgan struggled as Caleb forced her to the floor beside us. Some of the other women fought, too, while others seemed cowed and broken, their knees hitting the floor without a fight.

“Don’t make this hard,” Caleb grabbed her by the hair.

“You have been prepared to receive the blessings of the many and the one.” The woman shed her cloak, her nude body ghostly in the low light. “You will be strengthened, protected, deified on earth as you deserve.”

Ted reached for the knife.

“No,” I tried to pull away, but he held me in place.

“This must be done.” His grip turned to iron as he lifted the blade from the black floor.

“This must be done. On my command.” The woman peered around the room, her eyes lighting on mine. “This final step is what is required. The gods demand sacrifice. The only way to reach your full potential is to finish the ritual.”

Ted raised the knife to my throat. “I’m sorry.” He said the words, but I didn’t believe him.

The woman clenched her fists. “Now, my daughters!”

I plunged the dagger into Ted’s heart.

Chapter Eight

Ted

I didn’t feel it at first. The slicing agony set in seconds later, and I tried to slit Cate’s throat. But my blade simply bounced off the fair skin of her neck. None of her blood. Nothing. Just a pool of crimson forming beneath me as my heart pumped and shredded against her blade.

“What—” I gasped as she twisted the knife.

“Now my daughters, collect the blood in your cups.” Vanth rushed around the pentagram, checking each couple and stopping in front of us.

“Hecate, well done.” She smiled and handed Cate the cup. “Drain him.” She pulled open my robe.

I sat back on my haunches as an odd coldness settled over me. “What is going on?” My lips could barely form the words.

Vanth patted my head as if I were a silly dog. “Sacrifice, of course.”

Cate smiled, all the fear gone from her face. “I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it, but it was so easy. The knife was right where you said it’d be in my robe, and I just ...” She let out a triumphant gasp. “I just did it!” She pressed the cup to the wound in my chest.

“Stop.” I tried to bat her hand away, but my movements were sluggish and weak.

“You’re my child, of course you could do it!” Vanth kissed Cate on the forehead. “Get all you can before his last breath, then stop. We don’t want dead blood mixing with the live. And one more thing.” Vanth kissed her again. “Happy birthday!”

Cate smiled. “Thanks, Mom.” She returned her gaze to mine. “I guess you’re the candle I’m blowing out, huh?”

Vanth laughed. “Oh, how droll you are Hecate.”

A low groan came from my left.

Vanth turned. “Morgana! Stop stabbing him! You won’t get enough live blood that way.” She hurried off as Cate gripped my shoulder, keeping me upright as my world began to go dark.

“Cate.” A wet bubble popped on my lips. Blood?

“It’s Hecate, really. Named after my great-great-great-great grandmother. Though there may be a few more ‘greats’ in there. Not entirely sure.” She gave me the same sweet smile I remembered from the day of her job interview. “Don’t look so confused.” She pressed the cup harder against me, as if trying to make sure she didn’t lose a drop. “There was a reason I showed up in your office that day, a reason I wanted the job, a reason I got the job, and a reason I played you so easily.”

I couldn't speak, everything in me going cold.

"But don't be mad." She leaned up and kissed the tip of my nose. "It's all about power, just like you said. You got the power all those years ago. I was too young then. My sisters and I—" She glanced around the room, but I couldn't see anything beyond her anymore. It was too dark. "We're all Marie's daughters. Different fathers. Mom has a habit of dispatching whoever she mates with." Her eyes glittered. "So black widow, right? Anyway, me and the girls, we're taking over."

I tried to shake my head, but couldn't move.

"And I don't mean in some 'I'm going to write a girl power blog' way. I mean, we're really taking over. With the power we're getting from each of you, we'll rule this place. That's been Mom's plan all along. You're just one of the lucky few who gets to put the whole thing in motion. They'll sing songs about you, Ted! About the sacrifice you gave to make this brave new world possible. We'll run your companies, take over your estates, and eventually take it all. We've been waiting a long time, trying to figure out when we could make our move. But, really, with the way you men—" She tapped her fingers on my shoulder, her grip strong, too strong. "And I don't mean all men, of course, but with the way men have been fucking up running things, it's time for some fresh blood." She glanced at my chest and winced. "Sorry. No pun intended." Her tinkling laugh echoed in my mind as my eyes closed. "Women are the way to save this whole shebang. Mom, my sisters, and I are just going to light the match to start the blaze. And don't worry about me getting busted, sweet Ted. You're going to disappear tonight, and sure, maybe the cops will eventually come looking, but I'll say you left work early and said you were going to meet someone for a date. No one will be able to link you to me or this place. I haven't told a soul about

you.” She spoke in a familiar voice. In my own voice using my words. “And the waiter at the restaurant?” She giggled. “He’s one of my brothers. You saw him when we walked in Mom’s front door, but you didn’t even recognize him.”

I slouched, my body going numb so that all I could sense was the horror in my sluggish veins. My ears felt like someone had stuffed cotton balls in them.

“Girls, come!” Vanth’s voice barely made it into my mind. “Bring your cups. It is time to commune with the divine and the infernal.”

“Rest now.” Cate lay me back on the floor. “My cup runneth over.”

I opened my eyes once more. Cate hovered above me, her eyes gone raven black and a wicked grin on her face. Those were the last things I saw.

She pressed my eyes closed. “Shh. I’ll take it from here.”

Epilogue

Cate

“I’m the one running? I thought Morgana was more of the politician sort.” I kicked my stilettos up on my desk, the sun pouring in from the corner windows behind me.

“Daughter, you know very well that Morgana’s temper makes her ill-suited for public life.” Mom sat back on the leather sofa and cast an appreciative look around my office. “I rather like what you’ve done in here.”

“Thanks. Ted’s office was rather boorish, to be honest. It needed a sprucing up.” I’d replaced all of his furniture and décor, opting for sleek glass and chrome instead of the heavy wooden shit that was supposed to denote power but only showed bad taste.

“Well done. And how’s McGovern doing under its new leadership?”

I smiled. “Ever since we’ve taken over, profits are up, costs are down, and employee morale is at an all-time high. Paid family leave went a long way toward keeping the staff happy, not to mention we’ve started paying all of their insurance costs instead of only a quarter. Honestly, I can’t imagine things going any better.”

“Same for all the other girls. They are doing quite well. The blessings were particularly strong this time, just as I predicted. Taking those five was the smartest move we could have made. And you made a particularly good choice with Ted as your target. He had absolutely no idea, did he?”

“None.” I snorted. Ted thought he was ever-so-clever. Not so much, but at least he was an excellent fuck. I doubt any other man could pleasure me the way he and his friend had. Rough, but so, so good. Too bad.

I cleared the naughty thoughts away. “I’m glad my sisters are faring well. Morgana said she’s going to institute mandatory paid vacation at her firm. That should be interesting to watch.”

“Oh, I rather like that. Now, back to this Senate business.” She leaned forward, her shrewd eyes on me. “You have to be the one. You have that wholesome look—from your father, of course.”

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I drew a pentagram over my heart. “May the harpies never trouble his soul.”

“Amen.” She sighed. “Anyway, you’ve got the look, the smarts, and you aren’t so quick to anger. You’re also the sharpest, so I think this is meant for you.”

“Why not you?”

She narrowed her eyes. “The wholesome look completely missed me, my darling.”

I laughed. “When you wear all black all the time and have a body like yours, you tend to miss that mark, yeah. You’re more vamp than anything else.”

“Thank you, dear. At my age, it’s so hard to keep attractive.” She peered down at her svelte figure. “Virgin’s blood has been harder to come by lately, but I found enough at an incel rally a few weeks ago that I have at least two baths’ worth.”

“Incel rally?” I cocked my head.

She waved her hand. “It’s these young men who are ‘involuntarily celibate’ or, in common parlance, they can’t get laid and hate women because of it. They get violent sometimes, too, targeting women who’ve turned them down, or just women in general. Rude beasts, the lot of them.”

“And they have rallies for this? You’ve got to be kidding.”

“No.” She smoothed her hands down her trim waist. “Thank heavens I’m not, because I racked up with all the virgins in their ranks. And their ridiculous anger

makes the blood even more potent.”

“If you want me in the Senate, then you’ll need to share some of it.” I patted my not-so-trim waist. “I could use a tuneup.”

She shook her head. “You are beautiful. Made in the image of Diana. You’ve no need for lotions and potions like me.”

My cold heart warmed. Mom always knew just what to say. “Thanks.”

“I just speak the truth, little witch.” She rose and headed to the door. “I’ll go ahead and put out a call for a campaign manager, public speaking coach, all that. We’ll have you ready for the primary and general election in a year. You’ll win in a landslide. And then, we’ll be one step closer to the true fonts of power.”

I arched a brow. “Higher than the Senate?”

“With the roll we’re on, you’ll be sitting behind the desk at Pennsylvania Avenue in no time.” She walked out with her usual flare, the door closing on its own behind her.

I turned and stared out my windows at the city. The sun was going down, turning the skyscrapers into mirrors reflecting fiery orange and deep red.

Red, like Ted’s blood. I pulled a small vial from between my breasts. I’d kept a little souvenir from our night together and wore it around my neck, hoarding a piece of his vicious soul.

“Oh, Ted.” I grinned. “If you could only see me now.”