



Felix (4 Seats #2)

Author: *Cassandra Doon*

Category: Romance

Description: SHOW ME WHAT THAT PRETTY MOUTH CAN DO.

Every day, I am consumed by my past.

The memories haunt me relentlessly, driving me to write about my demons and turn them into best-selling novels.

They are my only escape, my safe haven from the pain and trauma that still lingers within me.

But one day, as I make my way to Sydney for a book signing, that sanctuary is shattered.

In restaurant, his eyes pierce through me like shards of obsidian.

He tells me I belong to him now, that he will protect me from all harm.

Its hard to believe his words when I discover he is an assassin for the ruthless Italian Mafia, a man who revels in causing pain and suffering. Will he also take pleasure in inflicting it upon me?

Felix Greyson is both my potential saviour and my possible downfall. Will he truly save me from the darkness or will he drag me down into it alongside himself?

Only time will tell as I am thrown into a dangerous game of survival and deception with this notorious man by my side.

Felix is Book 1.5 in the 4 Seats book series.

All books are stand lone, can be read out of order and separately, they are fast paced, with HEA.

Although reading in order for the full experience is recommended.

The 4 Seats is a Australian-based Italian Mafia Romance Novel featuring Sydney, Melbourne and Gold Coast.

This book has Trigger Warnings attached. This book is a work of fiction.

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Chapter One

Aurora Henry

The plane's wheels hit the tarmac hard, jolting me awake from my half-sleep.

I'm in Sydney now—there's no turning back.

My heart races as the weight of the upcoming book signing event bears down on me like a ton of bricks.

This isn't going to be a walk in the park—it never is when you've got a past like mine.

“Welcome to Sydney,” announces the flight attendant as I exit the aircraft.

The air here is different—electrifying. It makes my skin crawl, but not in a bad way.

I step out of the terminal and breathe, trying to steady myself.

I feel the energy pulsating through the city, the hum of traffic, and the chatter of people.

It's been an eternity since I last stepped foot in this place, and I never found myself pining to return.

The memories that haunt these grounds are too painful to revisit.

Each step is a reminder of my past. As I gaze around at the familiar surroundings, my heart remains heavy with regret and sadness.

This is a place of bittersweet nostalgia, where the ghosts of my past still linger, but it holds no allure for me now.

As I exit the terminal, I see a gruff-looking man holding a sign that reads, 'Aurora Henry.' Clearly, this is my taxi driver.

"That's me," I say to the man, forcing a smile.

"Got a big day ahead?" he asks as he takes my luggage and hauls it into the boot.

"You could say that," I mutter, my mind racing with anticipation and nerves.

"Good luck then," he says, slamming the boot shut. "Jump in."

As we drive through Sydney, I can't help but feel the city closing in around me.

The towering skyscrapers loom like giants, casting long shadows over the bustling streets.

The smell of grease and exhaust fumes fills the air, mingling with the salty tang of the nearby harbour.

Horns blare, people shout, and laughter echoes through the alleys.

It's a wild symphony of chaos, alive and kicking.

"What you here for?" he asks.

“A book signing.” I sigh.

“Excited for it?” the driver asks in return.

“Sure,” I lie, the anxiety gnawing at my insides like a starving dog. I can’t let him know how much this event is messing with my head.

“What book did you write?” he asks, his curiosity piqued.

“Dancing with Masked Men,” I reply. “Today is mainly for that particular book.”

“I’ve heard about that one over the radio... heard it’s a real page-turner,” he continues, obviously trying to make small talk. I appreciate the effort, but right now, I need silence.

“Thanks,” I mutter, gazing out the window at the vibrant cityscape—so different from the darkness lurking within me. Sydney may be alive and thriving, but inside, I’m constantly fighting off demons from my past.

“Alrighty then, here we are,” announces the driver as we pull up to the hotel. “Have a good one, Aurora.”

“Thanks,” I say, shoving a wad of cash into his hand before stepping onto the busy sidewalk.

It isn’t until I’m halfway inside the hotel that I realise he dropped me off at the wrong one. Shit. I’m going to have to walk a few blocks to get to the correct hotel.

“Damn, Sydney’s a maze,” I mutter under my breath. The twisted streets and towering skyscrapers threaten to swallow me whole, but I refuse to let this city break me.

“Excuse me, miss.” A middle-aged bloke with greying hair approaches me. “Are you lost?”

“Something like that,” I reply, trying to keep the edge out of my voice. “Just need to find my way to the Hilton Hotel.”

“Ah, right around the corner there.” He points, his eyes lingering on my tattoos.

“Thanks,” I snarl, leaving him in the dust as I round the corner and see the hotel.

Thankfully, the bookshop where I am scheduled to sign is only one block from here.

As I walk through the sliding doors, a young man stands before me—tall and blond with piercing blue eyes.

If he were just ten years older, I might attempt to pursue him.

“Can I take your bags, miss?” he asks charmingly .

“Yes, thank you,” I reply, taking note of his name tag—Matt. Well, Matt, you handsome devil. You’ll be getting a tip today.

I follow Matt to the front desk to retrieve my room check-in and grab my room key.

As we walk, I admire his strong stature and confident demeanour and wonder if he is a dancer—his body looks suited for the role.

Once inside my room, I quickly change into my signing attire and head back out in search of the bookshop.

My event starts in thirty minutes, so I must arrive on time.

Deep breaths, Aurora , I tell myself, forcing my racing heart to slow.

Inside, I'm a fucking mess. My past traumas claw at my insides, threatening to spill out on the pavement as I head towards the bookshop doors.

The memories of cold metal cuffs biting into my flesh and the taste of blood from the countless beatings come to mind. I shudder, willing the darkness away.

"Welcome to our special event!" greets a perky employee as I push open the door. Her smile is too bright, her cheerfulness grating against my raw nerves. "You must be Aurora Henry. We're so excited to have you here!"

"Sure thing," I say, plastering on a fake grin as I follow her deeper into the shop. My broken past may haunt me, but I won't let it stop me from living my dream.

"Here's your table," she says, gesturing to a small setup near the back. A stack of my books sits neatly on the table, looking so innocent and untouched. If only they knew the horrors that lurked between those pages were, in fact, true stories .

"Thank you," I mutter, taking my seat and trying to push away the ghosts of my past.

"Alright, everyone, please welcome Aurora Henry!" announces the store manager, and I brace myself for the onslaught of questions, the probing eyes, and the inevitable judgement.

"Let's do this," I whisper, steeling my resolve as I meet the gaze of the first person in line. The darkness inside me may be a part of who I am, but it doesn't define me. I'm stronger than that. I've survived, and I'll keep surviving, no matter what life throws my way.

"Hi, I'm Aurora. Nice to meet you."

I'm sitting there, scrawling my name across the title page of yet another book, and I can't help but think that, fuck, this is exhausting. Smiling like some goddamn Stepford wife, I feel the ache in my cheeks from hours of faking it.

"Thank you so much, Aurora," some woman gushes as she clutches her newly signed copy to her chest. "I love your work!"

"Thanks," I mutter, forcing a smile. "Thanks for coming," I say as if we're old fucking friends or something.

After what feels like an eternity, the last eager reader finally straggles away, their footsteps echoing through the now-empty bookshop.

The walls seem to close in on me as I gather up my belongings, eager to escape this claustrophobic hellhole.

The overwhelming presence of people and crowds has been too much for me to handle for years, the constant chatter and noise setting my nerves on edge.

My heart races and palms sweat as I hurry towards the door, desperate for some fresh air .

Finally, I slip out into the balmy Sydney night, relieved to be free from the suffocating atmosphere inside and head towards the hotel.

As I approach the hotel, I notice the sexy blond-haired doorman waiting to greet me. His eyes linger on the tattoos that snake up my arms, remnants of a life I'd rather forget. But hey, he's not bad to look at—a nice distraction from the endless parade of adoring fans.

"Evening," he says with a smirk, holding open the door for me.

“Hey,” I reply, nodding my head in acknowledgement. Yum, it’s a pity he is so young.

The lift ride up to my room feels like an eternity, and I’m reminded of how much I fucking hate travelling. As soon as the door slides open, I make a beeline for my room, tossing my bag on the bed.

“Room service?” I mumble into the phone after dialling the front desk. “Yeah, I’ll take a burger and fries. And a bottle of tequila.”

Hanging up, I strip off the layers of constricting clothes, tossing them carelessly on the floor. Sliding between the cool sheets, I let out a sigh of relief—finally, some fucking peace and quiet.

As I lay there, waiting for my food to arrive, I can’t help but feel the weight of the day bearing down on me.

The faces of those eager fans and the whispered words of praise all feel like a cruel joke.

If they knew the real Aurora Henry, the woman behind the carefully crafted persona, would they still be so enamoured?

Or would they recoil in horror, desperate to erase the grisly images from their minds ?

Would they ever realise the people in my books are real, and the horrific events I wrote about happened to me?

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Chapter Two

Aurora Henry

The sun's a real bitch this morning, stabbing my eyes through the blinds I forgot to close. Fucking great. I groan as I shove my face deeper into the pillow, trying to ignore the world outside, but I can't escape it forever. There's another book signing today and lunch with my publicist.

"Get your shit together, Aurora," I mutter to myself, peeling my body from the tangled mess of sheets.

I drag myself to the bathroom, taking in my reflection in the mirror—long, black hair a mess and dark circles under my eyes that scream 'I've seen some shit' louder than words ever could. I splash cold water on my face, shake off the remnants of sleep, and start preparing for the day.

"Stupid book signing," I grumble as I pull on a black business dress that shows off my ink. Might as well own it. People call me brave, but they don't know the half of it. They see my tattoos, read my books about pain and survival, and think they get it. But they don't. Nobody does .

"Alright, let's fucking do this," I say to my reflection, lips twisting into a smirk.

My stomach churns at the thought of the bookshop full of people wanting to pick my brain.

And then there's lunch with my publicist—the woman who thinks she knows me best because she reads my words and profits off my pain. But I'm more than they'll ever see.

My phone buzzes, snapping me out of my thoughts. It's a text from my publicist.

Vanessa: Looking forward to our meeting, Aurora!

"Sure you are," I mumble, sliding the phone back into my pocket.

"Let's get this over with," I say as I grab my bag and step out into the world, ready to fight whatever comes my way.

Stepping out of the hotel, I squint against the bright sunlight.

I fucking hate mornings—always have. As I fumble for my sunglasses, a sleek black car pulls up to the curb.

My heartbeat quickens as the tall, blond doorman, Matt, jumps out, all smiles and muscles.

He's got that whole Nordic god look going on.

"Morning, miss!" he calls as he holds the door open so I can see the driver.

Damn, if this guy isn't even sexier than the doorman—olive skin, dark hair, and eyes that seem to see right through me.

He waves to Matt and drives off, leaving me with nothing but daydreams about jumping in that car and doing some seriously naughty things with him. My pussy clenches at the thought .

“Hey, Matt,” I mutter, tearing my gaze away from the car as it disappears around the corner. “Have a good day.”

“Thanks, you too!” he replies with a grin that could melt icebergs. Fucking hell, why does everybody have to be so damn cheerful in the morning?

I shake off the thought and start walking down the street towards the bookshop where I’m signing today.

The sidewalk is crowded with people rushing to work, their faces buried in their phones or hidden behind takeaway coffee cups.

Don’t these people ever stop to think about what they’re missing?

The world is going to shit, and they’re too busy scrolling through feeds and sipping lattes to notice.

Speaking of which, I could use a caffeine hit myself. I duck into a coffee shop and order an espresso—no sugar, no milk. Just the way I like it—bitter and black like my soul.

“Here you go, miss,” the barista says as he hands me the cup. I force a smile and mumble my thanks.

Sipping the hot, dark liquid, I head back out onto the street, feeling the familiar burn as it slides down my throat. The caffeine hits me like a slap in the face, waking me up and sharpening my senses. Time to face the day.

I step inside the bookshop, and a familiar chill runs down my spine. The place is packed with people, all eager to get their hands on my latest creation. I take a deep breath, bracing myself for the onslaught of questions and compliments that’ll come

my way.

“Miss Henry, we’re so happy to have you here,” the store manager gushes as she leads me to a table piled high with copies of my book. “Your fans are very excited.”

“Thank you, can’t wait,” I mutter under my breath, plastering on a fake smile as I sit. Let the signing begin.

For three fucking hours, I scribble my name across the title page, making small talk.

“Your writing is so raw and powerful,” one woman says, her eyes wide with admiration. “You must have a vivid imagination.”

“Something like that,” I reply, clenching my jaw. If only they knew the truth.

Finally, the line dwindles to the last few stragglers, and I feel my energy draining. Just a little longer, Aurora. You can do this.

“Thank you for coming,” I tell the last fan, forcing a smile as they walk away. I pack up my stuff and make a beeline for the exit.

“Great job today, Aurora!” my publicist, Vanessa, calls out as she catches up to me. “Let’s grab some lunch and talk about your book’s success.”

“Sure, why not?” I say, unable to hide my exhaustion. It’s not like I have anything better to do.

We settle into a booth at a nearby café, and Vanessa wastes no time launching into her spiel. “Sales are through the roof, Aurora. People are loving it. Have you considered turning it into a series?”

“Fuck no,” I bite back. I dredged up enough demons for this one. “It’s a one-of-a-kind thing, like me.”

As I say the words, my mind flashes back to the shackles that once bound me, the pain and humiliation I endured. I shudder, trying to shake off the memories. It’s been years, but they still cling to me like a shadow I can’t escape .

“Are you okay?” Vanessa asks, concern etched on her face.

“Fine,” I reply, pushing away the remnants of my past. “Just hungry. Let’s order.”

Vanessa nods, seemingly relieved to move on from the topic. We place our orders and dive into a safer conversation about upcoming book events. But even as we talk, the darkness inside me lingers, a constant reminder of who I am and where I come from.

And no amount of success or praise can erase that.

As soon as lunch is finished, I race back to the hotel, feeling like a goddamn caged animal.

I slam the door behind me and kick off my shoes, desperate to wash away the day’s grime.

The shower’s hot spray pelts against my skin, stinging like a thousand tiny needles.

Good. Let it hurt. It reminds me I’m alive.

As I step out of the shower, I glimpse at myself in the mirror, my dark eyes staring back at me. Fucking hell, I look exhausted. I slip into a black dress—tight, sexy, but still appropriate for an evening out. I need a drink. No, scratch that—several drinks.

“Get your shit together, Aurora,” I mutter to myself as I apply some lipstick. It’s a deep crimson shade, bold enough to make a statement.

I head out into the city, searching for a decent bar where I can drown my sorrows. After scanning a few options, I settle on a dimly lit dive with a neon sign flickering above the entrance. Perfect. The more run-down, the better.

“Whiskey, neat,” I order, sliding onto a stool at the bar. The bartender nods and sets a glass in front of me. I take a swig, savouring the burn as it slips down my throat. Fuck, that’s good.

“Rough day?” the bartender asks casually, wiping down the bench.

“Try rough life,” I reply, taking another sip. “But today was particularly shitty.”

“Tell me about it,” he says, leaning in with curiosity in his eyes. He’s probably not expecting an answer, but I want to vent.

“Imagine being haunted by your past every damn day,” I start, my voice low and bitter. “And then having to relive it repeatedly because people keep asking you about it since you were stupid enough to write a damn book about it and claim it was fiction.”

“Sounds like a nightmare,” he says sympathetically.

“Damn right, it is,” I agree, finishing off my whiskey. “But the world ain’t gonna stop turning just ‘cause I’m hurting, so I keep going.”

“Another?” the bartender asks, gesturing to my empty glass.

“Fuck yeah,” I respond, slamming the glass on the bench. “Keep ‘em coming.”

As the afternoon wears on, I let myself sink deeper into the haze of alcohol, letting the buzz numb the pain that's never far from the surface.

Finally, I look at the clock and realise it's dinner time. "My favourite old Italian restaurant better still be open," I grumble to myself as I slip off the stool.

"Thanks for the drinks," I say to the bartender, feeling the effects of the whiskey on my balance. I pay my tab and stumble into the cool evening air slapping against my face, taking some of the alcohol buzz with it as I make my way down to the harbour, craving some chilli prawn pasta.

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Chapter Three

Felix Greyson

The phone vibrates in my hand, jolting me out of my thoughts. I glance at the screen and see Matteo's name flashing on the screen. My heart rate quickens as I answer, knowing it must be important.

"Yeah?" I say, trying to sound calm and collected even though my pulse is racing.

"Felix, I need you to bring some cash to the Italian restaurant down at the harbour," Matteo's voice crackles through the phone, rough and gravelly.

I can picture him standing on a bustling street corner, his dark hair tousled by the wind.

The urgency in his voice sends a shiver down my spine, and I know it must be something serious.

I let out a low breath before ending the call—another day in the gritty underworld of Sydney.

Matteo Ricci, the kingpin of this city, calls the shots, and I am one of his loyal soldiers.

My job description—cleaning his dirty money, collecting from his network of dealers, and taking care of any obstacles that come our way.

Gender holds no weight in this world—as long as I get my cut, I'll do whatever is necessary.

It's a twisted reality we live in, but it's where I thrive.

The adrenaline rush of danger and power courses through my veins, fuelling my love for this sick existence.

As I approach the highly coveted restaurant, my mind swirls with thoughts of my past and how it brought me to this moment.

Years of violence and bloodshed have moulded me into the ruthless enforcer for Sydney's most feared man.

The intoxicating power and control that comes with this position is like a potent drug, coursing through my veins and leaving me constantly hungry for more.

The weight of the cash-filled bag slung over my shoulder is reassuring and intimidating, like a loaded gun ready to be fired at any moment.

I confidently stride down the bustling street, feeling like a predator among the unsuspecting sheep.

Inside the bag lies fifty grand, just waiting to be cleaned at Matteo's Italian joint by the glittering harbour.

As I walk into the restaurant, the tantalising aroma of garlic and tomato sauce wafts towards me, causing my stomach to growl in hunger. Stepping inside, my eyes immediately find the short, bald man behind the bench with a bushy moustache—the owner.

“Here’s the cash,” I say, dropping the bag onto the polished wooden surface.

“Thank you, Felix,” he responds with a grateful smile. “You staying for dinner?”

I nod eagerly in response, already imagining the delicious Italian dishes that will soon grace my taste buds.

“Your usual table, Felix?” the owner asks, leading me through the bustling dining area to my preferred spot—a cosy booth tucked away in a corner.

The dingy restaurant is quiet, save for the low murmur of conversation and the occasional clink of silverware. I slide into my designated corner booth, back pressed against the wall. It is a perfect vantage point, giving me a clear view of the entire room. No one will catch me off guard here.

With trained eyes, I scan the other patrons like a predator assessing its prey. Most are weak and pathetic, but at least they are adults. Adults make their own choices, and I can handle that. It’s the kids who make me nervous, with their innocence and potential to be manipulated.

“The usual, Felix?” The owner’s familiar voice breaks through my thoughts as he sets a steaming plate of pasta before me. “Enjoy.”

I don’t recall ever seeing a menu in this place. The owner always makes me whatever he pleases, and I simply eat without question.

“Let me know if there is anything else you require.” The owner’s smile spreads across his face, revealing a glimmer of white teeth.

“Will do,” I mutter absentmindedly, twirling my fork through the plate of spaghetti.

The savoury aroma of garlic and tomato sauce fills my nostrils as I contemplate the job that awaits me tonight.

My target—a detestable paedophile worth nothing but pain and suffering.

But someone has paid me a hefty sum of fifty grand to ensure justice is served.

Every muscle in my body tenses with excitement at the thought of this job.

It's not often I get truly exhilarated, but this one is different.

Just thinking about hanging the cold- hearted bastard from hooks and slowly stripping away his skin sends a chill down my spine.

I can feel myself hardening at the anticipation of the blood-soaked night ahead.

My heart races with adrenaline as I imagine every detail of the gruesome scene, from the sound of flesh tearing to the scent of coppery blood filling the air.

This is no ordinary job. It's a thrilling chance to unleash all my pent-up rage and let loose in a moment of violent retribution.

When I finish my pasta, I stand and walk towards the front door.

The owner bids me goodbye, his voice a warm and familiar comfort in this cold world.

As my hand reaches for the brass handle, ready to embark on my dark task, a sudden collision knocks into my chest. A small, delicate woman has barrelled into me with force.

She is stunning, her features a mix of softness and strength.

My instincts kick in, and my hand tightly wraps around her neck as I pull her closer.

Her scent invades my senses, a heady mixture of wildflowers and fear that sends shivers down my spine.

It's an intoxicating blend, fuelling my twisted desires.

I can't resist the urge to run my tongue along the side of her face, eager to taste if she matches the alluring aroma surrounding her.

"Fuck me, darling," I growl, my voice a low and menacing rumble.

She stands before me, the embodiment of beauty.

Her dark hair cascades in waves around her delicate face, and her wide, doe-like eyes are filled with terror, but I can't help but be captivated by their depth and vulnerability.

Maybe fate has brought us together, or perhaps it's just another twisted game played by life.

But one thing is certain—she belongs to me now.

My darling. And nothing will ever come between us.

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Chapter Four

Aurora Henry

“Damn, this city isn’t what it used to be,” I mutter to myself, taking in the streets around me. The old shops I passed by every day when I lived here are long gone, replaced with flashy new ones, all trying to outdo each other. It’s like a fucking competition.

I’ve been away for years, but it feels like a lifetime. And now that I’m back, I can’t help but feel like an outsider. Maybe it’s because of the shit I’ve been through, or perhaps this city doesn’t have room for someone like me anymore.

Stepping up to the Italian restaurant, I reach for the door, ready to lose myself in a big plate of pasta and pretend everything is fine.

But as soon as I open the door and step inside, I run into a large, hard chest. Caught off-guard, I gasp, and before I know it, a hand instantly grabs me by the throat and squeezes tightly.

“Wha...” I choke out, struggling to breathe. My heart slams against my ribcage like it’s trying to escape, fear flooding my veins.

“Fuck me, darling,” the deep, menacing voice growls in my ear.

His hand tightens around my throat as I look up at him.

He's beautiful—dangerously so. A scar runs across his throat like someone tried to slit it.

Tattoos decorate his hands and neck, disappearing under his casual suit.

His hair is dark, styled messy, and those dark eyes look like they're hiding a shit ton of secrets.

"What's your name?" he asks, running his tongue up the side of my face, tasting me. He takes in large lungfuls of my scent like some goddamn predator.

My legs feel like they're about to give out from fear, but fuck if my pussy doesn't clench at this man's intense stare. Traitorous body.

"None of your goddamn business," I snarl back, refusing to let my fear show. I won't let this twisted stranger dominate me.

"Feisty. I like that." He grins.

"Fine, Aurora-fucking-Henry," I spit out, my voice shaking despite the bravado. He grins, and it sends a shudder down my spine.

"Good girl," he whispers in my ear, his hand snaking around my lower back to steady me as my legs threaten to give out. I stiffen at his touch, but there's no denying the heat surging through me at the contact. What the fuck is wrong with me?

"Let go of me, you bastard," I growl, trying to twist away from him. But he doesn't budge, instead running his thumb over my bottom lip in a sickeningly intimate gesture.

"Name's Felix," he murmurs, and I can feel the warmth of his breath against my

cheek. “And rest assured, sweetheart, I’ll be calling you soon.”

My heart pounds in my chest, fear and rage warring for control as he saunters out of the shop like he hasn’t just shattered my world.

“Asshole,” I mutter under my breath, taking deep gulps of air as I try to steady myself. My hands shake, and I ball them into fists at my sides, my nails digging into my palms to ground myself in the pain. How could one man have such an effect on me? I’m supposed to be stronger than this, aren’t I?

“Get your shit together, Aurora,” I hiss to myself, forcing me to focus on anything other than the man who just walked out of my life, but not before leaving a mark that went deeper than any of my tattoos.

It’s going to take more than a pretty face and a few rough words to break me, even if the thought of what else he might be capable of sends a thrill of excitement through me that I can’t quite ignore.

“Fuck, why am I so...?” My words trail off as I realise how wet I am. My undies are soaked through as if I’ve just lost control, betraying me like some horny teenager. Anger flares inside me, mixed with an unhealthy dose of lust. How could he do this to me? What kind of twisted shit is this?

Imagine what he’d do with more time , I think, biting my lip. The thought terrifies me, but I can’t deny that it also excites me. I don’t want to be weak, but something about his aggressive nature calls to the darkness within me. And I fucking hate it.

“Jesus Christ,” I mutter, my heart pounding like a jackhammer in my chest. The Italian restaurant’s warm atmosphere now feels suffocating as I stumble to the restroom, needing a moment of privacy to collect myself.

I lock the door behind me and lean against it, trying to catch my breath. That motherfucker, Felix—goddammit. His audacity to walk away like that leaves me reeling and craving more at the same time. I glance down at my trembling hands, cursing under my breath.

“Get your shit together, woman.” I scowl at my reflection in the mirror.

“Don’t let that bastard get to you.” But despite my determination, I can’t help but wonder what he would do if he had more than three minutes with me.

What kind of power does he have over me?

Perhaps even more unnerving, what am I capable of when faced with that power?

“Fuck,” I growl, splashing cold water on my face.

Yet, as I walk back into the restaurant and choose a table, trying to focus on the comforting smells of garlic and tomato sauce, I can’t shake the feeling that this is only the beginning. And a part of me—a dark, twisted part I’ve tried so hard to bury—is eager for whatever comes next.

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Chapter Five

Felix Greyson

The rush of adrenaline surges through me as I hurry back to my house, my dick throbbing from that intoxicating taste of Aurora's skin. Just three fucking minutes with her, and I'm ready to explode.

"Goddamn," I mutter under my breath, gripping the steering wheel tighter. She consumes my thoughts—owning and making her mine every goddamn hour of the day.

"Hey, Felix!" yells my neighbour, Frank, as I exit the car. He gives an annoying wave and a smirk that makes me want to punch his smug face.

"Fuck off, Frank," I growl out, slamming the car door shut and stomping towards my front door. I fumble with the keys, cursing each second that passes. Finally, the lock clicks open, and I storm inside.

With a sigh of sweet relief, I strip down and let my clothes fall to the floor.

My body is tense, my muscles aching from the anticipation of release.

The images of Aurora's face flood my mind—her lips parted in pleasure and her hair cascading around her face.

Water droplets splatter across my skin as I turn on the shower, eager to wash away

the tension and indulge in my desires.

My hand wraps around my hard dick, pulsing with need, and I pump it five times before waves of pleasure overtake me.

“Christ,” I pant, slicking back my black hair with one hand while wiping sweat from my forehead with the other.

“What has she done to me?” Another surge of pleasure courses through me as I lean against the shower’s cool tiles, my thoughts consumed by the woman who has captured my every desire.

All I know is that I need her. Now. No more games. She will be mine, and I’ll make damn sure every part of her knows it.

Jumping out of the shower, I grab a fresh black suit and get dressed.

Fuck, I need to know more about her, pacing the room in agitation. My heart pounds hard, and it’s like my entire body is on fire.

I grab my phone and shoot off a text to Angel, my eyes narrowed in determination.

Felix : Hey, I need a full detailed check on a woman named Aurora Henry.

Angel : Will have it in ten .

Angel texts back without skipping a beat .

I toss my phone onto the couch and stride over to the window. The city below looks like a goddamn ant colony, crawling with life I couldn’t care less about.

Ten minutes later, my phone buzzes with an incoming email from Angel.

I snatch it up, practically tearing the screen open with my eagerness.

My eyes scan the information before me—Aurora Henry, twenty-nine years old, born in Wollongong, lived in Paddington from age ten, moved to the Gold Coast, Queensland, ten years ago, and hasn't left since.

She's a fucking author of dark romance, writing about twisted people who crawl through Sydney's underbelly.

Is she writing from experience? I smirk at the thought.

No matter what, I want to get my hands on those books.

I open the web browser and type in her name to pull up her website.

Scrolling through her selection of books, I add each one to my digital cart.

Making sure to select express delivery, I eagerly click on the checkout button.

Her books will soon be on their way to me.

I lean against the wall, my mind racing with possibilities. Aurora is everything I crave—dark, mysterious, and her eyes hold a haunting quality. A perfect match for someone like me. And soon enough, she'll know it too.

Angel : Felix, check these attachments.

Angel's text pops up on my screen. I tap the icon, and a series of newspaper clippings fill my vision.

The headlines scream about a closed-to-the-public case involving a young woman kidnapped and held for three fucking weeks by three masked men.

No names or photos were given to the public, but the time frame matches when Aurora left Sydney.

Could it be her? I scrutinise the articles as if they hold the key to the universe. I can feel my heart beating, the anticipation growing with each passing second. This woman is an enigma, and I'm dying to unlock her secrets.

I shoot a message back to Angel. "Keep digging. There's more to her than meets the eye."

"Will do," comes the reply.

Satisfied, I pocket my phone. In just a few days, I'll fly to the Gold Coast and collect what's mine. She doesn't know it yet, but she's already mine. And I plan to make that very fucking clear.

"Get ready, darling," I growl under my breath, my eyes narrowing with determination. "You're about to become a part of my world whether you like it or not."

As I prowl through my dimly lit apartment, the bustling noise of the city outside slowly fades into white noise.

As I prepare for my task tonight, my heart races with excitement and purpose, the flickering flame of determination coursing through my veins like wildfire.

The sooner I'm done with this fucking paedophile, the sooner I can see my darling again.

I grab my knife, slip it into its sheath, climb into my car, and drive off, heading to Maxwell's apartment building. The streets are slick from the earlier rain, reflecting the city lights in a twisted dance. My grip on the steering wheel tightens. Soon, this piece of shit will be gone for good.

Finally, I arrive. I park nearby and stride into the building like I own the fucking place. Nobody glances at me as I make my way to the lift. The doors close, and I ride silently up to his floor.

I knock on the door, my heart pounding in anticipation. When John Maxwell opens it, he barely has time to register my presence before I shove the door wide open, walking in and closing it behind me.

"Wh-what do you want?" he stammers, backing away from me.

His eyes widen with fear, and I can tell he knows what's coming. Good. I want him to be scared.

"Please, don't—" he starts, but I cut him off with a punch to the face.

As I tie him up, I can't help but wonder how many times he's had innocent kids in this position. Anger surges through me, and I know there'll be no mercy tonight. This bastard will feel every ounce of pain he's ever inflicted on those children.

"Oh, we are going to have some fun tonight," I growl out as I knock him out and take him back home to my basement.

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Chapter Six

Aurora Henry

“Keep the change,” I snap, shoving a fistful of crumpled bills into the taxi driver’s hand. The morning flight was delayed by two goddamn hours, leaving me stranded at the airport with nothing but time to think about Felix—that dark, mysterious stranger who wormed his way into my thoughts.

“Thanks,” the cabbie mutters, peeling away from the curb without another word. Fuck him, too, then.

I stomp up to my front door, fishing for the keys in my bag, when the scent hits me—roses. Red-fucking-roses. My heart starts pounding like a sledgehammer against my ribs, and it’s all I can do to shove the key into the lock and wrench the door open.

“Jesus Christ!” I curse, taking in the chaos that was once my cosy home.

Furniture is overturned, books are scattered across the floor like confetti, and there, on the bench, is a single goddamn red rose sitting in a cup.

The rest of the roses have been thrown and trampled all over the carnage that has befallen my once peaceful sanctuary.

Tears prick at my eyes as I take in the devastation.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” I can’t breathe. Panic grips me like a vice around my chest. It’s

him. My ex. He's found me after six fucking months. I slam the door shut, my hands shaking as the memories threaten to swallow me whole.

"Get a grip, Aurora," I whisper through gritted teeth, pressing my back against the door. "You're not that scared little girl anymore. You're strong. You survived."

My mind drifts back to Felix, that enigmatic man who somehow saw through my tough exterior, branding me his 'darling' with that deep, gravelly voice that sent shivers down my spine.

What the fuck did he want with me? As much as the thought terrifies me, I can't help but feel a strange pull towards him.

Like maybe, just maybe, he can protect me from the darkness that keeps trying to drag me under.

"Fuck it," I mutter, pushing away from the door and stepping into my ruined sanctuary. "You want to play games? Let's fucking play."

I dial 000, my fingers trembling as I press the buttons. "Hey, my house has been broken into and trashed. I need someone here ASAP." My voice is firm, but I can't help the slight tremble that seeps in.

"Understood, miss. We'll send officers to your location immediately. Please stay on the line," the operator says. I grip the phone tightly, pacing around the wreckage of my living room.

"Fuck, this is so fucked up," I mutter under my breath, anger building like a firestorm inside me. Tyres screeching outside snap me out of my thoughts.

"About damn time," I say as I catch sight of the patrol car rolling up. Two officers

step out, their eyes wide as they take in the scene before them. They don't waste any time getting to work, snapping photos and dusting for fingerprints.

"Ma'am, did you notice anything out of the ordinary before you left?" one of the cops asks, his voice steady and professional.

"Nothing. Just got back from a trip. He must've been watching me..." I trail off, fear prickling at my spine. I shake my head, trying to dispel the creeping darkness threatening to envelop me.

"Alright. Well, we'll do everything we can to find who did this. In the meantime, maybe it's best if you find somewhere else to stay tonight," he suggests gently. He's right, of course. There's no fucking way I'm staying here tonight.

"Thanks," I manage to say through gritted teeth. "I'll do that."

"Good. We'll be in touch," he says, handing me his card. As soon as they're gone, I grab my purse and a fresh bag of clothes and storm out of my ruined home.

"Motherfucker is not gonna win this time," I growl as I march down the street. I find a hotel nearby and book a room, praying it'll be enough to keep me safe for now. Once inside, I call my landlord, my voice shaking with barely contained rage.

"Hey, I need to break my lease," I say, cutting straight to the point. "My psycho ex found me. My place was trashed."

"Jesus, Aurora, I'm so sorry," he says, genuine concern in his voice. "I understand. We'll sort everything out. Stay safe, alright?"

"Thanks, I will." I hang up, tossing my phone onto the bed. I sink beside it, feeling utterly exhausted and defeated. But there's still that fire burning inside me, a

relentless determination not to let him win.

“Fuck this,” I mutter, fumbling for my laptop on the nightstand. I need a distraction, something to take my mind off the shitstorm that’s become my life.

I boot it up and log into my personal email. It’s practically a ghost town in there—no one should have this address, and I rarely get any spam. So, when I see a new message, my heart skips a beat. The sender’s name is Angel, and I don’t recognise the email address.

“Who the fuck are you?” I growl under my breath, clicking on the message with trepidation. My eyes widen as I read its contents.

“Hey, Aurora,” the email begins. “Just forwarding Felix Greyson’s contact info to you for future use. Cheers, Angel.”

“Future use? What the fuck does that mean?” I murmur, bewildered. The email lists Felix’s mobile number, his home address, full name, and even his goddamn date of birth. How the hell does this person have all this information on him? And why would he give it to me?

“Jesus Christ, this just keeps getting weirder,” I mutter, rubbing my temples. My mind races with questions. Who is Felix, really? And who the fuck is Angel?

“Okay, so what do I do?” I ask myself, my resolve wavering. My gut tells me to reach out to Felix, but my brain screams that it’s a bad idea. ‘Trust nobody’ has been my mantra for years, and now some stranger wants me to contact him.

Fuck it . I finally decide, punching in Felix’s number on my phone. Let’s see what this bastard has to say for himself.

As the phone rings, I clench my jaw, bracing myself for whatever comes next. And deep down, I know there's no turning back.

"Hello?" A deep, velvety voice answers. Jesus Christ, even his voice is hot.

"Hey," I say, trying to sound tough despite the tremor in my voice. "It's Aurora. The chick from the restaurant."

"Ah, Aurora. I've been expecting your call." His words send chills down my spine, making me wonder how the fuck he knew I'd call him.

"Cut the crap," I snap, anger flaring up inside me. "Who the fuck are you? Who the fuck is Angel? And how the hell did you get my email?"

"Easy there, darling." He chuckles through the phone. "I'll answer your questions, but first, let's talk about why you called me."

As I come to a halt, I pause for a moment and allow my thoughts to wander. Why did I feel the need to reach out to him? The words hang in the air, waiting for me to grasp them. "To be honest..." I finally reply, "... I'm not entirely sure."

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Chapter Seven

Felix Greyson

It's seven in the morning, and I'm in the fucking basement again.

Sweat drips down my face as I heave Maxwell's bloody carcass off the chains anchored into the ceiling.

I have to love my night job. I spent all last night peeling away flesh, one slow slice after another. The sick bastard had it coming.

"Ugh, you're heavier than you look." I grunt, my muscles straining. My tattoos glisten with sweat as I work.

"Please... stop..." Maxwell wheezes, his voice barely a whisper. Pathetic.

"Too late for that now, isn't it?" I sneer, giving the chains a vicious yank.

My mind wanders to Aurora. My darling. I can't fucking help it—she's always there, lurking in my thoughts. What would she think of this shit? I chuckle darkly. She'd probably fear me even more if that's possible.

"Is this what you do for fun?" Maxwell croaks, blood bubbling from his lips .

"Only on special occasions," I tell him, smirking. "You should be honoured."

“Fuck... you...”

“Feisty till the end.” I laugh, admiring his spirit despite hating the man.

Finally, the body is off the chains.

I lower him down into the old bathtub filled with salt water and alcohol, my dark eyes never leaving his face. The anticipation is intoxicating.

“Hope you’re ready for the grand finale, asshole,” I sneer, watching his remaining eye widen in terror.

Maxwell gasps in pain as the water touches his raw flesh, his tortured screams echoing off the basement walls. His body convulses violently, desperation clawing at his throat, but there is no escaping this. Not for him.

“Too much for ya?” I taunt, a cruel smile playing on my lips.

His life flickers out like a snuffed candle, and I can’t help but smirk.

It was a long night, but fuck, it was enjoyable enough.

To make sure he’s dead, I swiftly cut across Maxwell’s neck, my fingers brushing against the scar that runs along the base of my throat.

If anyone knows you can rise from death, it’s me. I’ve done it before.

“Rest in pieces, motherfucker,” I mutter under my breath, stepping back from the bloody mess in front of me.

My eyes dart around the basement, greedily taking in every detail of the chaos I have

created.

It's a macabre scene, almost like a demented work of art with splatters of blood decorating the walls and floor.

The sweet metallic scent of blood still lingers on my skin as I climb the stairs.

The odour of death and saltwater permeates the air, clinging to me like a second skin.

However, it is not an unpleasant smell for me but a reminder of my power and control.

My body aches from the hours spent inflicting pain upon Maxwell, but it is a satisfying ache and one that fuels my insatiable thirst for dominance.

I cautiously enter the bathroom, turning on the shower and listening as the water splashes against the tiles.

It swirls down the drain in a deep crimson hue, reminding me of my sins.

I scrub at my skin with determination, desperately trying to wash away any evidence of what just happened.

Once finished, I hastily throw on some comfortable sweats and a worn T-shirt before collapsing on my bed.

Exhaustion and guilt weigh heavily on my body.

I tell myself I'll deal with the mess downstairs and look for flights to the Gold Coast after a quick nap.

As I lay there, drifting between sleep and consciousness, my phone suddenly buzzes on the nightstand. A random number flashes across the screen, causing confusion to flood over me. With blind hands, I answer the call, unsure who could be calling from an unknown number.

My voice, raw and hoarse with exhaustion, bounces off my bedroom walls as I demand, “Hello?”

There’s a brief pause before a tired, sweet voice responds, causing my heart to race. It’s Aurora. She called me. She reached out to me.

“It’s Aurora,” she confirms, her tone filled with weariness. “The chick from the restaurant.”

“Aurora,” I reply, trying to keep my voice calm despite the excitement coursing through my veins. “I’ve been expecting your call.” I can feel myself reeling her in bit by bit.

“Cut the crap,” she snaps, her tone suddenly sharp and demanding. “Who the fuck are you? Who the fuck is Angel? And how the hell did you get my email?” The words tumble out of her mouth as she demands answers down the phone line.

“Easy there, darling.” I smooth my voice as it travels through the phone line. “I’ll answer your questions, but first, let’s talk about why you called me.” My words are laced with amusement and a hint of something dangerous.

There is a quiet moment on the other end before she responds, her voice uncertain. “To be honest...” she finally replies, “... I’m not entirely sure.”

As I listen to her raspy breaths, my phone vibrates with an incoming text. I glance at the screen, and my blood boils. It’s from Angel.

Angel : Her house was trashed. Claimed it was an ex-boyfriend to the cops.

A surge of anger rushes through me, and my jaw clenches as every fibre of my being screams for vengeance. My voice trembles with barely contained rage as I speak into the phone. “Listen, darling. You need to stay where you are. I’ll be there in a few hours.”

“Wait, what’s going on?” Her voice shakes in confusion.

“I’m coming for you,” I growl out, my words dripping with venom. “I’ll take care of everything. No one dares to mess with what’s mine.”

I end the call, my heart thundering like a drumbeat. The thought of someone laying a finger on her and desecrating her home ignites an all-consuming fury within me. No one has the right to touch what belongs to me.

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Chapter Eight

Aurora Henry

I stare at my phone, his words echoing in my head. Shocked and scared, it's hard to process that he'll be here in just a few hours. What the fuck does 'a few hours' even mean to him? My heart races, but I can't tell if it's from fear or anticipation.

I glance at the clock. It's already eleven. Hunger gnaws at my insides, making me realise I haven't eaten since last night. Fuck it. I need food. Pulling on a jacket, I head out of the hotel room and walk down the block to the nearby café.

The bell above the door jingles as I step inside, and the scent of coffee and pastries hits me like a wave.

My stomach growls louder than I'd like to admit, and I quickly scan the menu on the wall.

It's one of those trendy fucking places with chalkboards and shit.

Whatever, as long as they have something edible.

"Can I get you something?" The barista's voice is too cheery for how I'm feeling right now, but I force a smile and order a croissant and black coffee .

As I wait for my order, I can't help but replay Felix's call in my mind. Why is he coming? It's unsettling, but deep down, a twisted part of me craves his presence.

God, what's wrong with me?

"Here you go!" The barista hands me my food and coffee, snapping me out of my thoughts. I mutter a quick thanks before grabbing my things and heading back outside. The sooner I eat and get back to my room, the better.

Just as I'm about to leave the café, there he fucking is. Nick, my ex-boyfriend and personal nightmare, stands in front of me. My heart is pounding against my ribcage, and I can feel my palms getting sweaty.

"Hey, whore," he sneers. "Thought you could run away?"

"Stay the fuck away from me, Nick." I fumble for my phone, dial 000, and hold it up to my ear. His eyes narrow, but I don't give a shit. I need to get out of here now .

I bolt for the door, not waiting for him to react. But I hear his heavy footsteps behind me as I sprint towards the hotel. Why the fuck did he have to find me?

"Please, I need help," I gasp into the phone. "My ex is following me, and he's dangerous."

"Of course I am, bitch," Nick snarls, catching up to me just as I reach the hotel entrance. He yanks me back by my hair, and I cry out in pain.

"Let go of me, you sick fuck!" I scream, but it's too late. He slams me onto the ground, knocking the wind out of me. My face throbs from where it made contact with the pavement, and I can already feel blood trickling down my cheek.

"Look at you," he spits, landing a punch on my jaw. "You're nothing but a worthless whore. "

“Get the fuck off her!” a voice shouts from nearby, but I barely hear it over the ringing in my ears. All I can focus on is the pain and the man who’s causing it.

The sirens wail, getting closer and closer. Nick’s eyes flicker between the approaching commotion and me. “This ain’t over,” he hisses before sprinting away and disappearing around a corner.

“Miss, are you okay?” A cop rushes to my side, concern etched on his face. I can’t fucking believe this is happening. My whole body shakes, but I force myself to sit up, cradling my throbbing face.

“Y-yeah, I think so,” I manage to choke out through gritted teeth. The pain is relentless, but I’m not going to let it show. Not now.

“An ambulance is on its way,” the officer says, trying to reassure me. Like that’ll fix everything. He only helps me to my feet when the paramedics arrive, and they swarm me like fucking vultures.

“Let’s get you checked out,” one of them says, attempting to guide me towards the ambulance. But I shake my head, refusing to budge.

“Can you just... patch me up here?” I ask, and he raises an eyebrow but nods. They clean and bandage my face right there on the damn sidewalk.

“Can you tell us what happened?” another cop asks. I take a deep breath, steeling myself, and recount the nightmare—running into Nick, calling for help, the chase, and the assault.

“Thank you for your statement,” the cop says gravely. “We’ll do our best to find him.”

“Great,” I mutter, wiping away angry tears. It’s not enough. None of it is fucking enough. I’ll never escape my nightmares.

“Let us walk you back to your hotel,” the first officer offers, and I nod, feeling exposed and vulnerable. I need to get back inside so I can fall apart in peace.

“Thanks,” I mumble to the officers, stepping into my room and closing the door behind me. Alone at last, I lean against the door, letting the tears flow freely as I cradle my bruised face in my hands.

I stumble into the bathroom, my reflection in the mirror a mangled reminder of everything I want to forget.

I turn on the shower, letting the hot water scald me, trying to burn away the pain and humiliation.

The steam fills the room, fogging up the mirror.

Good , I think. I don’t want to see myself like this again.

I step out of the shower, red and raw but still feeling dirty.

My whole body aches. I pull on some soft pyjamas and pad over to the bed, collapsing onto it with a choked sob.

Why can’t I escape my past? It’s always there, lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce.

Fucking Nick. I hope the cops find him and lock him up for good.

I curl up in a ball, hugging my knees to my chest. Tears flow down my cheeks,

leaving hot trails on my bruised face. I close my eyes, trying to shut out the world and all its horrors. I manage to rest for a while but not fully sleep.

A sudden knock on the door startles me, and I gasp, my heart pounding hard. Who is it? What if it's Nick again? No, it can't be... could it ?

"Who's there?" I demand, voice shaky.

"Darling, it's Felix," comes the reply, deep and smooth as velvet.

I scramble to my feet, rubbing at my tired red eyes, and unlock the door. As it swings open, I see him—Felix, tall and brooding, his dark eyes burning with murder. He takes one look at my battered face and clenches his fists, his tattoos swirling around his knuckles like vipers ready to strike.

I flinch as his fingers graze the bruises on my cheek, careful not to hurt me more. "Who did this?" Felix demands, his voice low and dangerous.

"Nick," I admit, feeling a fresh wave of shame wash over me. "My ex."

"Full name," he orders, and I comply without hesitation.

"Nicholas Morgan."

"Stay here," Felix warns, his dark eyes burning with rage. "I'll be back."

"Wait!" I cry out, grabbing his arm. "Please don't do anything stupid."

"Stupid?" he scoffs, shaking off my grip. "No, darling, it's called justice. And you deserve it."

Before I can argue, he presses his lips against mine, a gentle kiss that soothes my shattered nerves. When he pulls away, I see the promise etched in his features.

“Stay put,” he orders again, stepping outside the hotel room. The door clicks shut behind him, leaving me alone with my thoughts and fears.

I crawl back into bed, pulling the covers up to my chin and curling into a foetal position. Tears stream down my face, but I don’t bother trying to muffle my sobs. The pain is too much, too raw to contain.

Felix’s touch is like a salve, softening the hard edges of the nightmare I’m living. But now that he’s gone, the fear creeps back in, whispering that I’ll never truly be free from the darkness that has haunted me for so long.

Chapter Nine

Felix Greyson

I storm out of Aurora's room.

My fists are clenched so tight I feel my nails cutting into my palms. My blood boils in my veins. The thought of that fucker, Nick, still walking around alive makes me see red. Aurora doesn't deserve to live in fear because of him.

"Angel," I snarl into my phone after only two rings. "I need you to trace a motherfucker for me. Nicholas Morgan. Find out where this piece of shit is hiding."

"Got it, Felix. Give me a sec," Angel replies, his voice calm and efficient, a sharp contrast to my barely restrained fury. I hear his fingers tapping on the keyboard as he works his magic.

"Tell me the second you have something," I demand, pacing back and forth in the hotel hallway like a caged animal. Normally, I'd take care of this myself, no questions asked. But Aurora has changed everything. She's become my vulnerability, my obsession, and I'll be damned if I let anyone hurt her.

"Alright, Felix... I've got a location," Angel says after what feels like an eternity. "But are you sure about this?"

"Just give me the address," I growl, feeling the adrenaline course through me, charging every nerve ending with electric anticipation as I jump behind the wheel of

the rental car.

“Fine,” Angel relents. “It’s 132 Eastwood Drive. Be careful, man.”

“132 Eastwood Drive,” I repeat the address Angel gave me, my knuckles white as I grip the rental’s steering wheel. “You better be there, Nicholas Morgan.”

The engine purrs beneath me as I speed through the streets, the GPS guiding me with its cold, robotic voice. Every second feels like a lifetime, but I’m focused on one thing—finding that piece of shit and making him pay.

“Turn left in 500 meters,” the GPS instructs.

I follow the directions, turning onto a street that looks more like a battlefield than a neighbourhood.

Trash piles are on the sidewalks, houses sit abandoned with boarded-up windows, and the stench of decay is overwhelming.

My skin crawls at the thought of Aurora being anywhere near this hellhole.

“Arrived at your destination,” the emotionless voice says.

I slam on the brakes, the tyres screeching against the pavement.

The house in front of me is a crumbling wreck, barely standing under the weight of its own rot.

It makes my blood boil to think he’s been hiding here like the fucking cockroach he is.

“Alright, Felix, time to do what you do best,” I mutter to myself, pushing open the car door and stepping into the darkness. I can feel the anger pulsing inside me, driving me forward with each step. I don’t need a plan. I just need to get my hands on him.

I pull out my phone, glancing at the trace Angel put on it, and confirm I’m in the right place. “This is it,” I growl out, stalking towards the decaying building with purpose. “Time for some justice, darling.”

I feel my emotions go numb as a calm settles over me. This is how it is every time I kill someone. It’s like a blanket of peace.

I march into the house without hesitation, not bothering to knock or announce my presence. The place is a fucking pigsty, an abomination of filth and despair—rotten food on the floor, clothes strewn about, and empty alcohol bottles piled high. How does anyone live like this?

Kitchen knife will do, I think, pushing through the mess and making my way to the kitchen. My eyes quickly dart around the room, spotting a filthy knife next to a mouldy loaf of bread. Perfect. I snatch it up, feeling the weight in my hand before I push it into my back pocket.

“Let’s go find our friend, Nick,” I mutter under my breath, adrenaline pumping through my veins. I kick open each door in turn, my heart pounding with anticipation. Finally, I burst into a room where a man sits on a shitty mattress, lighting a cigarette as if he owns the place.

“Who the fuck are you?” I demand, raising the knife menacingly. His eyes widen, but he doesn’t bother hiding his annoyance.

“Name’s Nick, asshole,” he spits out, blowing a puff of smoke in my direction. “What the hell do you want? ”

“Nick, huh?” I say, smirking. “Well, that’s just perfect.” I stride towards him, the fury inside me boiling over. He takes a drag from his cigarette before flicking it aside, feigning confidence. It’s not going to help him now.

“Who the fuck do you think you are, huh?” I snarl as I grab his collar and start pummelling his face with my free hand. Blood sprays onto my knuckles, and I can feel his bones crack beneath my blows. He tries to fight back, but he’s nothing compared to me. Pathetic.

“Shouldn’t have messed with my girl,” I growl, slamming another fist into his already battered face. The room seems to vibrate with the force of my rage. His hands claw at mine, trying to break free, but I’m relentless. I won’t stop until he’s dead.

“Fuck you!” Nick spits out, blood dribbling down his chin. “You don’t own her!”

“Shut your fucking mouth!” I roar in response, dragging him off the bed and throwing him to the filthy floor. My heart races like a wild beast as I pin him down, darkness seeping into every corner of my vision.

“Please,” he chokes out, eyes wide with fear. “Don’t?—”

“Too late for that, asshole,” I sneer. With one swift motion, I press the knife against his throat and slice through his flesh. Blood pours out like a crimson waterfall, soaking the dirty floor.

As the life drains from his eyes, satisfaction fills my chest. No one fucks with my belongings. No one. As he gurgles his last breaths, I lean down, my lips brushing against his ear.

“Say hi to the devil for me,” I whisper, straighten up, and leave him gasping on the floor.

I step out into the bright afternoon light, the air cutting against my heated skin. My breaths come in ragged puffs. Blood still drips from my knuckles, but I don't give a fuck. Nick got what he deserved.

Felix : Angel, need a cleanup.

I text him as I slide into my rental Audi and slam the door shut. I know Angel will sort it out—one call to the Gold Coast mafia is all it takes. A member of the Four Seats runs his business up here.

I start the engine, and memories flood back to when I first began working for the Riccis.

Matteo's dad was running things back then—the old man knew how to keep order.

He hired me as part of his cleanup crew, and soon enough, I was brought on full-time as a hired hitman.

He saw the need for blood in my eyes and knew I was better suited to other roles.

Fifteen years later, here I am, still doing their dirty work but with a smile on my face.

“Fuck,” I hiss under my breath, gripping the steering wheel tight as I speed back towards the hotel where Aurora waits. My darling. My obsession.

I've never wanted to own someone before or even thought about one woman this much. She consumes my every waking moment. There is something special about that one. She is either going to be my soulmate or my fall from grace. Either way, I'm keen for the ride.

I knock on the hotel room door, blood drying on my fists. The doorknob turns, and

Aurora's dark eyes widen as she takes in the sight of me. Blood splatters decorate my face like some twisted piece of artwork, and a heavy bag hangs over my shoulder.

"Jesus, Felix!" She gasps, her hand instinctively covering her mouth.

"Move," I growl, pushing past her into the room, my desire to cleanse myself of the day's events urging me forward. I head straight to the bathroom.

I strip off my blood-soaked clothes, piece by piece until I'm standing naked before the mirror. My reflection stares back at me, eyes dark with both lust and rage. I know Aurora is watching me from the doorway, but I don't care. Let her see what she's gotten herself involved with.

"Fuck, Felix, you're covered in blood," she whispers, her voice wavering between concern and arousal. Yeah, I can see that, sweetheart. Rub those thighs together a bit harder, why don't you?

"Can't be helped," I say, turning on the shower and stepping under the hot spray. The crimson liquid swirls around my feet, staining the white tiles before disappearing down the drain. I scrub every inch of my body.

As the blood still swirls down the drain, I can feel Aurora's eyes on my naked body. She licks her lips with a hunger in her dark eyes. But still, she's confused and maybe a little scared.

"Fuck, Felix. What the hell happened?" she asks, her voice trembling a bit.

"Nick," I say sharply, turning off the water. "Slit his fucking throat. He shouldn't have touched what's mine. "

Aurora shivers, and I know it isn't from the cold. I step out of the shower, not

bothering to grab a towel. I let the water drip from me, allowing her to see every inch of the monster she's tangled up with.

"Jesus Christ, Felix," she murmurs, her tattoos standing out against her pale skin. I didn't know she had so many until now. Her pyjamas hide very little of her. "You killed him?"

"Damn right, I did," I growl out, stalking towards her. "And he won't be the last either. You're with me now, Aurora. You're mine. And anyone who tries to touch you, they'll end up like Nick."

Her body trembles, but she doesn't back down. A flash of anger sparks in her eyes, mixing with fear and desire. That's my girl—strong, fierce, never backing down from a fight.

"Remember that, darling," I whisper into her ear as I wrap one arm around her waist, pulling her flush against me.

Her breath hitches as my other hand cups her face, my thumb tracing her bottom lip. "Please... don't hurt me too," she whispers.

I chuckle darkly, pressing my lips to hers in a savage kiss. "No promises, sweetheart."

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Chapter Ten

Aurora Henry

My heart pounds as I watch Felix in the shower, his body slick and glistening under the stream of water. Goddamn, my pussy clenches just from the sight of him—all tattoos, muscles, and danger like a wild animal waiting to pounce.

“Fuck,” I mutter under my breath, unable to tear my eyes away from the scene unfolding before me. The steam rises, clouding the air with heat, yet it only heightens the intensity of the moment.

“Nick,” he says sharply, turning off the water.

“Slit his fucking throat. He shouldn’t have touched what’s mine.

” I watch the droplets slide down the contours of his sculpted muscles.

He steps out of the shower, moving like a predator stalking its prey.

And, for some twisted reason, I want to be that prey.

I’m shocked by the news of him killing Nick—shocked but also secretly elated. Can’t haunt my nightmares if you’re dead, right ?

He’s close now, too close, and I can feel the dampness of his skin against mine as he wraps an arm around my waist, pulling me to him.

I ask him not to hurt me too. I can't handle any more pain. My body would crumble to dust if it went through anymore.

He places his lips on mine and kisses me roughly. My body is a traitor, pressed against him like a moth to a flame, but I'm no fucking puppet. I pull away from the kiss and stare him down.

"Listen, Felix," I grit out, my fists clenching at my sides. "Nobody owns me. I spent years being possessed by men, and I won't let it happen again."

"Is that so?" His voice is low and dangerous, his grip on my waist tightening. "You don't get a choice, Aurora. You're mine."

"Fuck you!" My heart races, fear and anger colliding within me. Does he think he can just waltz in here, claiming me like some goddamn prize?

"The way your body reacts tells me otherwise." His free hand trails up my spine, sending shivers down my back. The bastard knows exactly what he's doing.

"Stop it," I demand, trying to shove him away, but he doesn't budge. He's a wall of muscle and tattoos—an immovable force.

"Admit it, darling," he whispers, his breath hot on my ear. "You want this just as much as I do."

"Go to hell," I spit, yet my resolve crumbles with each word. The truth is, I'm drawn to his darkness and violence. It's a twisted kind of allure, and it disgusts me .

"Maybe I will." He smirks, his eyes dark and intense. "But you're coming with me. Remember, you belong to me."

“Never,” I hiss, even though part of me wants to submit, to give in to the chaos and desire swirling around us.

My heart is pounding like a goddamn jackhammer, and I can feel the rage boiling in my veins.

“Fuck off,” I spit, glaring at him with every ounce of hatred I can muster. “I refuse to be hurt again. I don’t even know you, for fuck’s sake! We just met. You could be a serial killer for all I know.”

Felix smirks, his dark eyes dancing with amusement. “I am one, darling. I’m the thing that goes bump in the night.” My breath catches in my throat, but he continues, a predatory grin splitting his face. “But you’re safer with me than anywhere else because I’ll never hurt you.”

His words send a shiver down my spine, but they also piss me the hell off. How dare he say that, as if it makes everything better?

“Get the fuck out of here!” I yell, my voice shaking with fear and anger. “I want you to leave.”

But instead of backing off, he reaches up and runs his hand down my cheek, the warmth of his touch melting through my defences like a hot knife through butter. It’s infuriating how easily he breaks through my walls.

“See?” he murmurs, his breath ghosting over my skin. “You don’t want me to go at all.”

“Stop fucking with my head,” I growl out, trying to pull away from him, but he’s relentless. His grip tightens around my arm, holding me in place.

“Admit it, Aurora,” he whispers, his lips brushing against my ear. “You need me. And whether you like it or not, I’m not going anywhere.”

My chest tightens with a mix of fear and something else, something darker and more dangerous. I hate how he makes me feel, but I can’t deny the twisted pull he has on me. What’s even worse is knowing that he knows it too.

“Listen, Aurora,” Felix says, his voice low and steady. “You assume you need to be in control, but that’s where you’re wrong. What you need is for someone to take control away from you... that’s how you’ll find your power.”

“Fuck you,” I spit back, my heart pounding in my ears. “I don’t need anyone to take control of me.”

“Maybe not,” he agrees, his eyes locked on mine. “But you want it, don’t you?”

I open my mouth to argue, but the words die in my throat. There’s a terrifying truth in what he’s saying, making me sick to my stomach. The thought of someone else controlling me and giving up my power sends a shiver down my spine.

“Turn around,” he orders, his voice hard as steel. I hesitate for a moment, then comply, feeling the weight of his gaze on my back.

“Put your hands on the wall,” he commands, and I do as I’m told, my breath hitching in my throat. I feel his body press against mine, his chest warm and solid against my back.

His hand wraps around my throat, just tight enough to remind me who’s in charge. His other hand slips down the front of my pants, and I can’t help but gasp at the sensation.

“Look at how wet you are, darling,” he growls out in my ear, rubbing my clit in slow, teasing circles. “You’re practically begging for it.”

“Fuck you,” I choke out, even as my body betrays me and leans into his touch. He chuckles darkly, his fingers sliding inside me, slowly pumping in and out.

“Such a dirty little slut, aren’t you?” He hisses, tightening his grip on my throat, cutting off my air supply. My vision swims, the edges of my reality blurring as I struggle to breathe.

“Come for me,” he demands, rubbing my clit harder and faster, driving me towards the edge. And despite myself, despite everything I do, my body shudders with an intensity that leaves me breathless.

As my vision clears, and I gasp in a lungful of air, he releases my throat and calls me a good girl, his voice dripping with satisfaction. He licks his fingers clean, smirking at me as I stand there, reeling from it all.

“See?” he says softly, brushing a stray hair from my face. “I know what you need, Aurora. And whether you like it or not, I will give it to you.”

The room feels heavy, and my chest is tight with anxiety. I can’t believe what just happened. My body still trembles from the orgasm, but my mind is racing with fear and confusion.

“Pack your shit,” Felix orders, his voice cold and commanding. “We’re moving to Sydney.”

“Fuck you.” The words come out before I can stop them. “I’m not going anywhere with you, especially not back to that hellhole.”

His dark eyes narrow as he takes in my defiance, and I feel a shiver of unease crawl down my spine.

“Darling, you don’t have a choice,” he says with a dangerous edge to his voice.

“Like hell, I don’t!” I snap, my hands balling into fists at my sides. “You don’t own me, Felix!”

He takes a step closer, towering over me as he leans in. “No one will ever hurt you again, Aurora,” he murmurs, his breath hot on my cheek. “I’ll make sure of it.”

“By dragging me back to the place where it all started?” I scoff, my heart pounding in my chest. “You must be fucking insane!”

“Maybe,” he admits with a shrug. “But I know what’s best for you whether you want to admit it or not. And right now, that’s being with me.”

“Being with a goddamn killer?” I hiss, my voice shaking with anger. “That’s supposed to be better than living with my past?”

“Trust me, darling,” he coos, running his fingers through my hair. “With me, you’ll never have to worry about anyone hurting you again.”

“Except for you,” I whisper, my voice barely audible.

“Especially me,” he says, his grip on my hair tightening just a fraction. “Because I would never let anything happen to you.”

“Please,” I beg, my voice breaking. “I can’t go back there.”

“Sweetheart, you don’t have a choice.” His words are final, leaving no room for

argument. “You’re coming with me, and that’s that.”

My stomach churns with fear and revulsion as the reality of my situation sinks in. But even as tears prick my eyes and my heart aches with despair, a twisted part of me knows he’s right. I need him, whether I want to admit it or not.

“Fine,” I relent, my voice barely a whisper. “But don’t think for a second that this means I belong to you.”

“Of course not, darling,” he purrs, a dark smile playing on his lips. “What’s mine is yours, as they say.”

But as he walks away, the weight of his words sink in. I now belong to another again. I can feel the walls closing in on me.

Chapter Eleven

Felix Greyson

As I dial up Angel, my fingers tap impatiently on the table. “Angel,” I say, my voice firm. “I need all of Aurora’s shit packed and shipped to my place in Dee Why.”

“Can do,” he replies without missing a beat.

“Charge a visit to Candy on my card for all your hard work.” I smile and hang up, satisfied he will take care of everything. Aurora needs to be surrounded by her own things, even if she doesn’t realise it yet. I can’t have her feeling out of place in my mansion, after all.

Dinner arrives, and it’s nothing fancy, just some burgers and fries.

Aurora picks at hers, clearly not hungry or maybe too lost in her thoughts.

I watch her from across the room, the way she chews her lip and stares at nothing.

She’s a fucking mystery, that one, but I’m determined to unravel her, piece by piece.

“Come on, we should get some rest,” I say, standing and tossing my empty burger wrapper into the bin. Aurora nods, still silent, and follows me to bed.

She slips under the covers, her black hair fanned out on the pillow, and I can’t help but admire her for a moment. The tattoos on her body tell a story I’m eager to read.

It's not long before her breathing steadies, and I know she's asleep.

I slide into bed behind her, my body instinctively moulding to hers. My arms wrap around her waist, pulling her close. Even in sleep, she's tense, like she's expecting someone to hurt her. But I won't let that happen while she's with me.

"Sleep tight, Aurora," I whisper, my lips brushing against her ear. We've got a long day ahead of us tomorrow, and I want her to know she's safe in my arms, even if she can't hear me right now.

I can't fucking believe how much this girl has gotten under my skin. She changed everything in a three-minute meeting, and now I'm lying here thinking about romantic gestures for her. What the hell happened to me? I was never into that lovey-dovey shit before.

As sleep takes over, I find myself dreaming of Aurora—a softer version of her with the same fire in her eyes but without the fear. Maybe one day she'll trust me enough to let down her guard. At least, I fucking hope so.

The sun spills into the room, waking us up early. "We've gotta get going, darling," I say, gently nudging Aurora awake. She rubs her eyes, looking disoriented, then nods silently.

"Alright," she says, her voice barely above a whisper. We quickly gather our things, and I can tell she's still tense from last night.

I booked us on the first flight out of the Gold Coast back to Sydney, leaving at seven o'clock.

"Ready?" I ask, and she nods again. We head to the lobby, and I drop off the rental car keys at the front desk. The airport is not far, so we have a taxi taking us there.

“Want some coffee?” I offer as we approach the terminal. “You look like you could use a pick-me-up.”

“Sure,” she says, her voice so quiet I almost don’t hear her. I duck into a nearby café and grab two coffees.

“Here you go, darling,” I say, handing her the cup. “Drink up. We’ve got a long day ahead.” She takes a small sip, her dark eyes meeting mine for a second before she looks away. I can tell she’s still on edge.

“Thanks,” she mumbles, clutching the coffee cup like a lifeline.

I’m doing my best to be sweet and kind to her, but she barely talks back. She just agrees to everything I say, like a fucking robot.

“First class, darling,” I tell her as we board the flight. I grab her hand and ask if she needs anything else.

“No,” she says and curls up in her seat, falling asleep for the whole damn flight to Sydney.

I sit there, watching her sleep, and wonder what it’s going to take for her to trust me. For now, I’ll settle for just getting her back to Sydney in one piece .

The moment we touch down in Sydney, I feel a weight lift off my shoulders. We’re fucking home. I lead Aurora through the airport, my hand possessively on the small of her back. She hasn’t said much since we left the Gold Coast, and I’m starting to worry.

“That’s our ride there,” I say as we step outside, my eyes locking on the black Bentley waiting at the curb. It’s posh as hell, but she doesn’t bat an eyelid as she

slides into the leather seat, remaining quiet as ever. That's fine. She'll warm up to me eventually.

As we pull away from the airport, I glance over at her, trying to gauge what's going on in that pretty head of hers. "You'll get used to Sydney again, don't worry," I tell her. "And you'll be safe here with me."

She nods, her dark eyes locked on the window as the city passes by. I grip the steering wheel tighter, wishing she'd fucking talk to me. Anything would be better than this silence.

We arrive at my mansion in Dee Why, and I swear I catch a flicker of something in her eyes as she takes in the sight of the place, but it's gone before I can be sure.

I take her inside, showing her around like some goddamn tour guide.

It isn't romantic or anything, but I'm trying. I really fucking am.

"Here's our room," I say as I push open the heavy wooden door, revealing a massive bed and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the ocean. "You'll sleep with me every night from now on, darling."

"Okay," she murmurs, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Okay?" I repeat, my brows knitting together. That's it? Just fucking okay? What the hell do I have to do to get through to her?

But I don't push it. I let her settle in, unpack her things, and make herself comfortable. If this is what she needs right now—some space and time—then I'll give it to her.

“Alright,” I say, clapping my hands together. “I have some business to take care of, but I’ll be back soon. You need anything, you just holler. I’ll be down in the basement.”

“Okay,” she mumbles, and without another word, she climbs into the bed and goes to sleep. I glance at my watch—it’s only fucking ten in the morning, but I’m not going to mention it. She has some issues that I don’t know about. I need to read the email Angel sent me on her full medical history.

As Aurora drifts off, I can’t help but feel a sense of protectiveness wash over me. I don’t want anything hurting her, not even her own thoughts.

Heading down to the basement, my mind wanders to Mr Maxwell, the son of a bitch stinking up my cool room.

I should have cleaned him up the other day before I raced to the Gold Coast, but there wasn’t time.

Now, his lifeless body lies on the cold floor in the makeshift refrigerator room, waiting for disposal.

“Let’s get this shit done,” I mutter to myself, rolling up my sleeves and grabbing the necessary tools. I can’t have any loose ends.

As I work on dismembering the body, blood splatters on my arms and clothes, mixing with the sweat on my brow. It’s a gruesome task, but one I’ve done many times before. This is nothing new to me .

Once the body is all chopped and bagged up, I head back upstairs, hoping Aurora is still sleeping so I can grab a quick shower without her seeing me covered in blood for the second day in a row.

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Chapter Twelve

Aurora Henry

Sydney looms before us, a city of shattered dreams and buried memories. I grit my teeth as the plane descends, the weight of what awaits me settling heavily in my chest. Felix sits next to me as still as the fucking grave.

“Are you okay?” he asks, his voice dripping with concern—fake-ass concern. His dark eyes search mine, looking for something that isn’t there. Trust? Fuck no.

“Fine,” I say, not bothering to meet his gaze. A storm brews inside me, but I won’t give him the satisfaction of seeing it. He’s just waiting for an excuse to unleash his violent nature. Like everyone else, he’ll hit me. Just one wrong move and I’ll know it.

“Here, have some water,” he says, trying to sound kind. It grates on my nerves like sandpaper against my skin. He hands me a small bottle, cold droplets condensing on the outside. I take it, avoiding his touch. I don’t want him touching me, not ever again. My body cannot be trusted .

“Thanks,” I mutter, as insincere as his concern. I drink the water, cold and tasteless. It doesn’t quench my thirst and leaves me feeling emptier than before.

Staring out the window, I see a cold blue sky stretching above the city, a cruel joke of freedom. I’m not free. Never have been. And Felix thinks he can own me? He has no idea what that means to me.

“Welcome to Sydney,” comes the announcement over the speakers. Yeah, welcome back to hell. The plane touches down, and I brace myself for the impact. But it doesn’t come. Just like Felix, waiting for that one wrong move.

“Here we go,” Felix says, standing up as we walk out the gate. “Let’s get our stuff and head home.”

Home, the word is like venom. It’ll never be my home, not with the memories lurking in every shadow.

So, I follow Felix off the plane and into the heart of Sydney, a place I once loved and now dread. My heart pounds hard like a caged animal desperate for escape, but there’s no escape now.

The car pulls up to the fucking mansion, and I can’t help but gawk at it. It’s huge, like something out of a movie. A place I’d drive past and wish I could live in.

“Here we are,” Felix says, unbuckling his seat belt.

Stepping out of the car, the gravel beneath my feet crunches as I follow him towards the house. He unlocks the front door and gestures for me to go in first. “After you, Aurora.”

“Thanks,” I say, stepping into the grand entryway. My footsteps echo against the marble floors as I take in the somewhat tasteful décor. Whoever designed this place knew what they were doing. It’s a shame the owner is a fucking psycho.

“Let me show you our room,” Felix says, leading me through the house. My heart races with dread. What kind of torture chamber does he have in store for me? But when he opens the door, I’m taken aback. It’s just... a bedroom.

“Here it is,” he says, standing aside so I can get a better look. “I hope you like it.”

Like isn’t the word I’d use. More like hate. It’s so masculine, all dark wood and leather. It makes me want to gut it and change everything. If I have to sleep in here, maybe he’ll let me switch things up, not that I have much choice.

I climb on the bed, the plush mattress sinking beneath my weight. Fuck Felix and his taste in beds—it’s too soft for my liking. I pull the heavy covers over my body, burying myself in their suffocating warmth.

Felix disappears down the hall, off to some goddamn basement he’s got hidden away. As soon as he’s gone, a wave of depression crashes into me, dragging me under. My mind is flooded with memories I’ve tried so hard to drown out.

“Shit,” I mutter, curling into a tight ball. My body feels like lead, every muscle aching with exhaustion. I fight to keep my eyes open, but they’re already sliding shut, heavy like iron gates closing against my will.

“Fuck you, Felix,” I whisper into the darkness, even though he can’t hear me. “You don’t fucking own me.”

Running water startles me awake sometime later. I don’t even realise I drifted off. Felix must be back now, taking a shower in the en suite bathroom.

My body tenses, a part of me wanting to turn over and see if I can catch a glimpse of him through the cracked door. But another part of me is disgusted by how my body reacts to this man who claims to own me. I squeeze my eyes shut, trying to block out the intrusive thoughts.

“Fuck you,” I repeat, my voice barely audible. If only Felix knew what those words do to my mental health—I own you. It’s like a knife to the gut, ripping me apart from

the inside out.

But as much as I hate to admit it, there's a twisted comfort in knowing that someone wants me, even if it's in this fucked-up way. And maybe, just maybe, I can use that to my advantage to survive this hell he's dragged me into.

Chapter Thirteen

Felix Greyson

I 'm settled on the edge of the bed, my eyes locked on Aurora's still form.

She's out cold, a serene expression plastered on her face that never sees the light of day when she's awake.

It's been hours—no, a whole damn day—and she's just lying there, not moving, not eating.

I can't help but watch her chest rise and fall with each breath, the ink on her skin shifting subtly with the motion.

My gut twists. I need her eyes to open again.

“Darling...” I murmur, nudging her shoulder gently, “... you gotta eat something.” But she mumbles and turns away, her long, black hair cascading over the pillow like a spill of ink in the moonlight.

“Fuck this,” I mutter under my breath, standing up to pace the room. My mind is racing, trying to piece together her silence and refusal to let life in. I lean against the wall, a cold surface for my overheated skin, and pull out my phone.

The email from Angel is right where I left it, glaring at me with its bold subject line.

With a swipe, I'm staring down the barrel of her past, the medical records that read like a goddamn horror story.

STD tests, broken bones, and a terminated pregnancy, all before she was even twenty. My jaw clenches so hard it creaks.

Jesus Christ , I think, swiping through the data.

The masked men, the kidnapping, the rape, the newspaper clippings, all of it matches up with the woman gracing my bed.

But the broken bones, they're a fucking enigma.

What kind of hell did she walk through from fifteen to nineteen?

And after that? Nothing. It's like she vanished off the map only to reappear in my world, carrying all her shadows with her.

"Who did this to you, Aurora?" I whisper, knowing she won't answer even if she could hear me. The frustration coils in my gut like barbed wire, ready to tear through flesh.

I shove the phone back into my pocket and run a hand through my hair.

It's time to focus on the now, to deal with the woman who's somehow become the eye of my hurricane.

I can't let the past—hers or mine—fuck up what we have.

She's safe with me, safer than she's ever been.

And I'll kill anyone who tries to take that away from her.

"Fuck," I hiss, realising I've been clenching my fists so tight my nails are digging into my palms. Blood and violence are always just under the surface with me, a constant thrumming beneath my skin. But with her, it's different.

Nothing will happen to you, Aurora. Not while I'm breathing, I vow—the promise as solid and deadly as a blade pressed to flesh. I'll keep her safe, even from her own demons, because she's mine, and I don't give up what's mine.

The next day, I wake up to an empty bed except for me, the sheets cold where Aurora should be. A prickle of unease skates down my spine as I throw off the covers and stalk through the silent house. My gut tells me she hasn't left—she wouldn't dare—but I need eyes on her to kill the edge of panic.

My footsteps echo hollowly in the cavernous space until I hit the patio doors.

There she is, slicing through the pool's water with an athlete's grace, each stroke a silent defiance.

I never took a dip in it myself. It always seemed like a waste of time.

But watching her, it's like she's reclaiming something stolen from her.

"Morning," I call out, leaning against the doorframe. "Breakfast?"

Without missing a beat, she flips around for another lap, her voice trailing behind her. "Yes."

I watch a moment longer, raking my gaze over the fluid lines of her body as she swims, then pivot back inside.

The kitchen is sterile, unused to domestic shit like cooking.

Today, it's different. I'm making breakfast for Aurora.

It's a simple task, but it feels significant like I'm weaving another thread connecting us.

Yoghurt and fresh fruit are what she'll eat and will probably be all she'll eat. I fix two bowls, hands steady despite the turmoil that's been churning since yesterday. She's got secrets, sure, but so do I. We're a pair.

I carry the bowls out just as she's hauling herself out of the pool, water cascading off her in rivulets. My eyes latch onto her like I'm starved, and my body reacts hard and insistent. The sight of her, glistening and strong, stokes a fire in my core.

"Fuck, Aurora," I growl, setting down the bowls with a clatter. "I want you. Now."

She doesn't even flinch at my words, wraps a towel around herself, and plucks up her bowl. Her retreat has a purpose to it, and I follow because that's what predators do—they chase.

"Hey," I bark after her, but she doesn't stop. I trail into our bedroom, frustration and want gnawing at me. She's right there and still miles away.

The shower hisses on, steam fogging up the glass. My eyes are locked on her silhouette, every curve amplified by my imagination. This game she's playing is torture, and I don't like games, not unless I make the rules.

"Dammit, Aurora," I mutter under my breath, pacing the length of the room like a caged animal with nowhere to put its energy. She's a puzzle wrapped in an enigma, tucked inside a fucking conundrum. And I'm itching to unravel her, layer by

tantalising layer.

I lean against the wall beside the shower, arms crossed, waiting for her to emerge. She's a ghost haunting me, and I'm a man possessed. Whatever it takes, I'll break through those walls she's built.

Steam curls around her, a cloak of secrecy I can't penetrate.

I walk over and slump into the chair in the corner, elbows on knees, hands clasped together, watching her blurred form move behind the frosted glass.

Water cascades down her body, hiding and revealing in equal measure.

It's a dance of light and shadow that drives me fucking insane.

"Talk to me, Aurora," I demand softly, my voice barely carrying over the rushing water. "Tell me what's eating at you." But she won't, and it claws at my insides like a caged beast desperate for release.

She's silent as always, a statue under the torrent, her long, dark hair plastered against her back. The tattoos that map out her pain and survival ripple with each drop, telling stories she refuses to speak aloud.

I stand, restless, moving closer until the heat from the shower seeps into my skin. Why won't she let me in? What keeps her locked up tighter than a damn vault?

The shower cuts off abruptly, and she steps out, reaching for a towel with an economy of motion that speaks of her constant vigilance.

I'm on her before she can finish wrapping herself up, embracing her still-wet body from behind.

She goes rigid like a deer caught in the headlights, and I curse inwardly.

“Easy, easy,” I murmur, my tone softer now, less confrontational. “It’s just me.”

Her breath hitches, and I feel her pulse racing under my fingertips. I hate that she’s scared, even if it’s not of me. Or is it? That thought burns like acid in my veins.

“Look at me, Aurora,” I coax, but she doesn’t respond. Stubborn woman.

“Fuck,” I exhale, holding her closer, my warmth seeping into her bones. “I’m not going to hurt you. Ever. You’re safe with me.”

A shudder runs through her, and it’s like I can feel every wound she’s ever received, bleeding afresh. Her tears come silently, the way rain falls on a windowpane—there but somehow distant.

“Shit,” I whisper, because what else can I say? I’m an assassin, not a poet. My life is blood and shadows, not comforting words or gentle reassurances. Yet here I am, trying to be what she needs.

“Let it out,” I tell her, my voice barely audible over my heart’s thumping. “I’ve got you, darling. I’ve got you.” I say as I turn her around to face me.

She sobs then, a sound that rips right through me. And I stand there, holding her, feeling like the most powerful and powerless man in the world all at once.

I press my lips against the damp trail her tears left, salty and sorrowful on my tongue. She flinches but then steadies under my touch.

“Today’s a workday for me.” I grunt, stepping back to look at her. “And you’re coming with me. You need to see what I do.”

Aurora's dark eyes lift to meet mine, a flicker of curiosity warring with the shadows in their depths. "Okay," she whispers, her voice hoarse from crying or maybe from disuse.

"Get dressed," I order, my tone leaving no room for argument.

I watch her move, a silent ballet of vulnerability and strength, as she selects an outfit.

It's nothing fancy, just a plain black pant and blouse set, but damn, it hugs her curves in all the right places.

All she has are the clothes from the hotel.

Her own will arrive when Angel has her things shipped to us.

Maybe I should take her shopping? My gaze lingers a little too long, desire coiling tight in my gut .

"Stop staring," she snaps without turning around.

"Can't help it," I shoot back, the corner of my mouth twitching up despite the tension coiling inside me like barbed wire. "You're sexy as hell."

I tear my eyes away, but images of her body fresh from the shower keep flashing in my mind. My dick twitches in agreement, and I shove the thoughts aside. This isn't the time.

"Ready?" I ask when she's done.

She nods, and we head out. The silence between us is thick, charged with unsaid words and unasked questions. I want to break it, to force her to talk and understand

why she's pulled away, but I bite my tongue instead.

"First stop, money pick-up," I mutter more to myself than her as we reach my car.
"And then money drop-off."

The drive is quick, the city blurring past us in a smudge of grey and grime. We pull up to a nondescript building, and I glance over at Aurora, trying to gauge her reaction. "Remember, darling, you're safe with me."

"Always reassuring coming from an assassin," she retorts dryly, but there's no real heat behind her words.

"Smart-ass." I smirk but feel a pang of something else—pride? Yeah, pride sounds about right. She's still got fire in her despite everything.

We get out of the car, and I lead her inside. My hand hovers near the small of her back, not quite touching. Protection or possession? Maybe both.

Chapter Fourteen

Aurora Henry

When I step out of the car, it hits me like a punch to the gut—I'm not scared.

Not even as my gaze sweeps over the decrepit building in Redfern, its graffiti-tagged walls screaming danger.

It's the kind of place where bullet holes wouldn't be out of place, yet here I am, feeling like I'm wrapped in some damn invincible bubble.

"Darling, keep close," Felix mutters, his voice a low growl that vibrates through the chilly air.

I snort. "What, afraid someone's gonna take a shot at us?"

"Always," he replies. That scar at the base of his throat pulls tight as he scans the street. And shit, I believe him.

My mind races back to ten hours ago. I was damn certain I wouldn't wake up if I closed my eyes near him, but then there was that moment—his arms, inked and strong, encircled me, water from the shower dripping down my body, mingling with the steam.

"I'll keep you safe," he'd said, and I'd felt something shift inside me like a tectonic plate moving in a direction I hadn't authorised.

“Come on,” he says, leading me towards the entrance. His hand doesn’t touch me, but the air between us is charged, heavy with an unspoken promise.

Safe , I think, testing the word. It feels foreign to me, laced with a dangerous hope. Felix glances back at me, one corner of his mouth lifting in a half-smile that doesn’t reach his dark eyes. He knows. He knows he’s got me teetering on the edge of trust, and the bastard is pleased.

“Follow my lead, Aurora,” he commands, and I do. Because somewhere between the fear and the fight, I started to believe in the illusion he’s weaving—that as long as he’s by my side, the bullets will never find their mark.

The building looms, a monolith of grime and sin that could crumble with a stiff breeze or a bad deal going sideways. Felix’s hand is a warm brand on my lower back as we step across the threshold, the contact light, tethering me to reality—a reminder that I’m not floating through this world.

“Stay close,” he murmurs, his breath ghosting over my ear, sending an involuntary shiver down my spine.

“Like I have a choice,” I retort, but there’s no bite to it, just an edge of something like wonder at the fact that I’m here, walking into the maw of the beast with him by my side.

We’re deep in the belly now, and the air reeks of cigarettes and desperation. He strides up to the desk, a fortress of splintered wood and faded graffiti, and leans in. “I’m here for Dav,” he states, his voice low and commanding.

“Right away, Mr Greyson.” The kid’s eyes don’t meet mine, skittering away like he’s afraid .

Seconds tick by, slow and thick like blood from a wound until a door slams open and out comes Dav—a slab of meat with arms, hauling a bag that’s seen better days. “Everything’s there.” Dav grunts, pushing the package into Felix’s waiting hands.

“Better be,” Felix replies, his tone ice-cold, a threat wrapped in velvet.

“Always a pleasure, Mr Greyson,” Dav says.

“Let’s move,” Felix commands, and without another word, we’re back into the sepia-toned light of the street, the bag—its contents unknown and ominous—now in his possession, Is placed in the boot.

I slam the car door, the sound echoing off the concrete like a gunshot.

Felix is already in the driver’s seat, his hands gripping the wheel with a predator’s focus.

We don’t speak. We don’t need to. The engine roars to life, and we’re peeling out of there, leaving nothing but tyre marks and a cloud of exhaust.

“Next stop,” he says, his voice rough like gravel. It’s not a question but a statement—a command that sends shivers down my spine.

We pull up to another nondescript building, just as grimy and forgotten as the last. My heart’s a jackhammer in my chest. We’re on a loop of shady handoffs, and I can’t shake the thrill of it.

He’s out of the car before I can catch my breath, moving with a purpose that’s all animal grace and lethal intent.

“Stay put,” he orders, and I nod because what else can I do? I watch him disappear

inside, the door swallowing him whole. Minutes drag, each one dripping with tension, until he's back, another bag in his grip—a mirror image of the first.

“Got it?” I ask, trying to keep my voice steady.

“Like clockwork,” he replies, tossing the bag in the boot with a nonchalance that belies the danger of whatever's inside.

The city blurs past us as we drive. The buildings paint shadows on his face—shadows that might hide anything. I'm caught in his gravity, pulled along in his orbit.

“Hey, darling, you hungry?” His question slices through the silence. I'm starving, but not just for food. I am also starving for the rush, edge, and precipice we're dancing on.

“Starving,” I say, and it's the truth. “Pasta would be perfect.”

“Good.” There's a hint of something dark and delicious in his voice. “Because we're heading to the place where this all started.”

And just like that, without a map or plan, we're back at the beginning. The restaurant looms ahead, the same one where our twisted tango began. My stomach knots with a mix of hunger and anticipation.

The asphalt is still warm from the city heat as Felix pulls up in front. He's out of the car fast, moving with that predator grace that sets my nerves on edge—in a good way. He pops the boot, and there they are, those bags full of God knows what. No questions asked, no answers given.

“Come on,” he grunts out, nodding for me to follow. His hand finds the small of my back, guiding me through the door. That touch—it's fire and ice, and I can't get

enough.

We're inside now, swallowed by the dim lighting and familiar smells of garlic and olive oil. The place hasn't changed in the years I used to come, even now, ten years later—same chipped paint, same old photos hanging crooked on the walls. But everything else has. Especially me.

Felix hands the bags off to the young kid at the bench, strides over to the darkest corner, and slumps into the booth, all casual menace.

“Sit,” he orders, not unkindly, and I slide into the seat next to him, fitting into his side like I'm meant to be there. His arm comes around my shoulders like he's claiming me, marking his territory. And hell, if I don't arch into his touch.

Moments later, an older man shuffles over—no menu in sight—and drops two steaming plates before us. Chilli prawn pasta. My stomach flips with hunger as the scent hits me—rich and spicy.

“Where's the menu?” I ask, craning my neck, trying to pierce through the shadows for some kind of written choice.

“Never seen it,” Felix says, his fork already twirling pasta like he's ready to devour the world. “The owner dishes out whatever the hell he feels like cooking. And today, darling...” he smirks, his eyes dark as sin, “... it's chilli prawns, my favourite.”

“Convenient,” I shoot back, but my voice has no bite. It's hard to sound tough when you're salivating over the perfect dish.

“Life's all about the little things,” he replies, his mouth quirking up at one corner. “You'll learn.”

I dig in, letting the flavours explode on my tongue—garlic, tomato, and that kick of chilli. It's a dance of heat and satisfaction, and for a moment, I let myself forget the darkness that brought us together. Forget that this man beside me could snap necks as easily as he snaps his fingers.

“Good?” he asks, and it's all husky voice with hidden meaning.

“It will do.” And it's not just the food I'm talking about.

Chapter Fifteen

Felix Greyson

When I click the door shut behind us, the sound echoes through my fortress' grand foyer. I can't help but notice the shift in Aurora's demeanour. The raging storm in her eyes seems to have calmed, leaving a quiet sea in its wake.

"Feeling better?" My voice is low, almost a growl, as I carefully watch her.

Aurora nods, a faint smile tugging at her lips.

"Good," I grunt out, satisfied.

My phone buzzes in my pocket, a violent vibration against my thigh. Angel—always calling at the most inopportune times. I fish it out and answer with a clipped, "Hello?"

"Pack up's done." Angel's voice crackles over the line, all business as usual. "All of Aurora's belongings will be at your door in two days."

"Appreciate it." I keep it terse. No need for pleasantries. We both know the drill .

"Take care of her, Felix. That girl's got more ghosts than a goddamn graveyard." There's a note of warning in Angel's voice that grates my nerves.

"I know," I snap back as Angel says more.

“Matteo’s got a job for you.”

I lean against the cool marble of the kitchen island, my gaze flicking to the hallway where Aurora disappeared. “Hit me.”

“Korean gang’s been a thorn in our side,” he continues, his words clipped. “One in particular needs to be... removed. Left as a message.”

“Location?” My fingers tap an impatient rhythm on the granite.

“Sent to your secure line. Five days from now.”

“Done.” I cut the call short, images of what’s to come already taking shape in my mind—a shadow moving silently, the gleam of cold steel, a final breath. Business as usual. I allow it to centre me again, breathing life back into my limbs.

I shove the phone in my pocket and stride down the hall. “Darling?” I call out, my voice echoing off the high ceilings. I find her upstairs, wandering from room to room like she’s searching for something—or maybe running from something.

“Hey,” she says, turning to face me, her eyes wide and bright.

I take in the sight of her in these empty rooms. “You know you can do whatever the hell you want with these rooms, right? Paint them black, hang upside-down bats, whatever gets your creative juices flowing.”

“Really?” She seems taken aback, the corners of her mouth lifting in a hesitant smile.

“Angel just rang to tell me your stuff will be here in two days, so you will need to find places to put it all.” I smile at her as a spark of excitement lights up her features. “Except for the basement. That’s off-limits. It’s my murder dungeon.”

Her laughter dances across the barren walls, and I wonder how such a sound could come from someone who's seen so much darkness. "Can I have one of these rooms upstairs? For writing?" she asks, her voice soft but determined.

"Sweetheart, you can have the whole damn house if you want it." I reach out, letting my fingertips graze her arm. "Just stay out of the basement."

"Okay." She nods, her eyes holding mine.

"I would do anything for you, darling." And I mean it because in this fucked-up world of blood and shadows, she's the one thing that makes me feel human. A feeling I'm not used to.

"Can I see it?" Aurora's voice cuts through the quiet of the house, a tremble lacing her words.

"See what?" I ask though I know damn well what she means.

"Your... basement. The murder dungeon."

I study her for a moment, the curiosity in her eyes warring with something darker, something scared. "Alright," I say finally, my voice flat. It's a bad idea, but denying her feels worse. "But don't say I didn't warn you."

We walk down the stairs together, her hand light in mine. But the second that door swings wide open, the scent hits us—a cocktail of blood, death, and lemon bleach—her whole body stiffens.

"Jesus, Felix..." Her whisper is almost lost beneath the clang of metal tools I've hung meticulously on the walls. The place looks like a goddamn shrine to horror movies.

“Take a good look, darling. This is me too.”

She steps forward, her gaze darting from one instrument to another until it lands on the metal coroner’s gurney with its sinister drain. That’s when she loses it. A strangled gasp escapes her lips, and she crumples like a marionette with severed strings.

“Fuck.” I scoop her up before she hits the floor, all elbows, knees, and panic. Her heart hammers against my chest as I carry her out of there, out of the stench and the sight of my demons laid bare.

I set her on the sofa upstairs, holding her face between my hands. “Talk to me, baby. What happened? What set you off down there?” My questions are bullets. I need answers, not to hurt her, but to understand and fix whatever I broke by taking her down there.

“Kidnapped,” she chokes out between jagged breaths, tears making clean tracks down her face. “For three weeks. Masked men... they did shit to me,” she manages to stammer out, none of it making sense.

“The gurney. They tied me to one, cut up my back.” She shivers, and I run my hand under her shirt to her back. I can feel the scars under my fingertips, hidden under the works of art masking her pain.

“Darling, I’m not one hundred per cent sure about what you are telling me.

You will need to tell me in detail one day, but I have a small understanding,” I grind out the words, tasting rage and the promise of vengeance for past sins not even mine.

“I’ll get rid of the gurney today. Gone. You’ll never see it again.”

Her eyes are still wild, haunted. “I’ll never be okay with torture, Felix.”

“Listen,” I say, my voice softening with an edge of something like regret. “Something bad happened to me once too. This is how I cope. I don’t touch innocents, only those who’ve got it coming.”

“Like vigilante justice?” Her eyes have a flicker of understanding, but it doesn’t quite dispel the fear.

“Something like that.” It’s a raw truth, a glimpse into the abyss that is me. “It’s fucked up, but it’s the way things are.”

“Okay,” she whispers, her fingers tracing the scar at the base of my throat—a permanent reminder of my brush with death.

The air is charged with her fear, but I’m here to chase the shadows away. “Aurora...” I murmur, my voice a low growl of earnest promise, “... I swear on my fucking life, I won’t ever hurt you.”

She looks up at me, her eyes brimming with those salty tears, and something feral in me wants to hunt down every last one of her demons. She leans in, hesitant at first, until our lips meet, and I taste her pain. It mingles with the heat between us, raw and unfiltered.

“Come here,” I command softly, more of a plea than an order.

I lift her into my lap, and she wraps her legs around me, straddling me like she’s claiming her throne.

My hands are on her, pulling at her top, exposing skin that begs to be worshipped.

Her nipples harden under my touch, and there's a certain kind of power in knowing I can give her this, this escape from the darkness.

"Need you, Felix," she breathes out, and fuck if that doesn't hit me straight in the gut.

"Got you, darling." I'm all tender touches and soft kisses now. There is no room for the harshness she fears. I worship every inch of her, my lips trailing fire across her flesh.

I stand, her body still melded to mine, and carry her to the bedroom. There, it's just her and me, no past horrors, just the promise of pleasure. Clothes fall away, barriers stripped until it's only skin on skin.

I trail my lips down her body, savouring the softness of her skin until I reach the apex of her thighs.

Slowly, I glide my tongue up the middle of her pussy, eliciting soft moans and writhing movements from her on the bed.

Without hesitation, I plunge my tongue deep into her wetness and begin to thrust in and out, lapping up her delicious juices.

She tastes like sweet honey, and I can't resist pushing two fingers inside her.

I curve them just right to press against the roof of her pussy and slowly pump them in and out while I continue to suck on her sensitive clit.

It doesn't take long before she succumbs to pleasure and releases all over my face, her tight pussy clenching around my fingers with each wave of ecstasy.

I pull my fingers out, climb up her body, and place the head of my dick at her

entrance.

“Fuck, I’m not on birth control,” she pants out, a tinge of panic lacing her words.

“Doesn’t matter,” I growl out, locking eyes with her. “If you bear my child, I’ll cherish it as much as I do you.” The truth of it rings through me, fierce and possessive. Her eyes widen, and I can see the emotions swirling—a mix of surprise and something deeper, like belonging.

With a slow, steady thrust, I enter her dripping pussy.

She moans, and I can feel her body shudder as I seat myself inside her.

Her tightness and wetness engulf me, sending waves of pleasure through my body.

I begin to slowly pump in and out, savouring every moment as I know I won’t last long.

Her walls clench around me, urging me on.

Reaching down, I start to rub her clit, adding to the intensity.

As her walls tighten even more, drawing me in closer to her, I give in to the temptation and fuck her hard and fast. My balls draw up, and my toes tingle with anticipation as I pinch her clit, feeling her shatter around me like a vice.

With one final cry of her name, I release my hot load inside her, claiming her as mine.

In a primal growl, I whisper in her ear, “Mine.”

Chapter Sixteen

Aurora Henry

I 'm pinned under him, his weight a solid promise, and the room is just shadows and heavy breaths. "Mine," Felix growls, a declaration that should send shivers of pleasure down my spine.

Instead, my whole body locks up. My pulse hammers in my throat, a frantic bird against its cage. I can't breathe or move. It's like I'm back there, in that other place, with those other hands claiming me.

He stops just like that. His dark eyes search mine, intense and unflinching. "What's wrong? What set you off?" The concern in his voice doesn't fit the inked killer I've come to know.

Mine . The word echoes in my head, a ghost of the past. They used to say it all the time—those faceless demons in my nightmares. I'm shaking now, but not from fear. Anger. Why does he get it? How?

I wonder if Felix understands trauma. My heart is still racing. Why does he see through me so easily?

"The word 'mine,' " I finally choke out, betraying more than I intended.

He really listens, and then he kisses me. Not a possessive kiss, but one that speaks of shared shadows. "I won't say it anymore," he murmurs against my lips. "But just

know, if I do, it also means I'm yours. I might claim to own you, but that means you own me too."

Ownership. It's a two-way street with Felix—a twisted, dark alley where we both hold the power. My mind races, trying to process this man who would kill for me, yet yields to my demons. My chest tightens. This isn't just about control. It's something deeper, something dangerous.

"Fuck," I whisper, a half-formed thought slipping out. There's a bond here, forged in darkness and desire. Can I handle being bound to this enigmatic assassin with his scars and secrets?

"I'll always be yours," he promises as if reading my mind. Felix Greyson, the man who haunts the night, is offering me his protection, violence, and everything.

His words are like a balm on my ragged soul. I can feel the hard lines of his body soften around me, giving me space for my breath to catch up. "You'll be protected with me," he says, and dammit, if those aren't the sweetest words that have ever tried to stitch up the torn parts of me.

"Okay," I whisper because anything more feels like it might break the spell of this moment.

I slide away from his heat, the absence of his weight sudden and cold, leaving me feeling more exposed than when he was moving inside me.

He rolls to his side, facing me, his eyes dark pools of something fierce and tender all at once.

I'm caught in the paradox of Felix Greyson.

He rises without a word, a silent understanding passing between us. The bathroom door is left wide open behind him. I sit up, muscles complaining, heart still doing double-time, but curiosity wins, and I follow the sound of running water.

Stepping into the steam, I see him under the spray, his inked skin glistening, that scar at his throat stark against the wet black strands of hair. He turns, his gaze locking onto mine, and extends a hand. I take it, shedding the last of my hesitations.

The water is hot, almost scalding, but his hands?

They're gentle, washing away the mess between my thighs with care that's so at odds with the violence I know lives in his bones.

His touch is meticulous, reverent even as if he's memorising every inch of me.

And I can't help but think that maybe monsters do have a heart.

"Damn, Felix," I breathe out, watching him watch me, his hands now gliding over my hips, stomach, and breasts. It's not just the physical sensation, but knowing this man, this killer, could tear the world apart with those same hands, and yet here he is, treating me like I'm something precious.

I could fall for him. Hell, I'm halfway there already. The way he moves with me, for me, it's like we're dancing on the edge of a razor blade, both of us bleeding but neither willing to step off. Because what's on the other side? Just more shadows, more pain.

"Can't believe you're real," I murmur, reaching out to trace the edges of his tattoos, feeling the same raised scars beneath my fingers on his skin as I do mine.

"Believe it," he says, his voice low, pulling me closer until the water cascades over

us, mingling heat with heat. “Real enough to kill your monsters,” he adds, and I know he means it. This is who he is. My protector. My assassin. My Felix.

“Real enough to touch me like this,” I say, leaning into his caress, letting myself get lost in the contrast of his calloused hands against my skin. It’s madness how I crave his brand of crazy and want to stay hidden in this steam-filled sanctuary forever.

“Always,” he promises again, and I shiver, not from cold but from the intensity in his voice. Always—a promise from a man who deals in death but offers me life in his arms. Yeah, I could love him. And maybe that’s the scariest thing of all.

Towelling off, I watch him move around the room, all grace and lethal energy contained in skin and ink. Droplets of water cling to his back tattoos like they’re too scared to fall. He catches my gaze in the mirror, a knowing smirk tugging at his lips.

“Starving?” Felix asks, his voice cutting through the steamy silence.

“Kinda,” I admit, wrapping the towel tighter around me. His eyes follow the motion, dark and hungry.

“Was thinking of ordering in. What are you in the mood for?” He tosses over his shoulder as he rifles through a drawer for something to wear.

“Ever cook?” The question slips out before I can stop it. My curiosity always did have a way of getting the better of me .

He pauses, a short laugh escaping him. “I can, but I don’t. Usually, just eat out.”

“Same.” I chuckle, absentmindedly scratching at a scar on my arm. “I can’t even boil water, but I’d kill for some home-cooked food.”

“Then let’s do that.” He strides over, determination etched into every line of his body.
“I’ll cook tonight.”

“Really?” Surprise flickers through me like a candle flame caught in a draft.

“Really.”

The kitchen becomes our new battleground, with him manning the grill like he’s used to handling weapons instead of kitchen utensils. The sizzle and pop of chicken on the grill is white noise, a backdrop to the clink of cutlery and the dull thud of my heart against my ribs.

We sit at the table, plates of grilled chicken and salad between us. It’s simple, yet there’s pride in how he watches me take the first bite, like he’s laid his soul bare on this plate and waits for my verdict.

“Good?” he probes, a hint of vulnerability in those impenetrable eyes.

“Damn good,” I reply, meaning it, and his smile is all sharp edges and shadows.

“Tell me something…” I start, pushing lettuce around with my fork, “... where are you from?”

“Sydney.” His answer is clipped, the word slicing through the air.

“Family?” I prod, knowing I’m walking a razor wire without a net.

“Dead.” The syllable drops like a stone in deep water .

“How?” I can’t stop now, the questions bubbling up from a place I can’t quite name.

“Father killed my mother. Tried to off me, too,” he says, matter-of-factly, as if discussing the weather as he points to the scar on his neck.

“Shit,” I breathe out, the taste of the salad turning bitter.

“Twelve months later, I found him. Slit his throat.” He speaks with an eerie calmness, eyes locked on mine, challenging me to look away.

“Jesus.” I stab at the chicken, trying to match his nonchalance. “You make it sound so...”

“Simple?” he offers, a predator’s grin spreading across his face. “It was.”

“Is that how... you know...” I trail off, unsure how to ask if that’s what got him into the assassination game.

“Found my calling?” He leans back, arms crossed, tattoos shifting with the movement. “Something like that.”

My heart hammers against my ribcage. I can’t tear my eyes away from his. There’s a stillness to him, a quiet certainty that chills me to the bone. But I’m not afraid. No, it’s something else—recognition.

“Shit,” I mutter, setting down my utensils. My appetite’s gone, replaced by a gnawing curiosity. “That’s... one hell of a coping mechanism.”

“Survival,” he corrects me, his lips twitching into a smirk that doesn’t quite reach his eyes. “It’s all about survival, darling.”

“Survival,” I echo, leaning back in my chair. My mind races, piecing together the puzzle that is Felix Greyson. His darkness is like a mirror to mine—twisted

reflections in a shattered glass.

“Thought you’d be scared,” he says, almost sounding disappointed.

“Scared?” I laugh, but it’s hollow. “Of what? That you’re a killer? I’ve accepted that part.”

He studies me, and I feel like he’s peeling back layers with just his gaze. “You’ve got your ghosts, don’t you, Aurora?”

“More than you know,” I admit

“Tell me,” he insists, and there’s a hunger in his voice that matches the thirst for violence I see in him.

“Another time.” I stand up, my legs steady despite the turmoil inside. “Right now, I need a drink.”

“Running away?” He’s taunting me now.

“Regrouping,” I fire back, grabbing a bottle of whiskey from the shelf. “There’s a difference.”

“Is there?” he challenges, rising to join me.

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Chapter Seventeen

Felix Greyson

The next few days were a monotonous blur of work and driving with Aurora always by my side.

We pick up the money and make the deliveries—the routine never changing.

The sun beats down on us as we drive through the city streets, the buildings towering above us like giants.

Car horns and sirens fill the air, creating a chaotic symphony.

On the fourth day, the thunderous growl of the removalist truck broke the morning stillness as it backed into the driveway.

I stood on the porch, arms crossed, while Aurora orchestrated the dance of her belongings from the sidelines.

Her dark eyes are sharp and commanding, and the movers hang on her every instruction.

“Careful with that box,” she snaps, her voice slicing through the air like a whip. The guy adjusts his grip on a cardboard box labelled ‘fragile’ and nods.

“Sorry, ma’am,” he mutters, and I can’t help but smirk.

‘Ma’am’ is a word too soft for Aurora. She’s all fire and steel, not some delicate flower to be addressed with polite distance, but they don’t know that.

They steer clear of me, sensing the undercurrent of danger.

She turns, catches my eye, and gives a slight nod.

It’s an acknowledgement, a silent ‘I’ve got this,’ and I lean back against the wood railing, letting her take control.

The house has been nothing but a cold shell, a place to crash between jobs, but watching her now, directing her life into each room, I feel something twist deep in my chest.

“Stop hovering, Felix. You’re making them nervous,” she says without looking at me, her focus on a bookshelf being manoeuvred through the front door.

“Can’t help it,” I reply, pushing off the railing and walking to where she stands. “It’s what I do best.”

“Hover and brood?” she teases, but there’s no malice in it. A smile tugs at the corner of her mouth, hidden beneath the curtain of her long, black hair.

“Exactly,” I say, grinning back at her.

The day wears on, and the house fills with the echoes of movement—furniture scraping against wood floors, boxes thudding into place. I watch her, this enigmatic woman who’s turned my existence upside down. She moves with purpose, arranging her space—her sanctuary.

“Put that one in the study,” she directs, pointing to a crate filled with leather-bound

journals.

She's turning the sterile environment into something else entirely—something warm and lived-in. It's like she's breathing life into these walls, and despite myself, I feel a surge of something. Pride? Relief? Hell if I know .

“Looks different already,” I comment, my hands tucked into my jeans pockets as I survey the living room.

“Better,” she corrects without missing a beat, placing a stack of books on a shelf. “It looks better.”

“Can't argue with that,” I concede. Warmth is creeping in, chasing away years of cold detachment.

The sun dips lower, casting long shadows across the floor, and finally, the last mover exits, leaving us in the quiet aftermath. I walk through the rooms, trailing behind Aurora. She pauses now and then, tilting her head and deciding on the placement of a picture frame or the angle of a chair.

“Feels more like a home now,” I say, almost to myself. The words hang in the air, heavy with something like hope.

Aurora glances over her shoulder, her dark eyes meeting mine. There's a softness there, fleeting and fragile.

The next day has a bite to it, cold enough to remind me of the steel that's usually pressed against my hip. But today's recon work for Matteo means no heat—just eyes and ears and the kind of quiet that comes with watching.

“Got to head out.” I grunt, my voice slicing through the silence of our new

domesticity. “Matteo has a job.”

Aurora is in the kitchen, surrounded by boxes yet to be unpacked, her hands gripping around a steaming mug like it’s a life preserver.

Her voice remains calm and composed, but her gaze is fixated on the window, unseeing as she watches the world outside.

“I’ll stay here,” she says firmly. “Someone tipped off the press, so I now have to write a press release about my house being broken into, and my publicist wants me to reveal my move to Sydney as well.”

“Sure thing.” My gut twists, knowing leaving her alone is like stepping out onto a tightrope without a net. “Need anything before I go?”

“Could use some peace,” she half-jokes, a wry smile twisting her lips, but a tremor in her laugh tells me more than words ever could.

“Be back later. I’ll be entering through the basement,” I tell her, feeling the weight of every second I’ll be away from her.

“Okay.” She nods nonchalantly, but the flicker in her eyes—it’s quick, like the spark of a match—and I can’t decipher if it’s born from fear or something darker, akin to the thrill of the unknown.

“Lock up after me,” I say, leaving unsaid the ‘be safe’ that hangs between us like a loaded gun.

“Okay,” she replies, putting the mug on the table and turning back to her laptop, fingers dancing over the keyboard as if they might ward off any lingering demons.

I step outside, the door clicking shut behind me, and the world shifts into sharper focus.

Every shadow is an enemy, every sound a potential threat.

I'm on alert, alive with the tension of what I do—what I am.

It's a dance with danger and has its own rhythm, a staccato beat that matches the pounding of my heart.

Recon first, money pickup second. Then tonight's hit—an act of vengeance for a woman done wrong. The jobs line up in my mind like dominoes, and I know all it takes is one to fall for the rest to come crashing down.

"Shit," I mutter under my breath, pushing away thoughts of Aurora alone in the house. Got to keep my head in the game. Can't afford distractions now.

But as I merge onto the bustling streets, heading towards The Cross and its neon-lit promises of sin, I can't shake the image of her nodding at me, the enigma in her dark eyes. Excitement or fear? Maybe in our twisted world, they're the same.

The city is a hive of filth and greed—a playground for the likes of me.

I'm a shadow among them, slipping through the crowds with predatory ease.

Recon is done quickly—that Korean gangster won't know what hit him.

Then it's on to the strip joints, those dens of iniquity where cash flows like cheap liquor.

I scoop up the week's earnings, the weight of the bags grounding me in the reality of

my trade.

Matteo's office looms ahead, a monolith of dirty dealings and power plays.

I shoulder through the revolving doors, the lobby's sterility clashing with the dirtiness of my work.

The lift carries me skyward, and I can almost feel the pressure change, like ascending to some twisted Olympus where gods deal in bullets instead of thunderbolts.

As the doors slide open, three pairs of painted eyes size me up from behind their desk barricade. They're Matteo's sirens, luring men to their doom with honeyed words and poisoned smiles.

"Morning, ladies," I drawl, my grin all teeth. They titter and coo, pressing the buzzer that will announce my presence to the big man himself .

"Mr Greyson," one purrs, her gaze flicking over me like she's considering unwrapping me right there. "He'll see you now."

Spike's waiting, his bulk a testament to the violent currency we trade in. We're two sides of the same bloodstained coin, Spike and me.

"Greyson." He nods, the corner of his mouth ticking up in what passes for a smile in our line of work.

"Got something fresh for the boss," I say, patting the bag. "How's tricks?"

"Same shit, different day." He shrugs, leading me to the sanctum where the devil conducts his orchestra of vice.

Matteo's office door swings open to reveal the kingdom he's built on sin.

He's there alright, king of the damned, sitting at his desk with his queen of venom, Eleanor, perched beside him.

They're an image straight out of some fucked-up fairy tale—beauty and the beast, running the underworld side by side.

"Greyson," Matteo greets, his voice smooth as the blade I carry. "What've you got for me?"

"Your daily bread," I reply.

"Hello, Felix," Eleanor's voice slices through the room, cool and detached. She doesn't even bother looking up from her laptop but keeps tapping away like we're nothing but blips on her radar.

"Hey, Eleanor," I reply, dropping the bags of cash onto Matteo's desk with a thud.

"How have you been?" Matteo asks, eyeing me with that look—like he's always searching for cracks in my armour.

"Can't complain." I chuckle, shrugging off the question .

"Girlfriend keeping you out of trouble?" His smirk is knowing. He's seen the change in me. Hell, everyone has since Aurora came into the picture.

"Something like that," I say with a careless grin. Don't need him prying too deep.

Eleanor finally chimes in, her voice dripping with mock curiosity. "I wanna meet her. A woman who can have you being all nice is worth my time."

“Nice? Felix?” Matteo laughs a deep rumble that echoes off the walls. “I’m nice to you every day, Eleanor. Does that mean you wanna hang with me more?”

She looks at him, eyes bright with amusement. “Fuck off, Matteo.”

Their banter is a familiar tune that’s played on repeat for as long as I’ve known them. The underworld’s odd couple, and damn if it isn’t true.

I laugh along, feeling the itch to get moving. Time is bleeding out, and there’s work to be done. “Gotta run. Business waits for no one.”

“Sure thing.” Matteo waves me off. “Be careful out there.”

“Always am,” I shoot back, though ‘careful’ isn’t my style. I’m a blunt instrument—precision through chaos.

My mind shifts gears as I step into the lift. The hit tonight—some scumbag who’s had it coming for a decade. Wife-beater, cheater—the kind of filth that needs scrubbing off this earth.

His office building is just a stone’s throw from Matteo’s as I park in the underground car park. I wait, a predator in human skin, as minutes stretch into an eternity. Finally, he appears, keys jangling, oblivious. Poor bastard won’t know what hit him.

Silent steps, a coiled spring—I’m on him before he can even turn. My fist connects with the side of his head, a satisfying crack that sings down my arm. He crumples like a sack of shit, and I drag his unconscious body to my car.

“Nighty-night, asshole,” I mutter, heaving him into the boot.

The drive home is tense, every shadow a potential witness, every light a prying eye.

But darkness is my ally, and I slip through it unseen.

The basement greets me with its cold embrace, tools lined up like soldiers ready for war. I haul the body out and secure it to the chair bolted to the concrete floor—the chair that's heard more confessions than a priest.

“Welcome to hell,” I whisper, rolling up my sleeves. The sight of him bound and helpless stirs something primal in me—a mix of disgust and exhilaration.

“Let's see if the wife thinks you're worth 30k,” I muse, cracking my knuckles.

Chapter Eighteen

Aurora Henry

The moment Felix's footsteps die away, I can feel it—the press of silence like a goddamn vice squeezing my chest. The walls inch closer, the shadows in the corners of this Sydney mansion seem to loom larger, and I'm here, trapped in the middle, gasping for air.

“Fuck,” I mutter, dragging my laptop towards me.

My fingers hover above the keys, each one an accusation.

I've got to do this—spin the break-in into something digestible for the bloodthirsty public.

They love a good tragedy as long as it's not their own.

‘Aurora Henry's Gold Coast Home Invaded,’ I type, the words stark on the screen.

‘Forced to Flee to Sydney.’ Each word is a betrayal, a little piece of my past I'm laying bare for them to pick apart.

I hit send before I can back out, delete the whole damn thing, and pretend it didn't happen. But it did. And now it's out there, floating in the digital abyss, waiting for my publicist to stamp it with her approval and push it out into the world .

“Done,” I whisper to myself and grab my phone to make it official.

“Hey,” I say when she picks up, trying to keep the tremble out of my voice. “It’s sent. Press release about the break-in. It’s all yours.”

“Good work, Aurora,” she replies, her voice crackling through the speaker. Her tone is too upbeat, too normal for the shitstorm I’m stirring up. “We’ll get it out today.”

“Thanks,” I reply

“Aurora,” she starts, no bullshit, straight to the point. “Why? You swore you’d never live in Sydney again. Is it just the break-in, or is there something else?”

I lick my lips and taste the metallic tang of fear and secrets. “There’s... someone,” I admit, my voice low like confessing a sin.

“Someone?” She pounces on it like a cat, all claws and curiosity. “Who’s got you tossing your vows out the window?”

My heart hammers, traitorous, eager to spill. “Met a man,” I say, and it feels like peeling my skin back. “Decided it was time to stop running from the shadows.”

“Shadows,” she repeats, a note of scepticism threading through her tone. “You mean your demons?”

“Same difference,” I snap, suddenly angry at her, at myself, at the fucking world that keeps turning no matter how much I hurt. “He understands them. Understands me.”

“Understands or exploits?” she fires back, her voice as sharp as broken glass.

“Isn’t it always a bit of both?” I challenge, feeling the edge of every word like I’m

dancing on a knife blade .

“Fine,” she relents, but I can tell she’s filing this away. Another piece of the puzzle that is Aurora Henry, one she’ll try to solve later. “Just be careful.”

“Always am,” I lie, because with Felix, careful is a concept that’s lost its meaning. It’s a plunge into the depths, and there is no looking back.

“Alright.” There’s a sigh on the other end of the line, tired, maybe worried, but she knows better than to push. “Take care of yourself.”

“Will do.” But I know I’m in too deep already, drowning in the dark romance I never knew I craved, staring into the abyss and finding it staring right back.

The cardboard caves in under my fist, a pathetic barrier between the past I’m unpacking and me. Each is a Pandora’s box, spilling out old scars alongside faded concert tickets and chipped mugs. My fingers trail over the edges of a photo frame, the glass cool and unforgiving.

“Dammit,” I mutter, the frame slipping from my grasp and shattering against the hardwood. The sound echoes, a sharp reminder that this place is still foreign soil, Sydney’s air too thick with memories I’d rather choke on.

I kick the shards aside, not caring about the bare soles of my feet, the way they dance dangerously close to injury. Let them bleed. It’s nothing compared to the haemorrhage inside my chest every time I think of where I’m now living.

Hours slip by, each one a grudging step forward in a dance I don’t know the steps to. I’m pacing through this graveyard of belongings when the back door clicks shut, a sound that freezes my blood.

Felix .

My pulse ramps up, the staccato beat echoing the rhythm of my life since he stormed into it—chaotic, frenzied, relentless. I stand still, holding my breath, listening for clues in the silence that follows. There's something predatory in how he moves through our shared space, silent and calculated.

Thud.

A door below, heavy like the lid of a coffin, signals his arrival into the basement. And just like that, the house swallows him whole. My sanctuary becomes a crypt with secrets buried beneath.

“Fuck,” I spit out, the taste of iron spreading across my tongue. I've seen what lies beyond that door—hints of a man drenched in darkness, control, and blood.

Am I going down there? The thought scratches at the back of my mind, a clawing need to confront the monster and the man, to see which one surfaces when I look into those pitch-black eyes.

“Stay put,” I growl to myself, but my feet betray me, inching closer to where the earth swallows sinners. I hover at the top of the stairs, my heart a jackhammer against my ribs, fighting the urge to descend into hell or whatever twisted salvation Felix offers.

I've never been this curious, and it's fucking with my head. I know seeing Felix work might trigger me and make my heart race like a goddamn freight train, but something in me can't resist. I need to see it and understand what kind of man I'm tangled up with.

“Fuck it,” I mutter under my breath, making my way down the dimly lit hallway. The

basement door looms before me, heavy and foreboding. I hear faint, muffled noises coming from behind it. My hands tremble as I raise one to knock.

It takes him two long minutes to finally open it, but when he does, I can't help but freeze for a second. Blood coats his hands, and the sight makes my stomach twist into knots. His dark eyes flicker with concern, and I can tell he's trying to read me and figure out if I need him.

"Are you okay?" he asks, brows furrowed. "Do you need me?"

"Fuck no," I snap, swallowing down the fear that threatens to choke me. "I want to watch."

His expression shifts, a hint of surprise flashing across his face. But then, he steps aside and lets me in.

The moment I step into the basement, my heart feels like it will burst out of my chest. The air is thick with a metallic smell that makes me want to puke. I swallow hard, forcing myself to keep my shit together.

"Jesus Christ," I whisper, my eyes snapping to the man tied to a chair in the middle of the room. He's beaten and bloody, his face swollen beyond recognition. The chair bolted to the floor makes it impossible for him even to try to escape.

"What did he do?" I ask Felix, my voice barely audible over the thudding in my ears.

Felix glances at me, then back at the man. "His wife paid me 30k to take care of him," he says casually, wiping his blood-soaked hands on a rag. "He spent ten years beating her up and wouldn't give her a goddamn divorce."

My stomach churns, but a twisted part of me is glad Felix is killing this piece of shit.

How fucked up is that? What does it say about me if I'm happy for a man to die at the hands of my psychopathic boyfriend?

"Is that why you're torturing him instead of just killing him?" I ask, trying to steady my breathing.

"Partly," Felix admits, a dark smile playing on his lips. "But mostly 'cause I enjoy it."

"Fuck," I mutter, torn between repulsion and a sick sort of fascination.

"Are you sure you want to stay?" Felix asks, looking me straight in the eye. "You don't have to watch if you don't want to."

"Fuck that," I snap, feeling angry. Angry at the world, at fate, at how screwed up everything is. "I wanna watch you finish the job."

"Alright, darling." Felix grins, picking up a wicked-looking knife from a nearby table. "Just remember, you asked for this."

As Felix moves towards the man, my heart pounds a brutal rhythm in my chest. And as the blade sinks into flesh, I can't help but feel a twisted sense of satisfaction. It's fucked up, but maybe I might just like it.

Chapter Nineteen

Felix Greyson

My hand clenches the blade's handle tightly, my other hand holding the poor bastard's hair in place as I drag the razor-sharp edge across his cheek.

Blood drips hot and sticky down the man's chest, staining his shirt and dripping onto the cold floor.

A growl rumbles low in my chest as I watch Aurora watch me, her eyes wide with some mix of fascination, horror, and arousal.

I can almost taste it in the air, that heady combination of emotions spinning together like a sweet, intoxicating cocktail.

The room is dimly lit, just enough to see the sweat glistening on her skin.

My breathing is laboured, and I can feel my heart racing.

Every cut I make sends a shiver down my spine, but it's nothing compared to the one that runs through me when I see her reaction.

Aurora licks her lips unconsciously, her fingers curling around the edge of the metal table as if she wants to reach out and touch me.

She wants to feel my warmth, to taste my blood .

I force myself to look away from her for a moment.

Back to my work. I sink my knife deep into the man's flesh again, feeling the hot, coppery liquid well up around the edges of the wound.

The tang of iron and fear fills my mouth as I drag the blade across the man's chest, carving out this man's wife's name over and over again.

"You like that, don't you?" I ask her softly, not taking my eyes off the man. "You like seeing me like this."

Aurora swallows hard, her throat bobbing as she nods. Her voice comes out husky and low as if she's been swallowing desire for hours. "Yes," she whispers. "I do."

"Didn't think you would," I grunt out, wiping the blade on my pants. "Thought you'd be scared shitless."

"Maybe I should be," she admits, her dark eyes never leaving him. "But it's... clarifying. Something about watching you work makes everything else in my twisted mind disappear."

I love her admission, though it catches me off-guard. I thought this would surely send her into a panic attack, but instead, she seems to find clarity in it. And that realisation alone is enough to make me feel a surge of arousal.

"Damn, Aurora," I growl out, the lust in my voice unmistakable. "You're something else."

"Am I?" she asks, her voice teasing and sultry. She steps forward, her movements graceful even in the dim light.

I watch as she approaches, my dick getting rock hard as she closes the distance between us.

I know I need to end this quickly, to deal with the man in the chair before I can truly focus on Aurora.

But every step she takes sends a rush of blood to my groin, making it harder and harder to concentrate.

“Fuck,” I mutter, grabbing the man’s chin and yanking his head back so he can look into my eyes. “This is your lucky day, asshole.”

With one swift motion, I slit the man’s throat, blood spurting out in a crimson arc. The life drains from his eyes as he gasps his last breaths, and then he’s gone, just another body in a long line of my victims.

“Done,” I say, turning to face Aurora. She watches me with a mix of lust and admiration, and I can see the hunger in her eyes. “Now, where were we?”

“Right here,” she breathes out, pressing her body against me as she wraps her arms around my neck.

I pull her close, feeling the heat of her skin against my own. “Darling,” I growl, my voice low and dangerous. “You have no idea how much you mean to me.” I can’t help it. Aurora is the one person who’s managed to dig her way into the darkness of my soul.

“Please, Felix,” she whispers, her eyes pleading with mine for understanding.

Without another word, I pull her close and press my lips against hers, feeling the heat and passion ignite between us. My heart softens even more as I realise this woman,

this beautiful, broken creature before me, is the key to unlocking the cage I've trapped myself in.

Fuck it , I think, giving in to the desire that courses through my veins. I grab her by the ass, lifting her off the floor like she weighs nothing at all. Her legs wrap around my waist, her fingers digging into my arms, making me feel alive in a way that only she can.

“Where are we going?” she asks breathlessly, her words muffled by the intensity of our kiss.

“Somewhere less bloody,” I reply, carrying her across the room until her backside is perched on the new simple stainless-steel gurney I bought just for her.

“Trust me,” I whisper into her ear, my breath hot against her skin. “This is gonna be worth it.”

A shiver runs down her spine, and I know I've got her right where I want her.

“Time to lose these,” I growl, my hands gripping her pants and yanking them down her long legs. The anticipation building inside me is a fucking wildfire that can't be contained. Aurora's eyes widen, but she doesn't resist.

Her soaked underwear clings to her like a second skin, and I can smell the sweet scent of her arousal.

Fuck, it drives me wild. Without thinking, I plunge two of my blood-soaked fingers into her wet pussy, feeling her heat envelop me.

The sharp contrast between the cold steel beneath her and the warmth of her body fuels my desire, giving me the power to control her pleasure.

“Shit, Felix.” She gasps, her fingers digging even deeper into my arms. Her breaths come in ragged pants, and I know she can barely hold on. But I won’t make it easy for her.

“Like that, huh?” I smirk, never breaking eye contact as I roughly fuck her with my fingers. She’s drenched, practically begging for more, and I’m more than happy to oblige.

“Please,” she whispers, the vulnerability in her voice making my heart clench. It’s a strange mix of emotions—pride, lust, and something I can’t quite put my finger on. All I know is that I want to make her scream my name.

“Alright, darling,” I murmur, pulling her shirt over her head. Her beautiful breasts are now on full display, her nipples hard and begging for attention. I lean down, swirling my tongue around one before sucking it greedily into my mouth.

“Fuck!” she moans, her legs tightening around me as I continue to devour her. My fingers don’t let up their assault on her pussy, and I can feel her walls clenching around them, desperate for release. But I won’t let her come just yet. No, I want to savour every goddamn second of this.

“Tell me what you want,” I demand, my voice rough as I continue to pleasure her. “Beg for it, Aurora.”

“Please, Felix,” she whimpers, her eyes wild with need. “I need you inside me... now!”

“Darling, you want this?” I growl, my voice low and dangerous.

Aurora’s dark eyes lock onto mine, her body trembling with anticipation. “I need it, Felix,” she whispers, her voice laced with vulnerability.

“Good girl.” I quickly undo my pants, releasing my throbbing cock that glistens with precum at the tip. The sight of her naked on the table, completely exposed to my desires, makes me crave her even more. I line up with her wet entrance and give a wicked grin as I slam myself inside her.

“Fuck!” Aurora gasps, her eyes rolling back in ecstasy. Her body arches off the table, embracing the pain and pleasure I unleash upon her.

“Take it, darling,” I grunt out, thrusting into her mercilessly. Her warm, tight walls grip me like a vice, fuelling my need to dominate her further. I fuck her hard and dirty—my fingers are still coated in blood as they grip her hips.

“Ah, Felix...” She moans, her voice barely a whisper as she succumbs to the sensations.

“Tell me who is fucking you, Aurora,” I demand, twisting her nipples between my blood-soaked fingers. She gasps in pain, but the pleasure on her face is undeniable.

“Y-you, Felix,” she stammers, her body writhing beneath me.

“Damn right, I am.” When she climaxes, her face is a mask of pleasure while her pussy clenches around me. I continue pounding into her through her orgasm, showing no mercy until she goes limp on the table.

“Enough... please...” she pleads, her voice hoarse from screaming.

“Alright, darling,” I acquiesce, though my hunger for her obedience remains insatiable. But I’ve always been a man who knows when to stop, and for now, I savour the power I hold over her.

I yank myself out of Aurora’s dripping cunt, my cock still rock-hard and throbbing.

She's panting on the table, her body slick with sweat and her cum. Seeing her well-fucked form is intoxicating, but I'm not done with her yet.

"Get on your knees, darling," I command, my voice rough and growly. "Lick me clean and make me come."

Aurora doesn't hesitate for a moment. She slides off the table, her legs wobbly, and sinks to her knees before me. Her dark eyes lock onto mine, filled with lust and submission. It's fucking beautiful.

"Such a good girl," I praise her as she opens her mouth and swallows my dick down her throat in one swift motion.

"Fuck," I groan out. The sensation of her warm, wet mouth engulfing me nearly makes my knees buckle. She hums around my cock, the vibrations sending shivers up my spine. My hands tangle in her long, black hair, guiding her movements as she works her magic.

"Show me what that pretty mouth can do." I hiss, my grip on her hair tightening. Aurora squeezes my balls gently, her nails digging into the sensitive skin just enough to send a jolt of delicious pain through me. I grit my teeth, trying to hold back the impending release.

"Shit, Aurora... you're gonna make me come," I warn, my breath hitching and heart pounding in my chest.

"Swallow it all, darling." I grunt, my control slipping away.

As if on cue, I explode down her throat, filling her with every last drop of my seed.

She greedily swallows it all, each gulp a testament to her submission.

Once she's drained me, she licks my dick clean, her tongue teasing the sensitive head.

"Good girl." I pant, my chest heaving as I try to catch my breath.

Chapter Twenty

Aurora Henry

I 'm kneeling on the floor, my body trembling, still reeling from the night's events. Blood—not mine—pools around me in a macabre halo. I can't tear my eyes away until Felix's shadow looms over me, his presence a force that grounds me even now.

“Up you go, darling,” he growls out, his voice a low timbre that resonates with something dark and protective. He bends and slips off his blood-soaked shoes without a second thought, and suddenly, his arms are steel bands lifting me from the cold floor.

He navigates the carnage with an eerie grace, sidestepping crimson puddles like they're nothing but spilt wine.

My head rests against his chest, the thud of his heartbeat a steady drum in this chaos.

The scar at the base of his throat brushes against my forehead, a stark reminder of his dance with death.

We reach the stairs, and he ascends with measured steps. Each one creaks under the weight of our combined sins. I cling to him, my personal ferryman guiding me through the hellfire.

“Shower first,” Felix announces as he sets me down in the stark white bathroom. “Can't have you covered in this shit.”

The water scorches the filth from my skin, but it's his hands that really cleanse me. They're firm yet tender, erasing the night's evidence with practised movements. When he's satisfied, he wraps me in a towel, his touch lingering a second too long.

"Here." He hands me a set of his tracksuit pants and top, the fabric soft and smelling of him—cedar and blood. I slip them on, the clothes hanging loose on my frame.

"Get some rest," he murmurs, tucking me into bed as if I'm something precious, not broken. I watch through half-lidded eyes as he leans in, his lips brushing mine in a surprisingly gentle kiss. "Gotta deal with the mess downstairs. Then I'll text for cleanup to come and pick him up in the morning."

The darkness calls to him, and he answers without hesitation, leaving me cocooned in the safety he's crafted.

I'm enveloped in silence, the kind that presses against your eardrums and fills the room. But below, I know Felix moves with purpose, his actions precise and methodical. The thought should terrify me, but it doesn't.

The clink of metal and the rustle of plastic seeps through the open door. He's cutting up the body, dismembering it, and packing it into bags.

He's efficient, the sounds stopping sooner than I'd have imagined.

A chill shivers down my spine, not from fear but the realisation of how much power he wields and how easily he navigates this world of darkness.

Then, the house falls quiet again, save for the thud of his footsteps on the stairs. He's coming back—to me. My chest tightens half in anticipation, half something else—something warm that coils in my belly.

The door creaks open, and there he is, his frame filling the doorway, his eyes finding mine in the dark.

He doesn't speak, doesn't need to. His presence says everything.

He strides to the bathroom and showers again.

Drying himself, he slides into bed beside me, the mattress dipping under his weight, completely naked while I'm encased in his clothes.

His arms wrap around me, a steel band of protection, and I melt against him. "You're safe," he rumbles against my hair, and I believe him.

"Thank you," I breathe out, the words catching in my throat. Because despite the horror, blood, and violence, he's given me this—a haven in his arms.

"Always, Aurora." His lips press against my temple, a silent vow. "Now sleep. I've got you."

Water slices around my body, a sharp contrast to the sluggish warmth of sleep. I slice through the pool's surface, each lap an attempt to scrub clean the lingering darkness from last night. The chill bites at my muscles, but I push harder, relishing the burn.

"Morning," Felix says, his voice echoing against the water as he steps onto the patio, a plate in hand. His features are cast in the soft light of dawn, dark and unreadable.

"Hey," I grunt out between breaths, pausing to tread water and glance at him. "What's that?"

"Breakfast," he replies, setting it on a poolside table. He watches me with those intense eyes like he can see right through the ripples I create. "I've got a job tonight.

Won't be back till late."

"Another mess for you to clean up?" I can't help but notice the acerbic twist in my words as I pull myself out of the pool, droplets cascading off my skin.

"Something like that." A shadow passes over his face, so fleeting I almost miss it. "I could have Angel swing by and keep you company. Make sure you're safe."

"Safe," I scoff, wrapping a towel around myself and ignoring the breakfast. "I spent all day alone yesterday, Felix. I don't need a babysitter."

"Fine," he says, a smirk playing on his lips, but I notice the tension in his jaw. Protective bastard. "Besides," he continues, leaning against the doorframe, arms crossed. "I'll be here during the day. Thought I'd read your first book."

"Good luck finding it," I retort, my guard up. "I don't keep copies lying around."

"Already found them." He seems pleased with himself, and irritation flares within me. "Bought your whole book list after I met you. They're in a box in the garage."

"Stalker much?" I quip, but inside, my stomach twists. He's going to read my words, my secrets. He owns a piece of me without even realising it .

"Only for the things I care about," he replies, his tone low and dangerous. "So, which one should I start with?"

"Doesn't matter." I turn away, hiding the sudden heat in my cheeks. "They're all lies, anyway."

"Are they now?" He steps closer, the predator in him never quite at rest. "Guess we'll see about that."

He walks away, the weight of his attention leaving my skin prickling.

I'm not sure if I'm more afraid of what he'll find in those pages or what he'll do with the knowledge.

But one thing's for sure—Felix Greyson is a man who gets what he wants.

And right now, he wants to peel back the layers of Aurora Henry.

The garage door groans as Felix heaves it open, the sound echoing through the stillness inside the house. I stand in the kitchen's doorway, arms folded over my chest, a knot of anticipation coiling in my gut.

“Got ‘em,” he calls out, a note of triumph in his voice.

He swaggers back into view, a cardboard box cradled in his inked arms. The muscles of his biceps flex beneath the dark artwork etched into his skin. He sets the box on the kitchen bench with a thud that seems to echo my racing heart.

“Eight of them,” he says, flipping through the books like he's shuffling a deck of cards. “Which one's first?”

“Start with All Lies ,” I mumble, feeling heat swarm my cheeks. It's an involuntary reaction, and I hate it.

He plucks the book from the stack and looks at me, his gaze sharp enough to cut. With a gentle touch that belies his savage nature, he kisses my forehead—a brief, soft press of lips that feels like a brand .

“Let's see what we have,” he murmurs.

With a fresh coffee in hand, he strides to the living room and collapses on the couch, the old leather creaking under his weight.

He opens the book, and I can't help but watch him from across the room—this man, this enigma who kills without flinching, now thumbing through my soul laid bare on paper.

I lean against the kitchen bench, trying to appear nonchalant, but I'm hyperaware of every shift and adjustment he makes. He squirms, rearranges himself, and a low grunt escapes his lips. I swallow hard, knowing exactly which scenes are making him uncomfortable—or maybe it's not discomfort at all.

"Damn, Aurora." He breaks the silence, his eyes never leaving the page. "You wrote all these beautiful filthy words?"

"Guilty," I say, trying to sound indifferent, but there's a tremor in my voice.

"Is any of this... drawn from your own life?" His dark eyes flick up to meet mine, probing, seeking truths I've buried deep.

"Horror parts, yeah. Real as they come." I force the words out. "Steamy bits? Pure fantasy."

"Fantasy, huh?" A wicked grin spreads across his face. He stands abruptly, the book forgotten as he stalks towards me.

"Everyone I read..." He's close now, too close, the heat from his body mingling with mine, "... I'll bring to life for you."

I want to scoff, to shove him away, but instead, I'm frozen, caught in the intensity of his gaze. His laughter is a dark melody that fills the space between us, promising

pleasure laced with pain.

“Guess I’ve got my work cut out for me then,” he purrs out before pouncing, pinning me beneath the weight of his desire.

The book lies discarded on the couch, a silent witness to the twisted game we’re about to play.

Chapter Twenty-One

Felix Greyson

As I slide behind the steering wheel of my car, the engine's growl is a low promise of the violence that's simmering just beneath my skin. It's six thirty in the evening, prime time for shadows and scum to crawl out in this city. I'm one of them tonight—a predator on a very specific hunt.

The car lurches forward, tyres gripping the asphalt as I weave through the traffic.

My grip on the steering wheel is tight, knuckles white, pulling over a block away from the Korean gang's hangout.

I kill the lights and sit back. The neon sign buzzes and flickers, a beacon for every lowlife with business darker than the night itself.

They pass through the doors like sheep to a slaughter.

But there's one wolf among them I've come to claim.

"Come on out, you son of a bitch," I mutter under my breath, eyeing every figure that emerges.

Through the windscreen, the world is a stage, and I'm the unseen audience until it's time for my cue. There he is—the mark. He's laughing, unaware that death's shadow is cast long and close.

“Gotcha.”

I slip out of the car, all coiled energy and silent steps. My hand clutches the rag, soaked with chloroform, hidden and ready. Boots on gravel, I edge closer, waiting for him to be alone. I have to time it perfectly. I can't risk any of his gang spotting this.

“Hey!” I bark, springing from behind the parked car. The guy turns, startled, confusion stamped on his face for a half-second before I clamp the rag over his mouth and nose. His eyes go wide, hands clawing at my forearm—the desperate dance of prey caught in the jaws of the inevitable.

“Shh, it's naptime, bastard.” My voice is a whisper, a lover's caress twisted into something dark.

He bucks and writhes, but I'm a goddamn mountain, unmoving, relentless. His muffled screams are music, the rag of a conductor's baton silencing the orchestra of his panic. The struggle fades, and his body goes limp in my arms.

“Nighty-night,” I say, dragging him back to the boot I left open and waiting like a gaping maw.

I dump him inside, unceremonious, just another piece of trash to be disposed of. My heart hammers a brutal rhythm, the thrill of the hunt surging through me like a drug. I slam the boot shut, a satisfying end to the first act. Now, the real performance begins.

“Showtime,” I growl to myself, sliding back into the driver's seat.

I pull away from the curb, the streetlights streaking by like the fading pulse of the city. In the rearview mirror, I glimpse at my reflection—scarred throat, dark eyes, and a grin that doesn't quite reach them.

I pull up to Matteo's warehouse, the dirty stench of this godforsaken place mixing with the scent of gasoline and cigarette smoke. My heart is pounding like a jackhammer in my chest, adrenaline surging through my veins. I can't fucking wait to get my hands on this bastard.

With a fierce determination and a low growl escaping my lips, I wrench open the boot and forcefully drag the Korean man out by his feet.

His eyes widen in terror when they meet mine, full of malice and hatred.

As I lead him towards the table, an assortment of tools glint in the dim light, promising pain and suffering.

Despite his screams in his foreign tongue, I relish the sound—it's like a sweet symphony to me.

"Let's start with those pretty fingers of yours," I say, smirking as I grab a pair of pliers and move towards him.

The pain in his eyes only fuels me further as I rip off each finger, one by one, blood spurting and staining the concrete floor beneath us.

His muffled cries for mercy do nothing but strengthen my resolve.

Matteo wants a message sent, and this fucker is it.

"You never imagined this outcome when you dared to cross the Riccis, did you?" I jeer at him, relishing in the fear that radiates from his trembling body.

With precise cuts, I slice off small pieces of skin from his arms and legs, savouring the sound of his agonised screams. As I meticulously sew them together into a

twisted patchwork with fishing line, I can't suppress my amusement at his pitiful state.

And when I place the grotesque little cap on his head, smirking at the way the blood stains his hair, it's as if I've completed a masterpiece of art.

With a wicked grin, I reach for the knife and run my fingers along its cold, sharp edge.

The anticipation builds as I position it over his limp dick, ready to make my darkest fantasy a reality.

As I quickly slice off his dick, crimson blood spurts out in all directions, splattering the floor with a gruesome pattern.

He tries to scream but can only gurgle as I forcefully shove his severed appendage down his throat, silencing him forever.

The rush of power and adrenaline courses through me as the light fades from his eyes as his dick chokes him to death, knowing that my twisted desires have been unleashed.

Fuck, that one was fun . A twisted smile spreads across my face as I laugh at the body in front of me.

The thrill of the kill is still coursing through my veins, and I give one final kick to his lifeless form before dragging it back to my car.

The city lights fade behind me as I speed towards a selected spot, the familiar feeling of satisfaction building in my chest. As I reach my destination, I carefully string him up in a tall tree, his mangled limbs dangling grotesquely in the wind like some

macabre marionette.

It's a sick and twisted display, but it brings me a strange sense of joy.

"Let this be a warning," I whisper before returning home to Aurora. My heart still races at the thought of what I've done, my dick hard in my pants.

I step into the house, quiet as a fucking shadow. Aurora's probably fast asleep by now. I head to the bathroom, stripping off my clothes and letting the water wash away the blood and grime. It's like some twisted baptism cleansing me of the night's sins.

I wrap a towel around my waist and enter the bedroom.

The sight of her sleeping form brings me peace.

She's so beautiful and innocent. I slide into bed behind her, wrapping my arms around her.

She doesn't stir, lost in her dreams. I softly kiss the nape of her neck, feeling her warmth, and let sleep claim me.

"Hey, Felix," Aurora says the next morning over breakfast. "My publicist asked if I'd do another signing in the city, but I said no." I raise an eyebrow at her words, her mouth full of fucking toast.

"Really? Why not?" I ask, genuinely curious. Her book has been a hit, after all.

"Because it's been out for eight months, and it's time to move on," she explains, stirring her coffee. "I have new ideas, you know? Like a story about a possessive assassin who kidnaps a woman he just met and makes her fall in love with him."

I laugh, the sound rough and low. “I love you, too,” I tell her, the words raw and honest.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Aurora Henry

The door clicks shut, a soft echo of Felix's departure.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding and climbed into the bed that still holds his scent—a mix of cedar and blood.

My laptop sits on the nightstand, a silent accuser of my procrastination.

I reach for it with a sigh, the cool metal against my skin grounding me.

"Let's see what the world wants now," I mutter, flipping the damn thing open. My inbox is a godawful mess, a sea of unopened emails staring back at me with virtual judgement. One catches my eye, an address that doesn't ring any bells. Probably more spam, but curiosity is a bitch.

I click it open, and there it is, just four words that manage to make my heart skip despite my better judgement—I'll see you soon .

No name, no nothing. A chill runs down my spine, but I shake it off.

Probably some fan who thinks they're being cryptic.

I hit delete with more force than necessary and shove the laptop away.

“Creeps,” I grumble under my breath .

My eyelids grow heavy as the adrenaline from earlier fades.

Felix’s touch lingers on my skin, a phantom caress that promises danger just as much as it does excitement.

I can almost feel the weight of his hand around my throat—rough, demanding, intoxicating.

But he’s not here now, and the bed feels too big, too empty without him.

“Damn you, Felix Greyson...” I whisper to the shadows, “... for making me want things I shouldn’t.”

I yawn, stretching out on the bed, feeling the pull of tired muscles.

The sheets are cool against my bare legs, a stark contrast to the heat Felix always brings.

I curl up, trying to chase the warmth that’s left with him and let the darkness take me.

Sleep comes as a thief, stealing the tension from my limbs and pulling me under before I can fight it.

The next morning, I wake up with Felix’s arms wrapped around me, his body pressed against mine like a protective shield.

I breathe in his scent, and it sends a shiver down my spine.

I gently lean over and kiss his soft lips, careful not to wake him.

He stirs slightly but doesn't wake, and I smile before slipping out of his embrace.

Padding silently through the bedroom, I feel the need to burn off some energy, so I head to the pool to swim laps.

The water is cool and invigorating, each stroke pushing my muscles to their limit.

As I power through the water, I can't help but think about how Felix has invaded every aspect of my life—my thoughts, desires, and nightmares.

When I'm done swimming, I wrap a towel around myself and head to the kitchen, where I find Felix making breakfast. He smirks as he flips an egg, his eyes fixed on mine.

"Morning, darling," he says, amusement lacing his voice.

"Morning," I reply, grabbing a cup of coffee. "You know, my publicist wants me to do another book signing, but I told her no."

"Really? Why's that?" Felix asks, his interest piqued.

"Because the book was released over eight months ago. I've moved on from it," I say, sipping my coffee. "I want to write a new one. Maybe I'll write about an assassin who kidnaps a girl and makes her fall in love with him."

Felix chuckles, his dark eyes glinting with mischief. "Sounds like a thrilling story, but be careful. Once you go down that path, there's no turning back."

He walks past me, his footsteps loud on the floor.

On one hand, he carries a steaming plate of food, its savoury aroma filling my

nostrils.

With a gentle, unexpected sincerity, he places the plate before me and whispers, “I love you, too, Aurora.” His words wash over me like a warm wave, leaving me stunned and rooted to the spot as he saunters up the staircase, a grin tugging at the corners of his lips.

“Wait... what?” I whisper, my heart pounding like a jackhammer. Did Felix Greyson just say he loves me? The man who thrives on violence and control, who’s always lurking in the shadows, just bared his soul to me? My world tilts, and I’m left reeling, trying to make sense of it all.

I bolt up the stairs, my heart racing as I chase after Felix. I can’t let him just drop a bomb like that and disappear. The man’s a freaking enigma, and I need answers.

“Hey!” I shout, catching up to him in the hallway. My arms fly around his neck from behind, locking into a piggyback hug. “You can’t just say that and run off!”

“Can’t I?” he replies, his voice low and dangerous.

He grabs my wrists, yanking me off his back with brute strength.

My body slams against the wall, the impact sending jolts of pain through me.

His hand wraps around my throat, cutting off my oxygen supply.

But the way he does it... it’s all too familiar, awakening a dark craving inside me.

“Say it again,” I demand, gasping for breath, my eyes locked on his.

Felix smirks, leaning in to capture my lips in a rough, possessive kiss. I melt into his

touch, my body betraying the fear that should be there. Instead, adrenaline courses through me, fuelling my desire even more.

“Get dressed,” he orders, pulling back and releasing his grip on my throat. “I have jobs to do today, and you’re coming with me.”

“Jobs? What kind of—” I start to ask, but he cuts me off.

“Does it matter, darling?” he says, his voice dripping with menace. “Just get ready.”

My chest heaves as I try to catch my breath, the intensity of what just happened still etched in my mind. He walks away, and my thoughts are a tangled mess of confusion and lust. There’s no denying it now—I’m drawn to this man, this assassin who has somehow made me fall head over heels for him.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Felix Greyson

As I button up my jacket, the scent of my cologne mixes with the crisp morning air. Aurora is beside me, her dark eyes scanning the horizon like a hawk.

We slide into the car, the engine growling to life under my foot.

The drive is short, the city's decay blurring past us until we reach Redfern's skeleton, the building standing like an old bruise on the landscape.

I've brought her here before—a test of trust or maybe something sicker. I never can tell with me.

“Wait here,” I bark, already halfway out the door. She nods, her face unreadable as I dart into the gaping maw of the building.

Dav is lurking in the shadows, his rat face twitching. “You got it?” I snap, no time for pleasantries.

“Right here, Mr Greyson.” He hands over the bag, bulging with filthy cash, and I'm back out, the stink of mould and piss clinging to my clothes .

She's there, as still as stone, when I throw myself into the driver's seat, the bag tossed carelessly on the back seat. We don't speak as we tear through the streets again, the city's heartbeat pulsating around us.

Fratelli's is all warm lights and the promise of garlic and tomatoes.

I leave her, engine idling, as I shoulder through the restaurant doors.

The place doesn't open for hours yet, so only Matteo's workers are inside.

I throw the bag on the bench, wave at their faces as they walk out of the kitchen, and walk back out the door.

Back outside, shit hits the fan. Aurora's stiff, her breath shallow, eyes wide as if she's staring down the gates of hell. I scan the area—nothing but empty cars and the ghost of trash tumbling across the pavement.

"Hey, hey, look at me," I say, my hand reaching out to clasp her chin, forcing her gaze away from whatever phantom has got her spooked. "It's just us. You're safe."

But she's somewhere else, lost in the labyrinth of her mind. My gut twists. I hate seeing her this vulnerable—a caged bird thrashing against memories that claw and peck.

"Tell me what you saw," I press, needing to rip out the roots of her fear before they strangle her completely.

The silence is a screaming siren in my ears.

Aurora's finger trembles as it points beyond the windscreen, past the fogged glass, to a red Holden Monaro.

It's just sitting there, innocent to anyone else's eyes, but I know better.

"That car," she breathes, a voice so damn quiet it's almost lost in the tight space

between us. “It set me off.”

“Fuck.” The word is a bullet. I whip my head around, taking in the sleek lines of the Monaro. There’s no mistaking the visceral terror lacing her words. My hands clench into fists, the leather of the steering wheel creaking under the strain.

“Let’s get the hell away from here.” My voice is gravelly, rough with the promise of violence. I slam the car into drive and rev the engine—a feral thing ready to pounce. The car lurches forward as I stomp on the gas, tyres screeching their rage against the asphalt.

“Deep breaths, Aurora. In and out,” I bark out the command, glancing at her profile. Her chest heaves beneath the seat belt, a battle raging within her slender frame. I can almost see the tendrils of her dark past wrapping around her throat, squeezing the air out.

“Focus on me, darling,” I snarl, navigating the traffic with predatory ease. We’re a bullet slicing through the city, leaving shadows in our wake. My mind races, a storm of thoughts colliding with every turn of the wheel.

“Talk to me when you can. Anything,” I growl, my need to protect flaring up like a brushfire. The animal in me wants to track down whatever or whoever’s linked to that car and tear them apart.

“Can’t... not yet,” she chokes out, her knuckles white where they clutch the armrest.

“Alright, alright. No rush.” Words are cheap anyway. Actions are my currency, and I’m about to spend them all to keep her safe. My foot hammers the pedal harder, each mile putting distance between her and the trigger.

“Home,” she finally whispers as though the word itself is salvation. And maybe it is.

For her. For us. Home is where I can watch over her, where the darkness retreats, if only for a moment.

“Home,” I echo back, letting the word hang between us like a vow. Home is where we fight our demons, together, one nightmare at a time.

The driveway’s gravel crunches under the tyres like bones breaking. I’m out before the engine dies, moving with purpose. I yank open the door and reach for Aurora. My arms are like steel bands as I lift her against me. She is as light as a ghost in my hold.

“Got you,” I grunt out, carrying her past the threshold and into the dimly lit living room. The couch takes her from me, the leather harsh against the reality we’re wrapped in. I crouch before her, my hands on her knees, looking up into those dark eyes that have seen too damn much.

“Talk to me, Aurora. What did that car do to you?” My voice is a blade—sharp, ready to cut through the silence she’s trapped in.

Her lips part, and words tremble on the edge of a precipice. “It was... it was their car. The same model, same colour. Just seeing it, it’s like I’m back there, Felix.” Her voice is a haunted melody, notes of pain threaded through every syllable.

“Back where?” I push, though each word feels like I’m pressing bruises. But I need to know this so I can stand between her and whatever hell is clawing at her mind.

“At their house,” she whispers, and the air in the room gets heavier.

“Fuck.” It’s all I can say—a curse against the ghosts that torment her. My fist clenches, nails digging crescents into my palm. I want to smash something, to shatter the world that hurt her.

“Tell me everything, darling. Don’t leave out anything. I need to understand,” I demand, my tone brooking no argument. This isn’t just about comfort. It’s strategy and survival. Know your enemy, even if it’s a fucking memory.

“The screams... mine, echoing off the walls. The fear. I could taste it, metallic and bitter.” Her eyes are distant now, glazed with the film of the past. “And the belt... he’d take it off slowly, making me watch.”

Chapter Twenty-Four

Aurora Henry

I sit on the couch.

Felix crouches in front of me. As his dark eyes search my face, I can't help but get lost in the past, reliving the tale of my kidnapping to him.

"Fuck, Felix..." I whisper, my voice trembling. "I was walking home from uni when this red Holden Monaro pulled up next to me. Three fuckers with masks jumped out and grabbed me, throwing me in the back like I was nothing. They blindfolded me and took me to this house..."

Felix's grip tightens on my knees, his jaw clenched as he listens intently.

"Windows were painted black, so I couldn't see shit.

There were two other girls in there with me, one Asian woman and another girl, maybe twelve?

Fuck, she was so young." I choke back a sob before continuing, "They chained me to this metal gurney with a headrest and a drain. They... they tortured and raped me for three weeks straight. "

His eyes darken, and I see the rage bubbling beneath the surface. I push on, needing to share every brutal detail.

“One of them would tie me to a chair, making me watch as he took off his belt, using it to whip one of the other girls. I think they were Italian... they only spoke it to each other. Kept using the name Enzo a lot. They cut up my back pretty badly, put out cigarettes on my skin.” My voice breaks, and I force myself to continue, “One of ‘em even wrapped barbed wire around my arms and chair, then punched me in the face, causing the wire to pull tight on my skin.”

“Jesus Christ...” Felix growls, his anger barely contained.

“Managed to escape, though. They left me untied in a cage while they went out for something. I used a hairpin one of the other girls threw to me to open the lock, but just as I got it open, they came back. I couldn’t free the others.

” My voice falters, guilt eating at me. “I ran and ran, finally getting a car to stop for me. They took me straight to the police station, and then I was taken to the hospital.”

Felix’s eyes are cold and calculating.

“My parents did their best to support me after that goddamn nightmare, but being around them just made it worse. They reminded me of what I’d lost and how fucking broken I was.

“Couldn’t stand being there anymore,” I tell Felix, my voice cracking.

“So, I moved to the Gold Coast and got all these tattoos to cover the scars left behind.”

Felix nods, his dark eyes intense as he studies the ink on my body. He’s got this way of looking at me that makes me feel like nothing else exists as if I’m the only thing in the world that matters. It’s fucking terrifying and comforting at the same time .

“You know, I saw your medical file,” he says casually as if it isn’t a big deal. “Noticed you had a bunch of broken bones between fifteen and nineteen. What happened?”

I bite my lip, not wanting to go back down memory lane anymore, but now that he’s asked, it’s hard to keep the past from clawing its way back up.

“First boyfriend I ever had, met him in school. His name was Hael.” The words taste like bile on my tongue. “He beat me up for years, and I hid the broken bones with bullshit excuses. We broke up when I was eighteen.”

“Fucking bastard,” Felix growls, his hand clenching into a fist. I can see the vein in his neck throbbing, and I know he’s imagining all the ways he’d make Hael suffer if he ever got his hands on him.

“No one touches what’s mine,” Felix growls out.

His words send a shiver down my spine. This man, this dangerous assassin who could kill without a second thought, cares about me enough to protect me from the monsters who haunt my past.

“Only had two boyfriends in my whole life,” I admit, taking a shaky breath. “Hael, and then Nick.” My hands tremble as I remember the pain he caused me. “Took me eight fucking years to even think about talking to another man.”

“Tell me about Nick,” Felix says, his voice low and dangerous.

“Nick... he wasn’t like the asshole you met. He was nice at first, you know? Real sweet, actually. For over a year, everything was fine. Then, he started popping pills, snorting lines, all that shit.” I swallow hard, trying to keep myself from breaking down. “That’s when I became his punching bag.”

“Did you leave him?” Felix asks, his jaw tight.

“Managed to get away, yeah. But the bastard stalked me after. Had to move around a lot, stay off his radar.”

Felix’s eyes turn cold and crazy, sending shivers down my spine.

He leans in close, gently touching my cheek.

“No matter what, Aurora, I’ll never hurt you.

You’ll always be safe here,” he promises, and something in his tone tells me he means it.

“I’ll remove every single person who hurt you.

I swear on my fucking life, I’ll kill them all. ”

The room is dim, shadows dancing on the walls like demons from my past. My heart is racing, but it isn’t fear that’s got me worked up—it’s something else.

Felix leans in, closing the gap between us, and his lips meet mine in a sweet, tender kiss.

It’s a stark contrast to the violence I’ve known, the aggression that’s haunted me for so long.

His strong arms wrap around me, pulling me close, and I can feel his body heat against mine.

For the first time in God knows how long, I feel wanted and cared for.

“Never thought I’d see the day,” I mutter against his mouth, my words breathless.

“See what day?” Felix asks, his voice low and rough, sending shivers down my spine.

“Finding someone who gives a shit about me.”

Felix chuckles a deep, throaty sound that makes my whole body tremble. “I give more than just a shit, Aurora. You know that.”

“Still hard to believe,” I say, pulling away from him just a bit, staring into those dark eyes that seem to see right through me.

“Enough with the past, babe,” Felix murmurs, brushing a strand of hair away from my face. “You’re safe now. With me.”

His words hit me like a fucking freight train, slamming into my chest with all the weight of the truth he’s laying on me.

I’ve never been one for happiness or letting myself believe that things could be okay.

And yet, here I am, wrapped up in Felix’s arms, feeling a warmth I can’t even begin to describe.

“Alright,” I whisper, my voice barely audible.

“Good girl,” he says, smiling that sexy, wicked smile of his. “Now close those pretty eyes and get some rest.”

“Rest? With you around?” I tease, but I do as he says, closing my eyes and letting myself sink into the comfort of his embrace, as he swings up and lays me down.

“Smart-ass.” He chuckles, his breath tickling my ear.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Felix Greyson

The fucking rage is building up inside me like a goddamn volcano as I sit here clenching my fists. I know she's the girl from that newspaper article Angel found, but it still doesn't make her suffering any easier to stomach.

"Fuck," I mutter under my breath, trying not to let Aurora see how much this shit is getting to me. She doesn't need me losing control right now.

The fact those bastards spoke Italian and said 'Enzo' gives me some fucking clue about who they are.

I sit there, watching Aurora sleeping like an angel in my lap. Her long, black hair fans out across my legs, and her breathing is soft and even. Fuck, she's beautiful when she isn't all guarded and shit.

Gently, I run my fingers through her hair, careful not to wake her. She's been through enough hell lately, and she deserves some peace. But the rage inside me threatens to burst out, thinking of those fuckers who hurt her. I have to do something about it, and I know just who to call—Matteo.

Shifting slightly, I pull my phone from my pocket without disturbing Aurora. My fingers fly over the screen, shooting off a text to Matteo.

Felix : Need a meeting. It's 'bout Aurora.

A minute later, his reply pops up.

Matteo : I'll come to yours. El wants to meet Aurora anyway, and we can talk shop in the basement.

I smirk, thinking of how much Matteo loves my basement. The dude is a psychopath like me, but hey, it takes one to know one, right?

Felix : Sounds good. See you at five .

I text Fratelli's, ordering four pasta dishes for delivery.

As Aurora continues napping, I grab her book from the coffee table. Flipping through the pages, I can't help but feel a bit more connected with the woman resting on my lap, seeing as how she bared her soul to me earlier. Hell, it's like I'm reading her journal or some shit.

"Jesus Christ," I mutter under my breath as I dive back into her story. The lines between fact and fiction start to blur, but I reckon I can tell which parts are real and which ones are not. The raw, gut-wrenching pain in her words? Yeah, that isn't anything any writer could make up.

"Fuck," I whisper, my emotions churning inside me like a damn hurricane. The more I read, the more I want to wrap my hands around those bastards' necks and choke the life out of them. But for now, I can only focus on Aurora and make sure she's safe with me.

I glance at the clock, seeing it's four o'clock. Shit, time flies when you're caught up in a good book. But right now, I need to take care of business. I gently shake Aurora awake, her long, black hair spilling over my lap.

“Hey, babe,” I say softly, “my boss and his wife are coming for dinner. You need to grab a shower before they get here.”

Her dark eyes glare at me with that grumpy look she’s got down pat. “Why the fuck didn’t you wake me sooner?” she snaps. “I need more than an hour to look presentable!”

“Relax, sweetheart.” I chuckle, trying to soothe her ruffled feathers. “Tracksuit pants and a T-shirt will be just fine.”

Aurora bursts out laughing. “No one sees me like that except you!” she says, smacking my chest playfully. God, I love that fiery spirit of hers.

“Fine, go on then,” I say, helping her up. She stumbles a bit, still groggy from her nap. “Get yourself all dolled up. Just don’t take too fucking long, alright?”

“Whatever,” she mumbles, dragging herself towards the stairs and up to the bedroom.

Forty minutes later, Aurora walks in wearing a simple pair of black suit pants and a long-sleeve black blouse. I’ve noticed she covers her tattoos in public. Why the fuck is that? It makes me curious. But fucking hell, Aurora looks good.

“Hey,” she calls out, entering the kitchen when the doorbell rings. The kid from Fratelli’s hands over the pasta and takes off without waiting for payment. Aurora’s dark eyes glance at me, full of questions. “Why didn’t he want payment?”

“Simple,” I say, smirking. “I don’t pay at Fratelli’s. It’s a money laundering system. I drop the cash off, I eat for free.”

Her eyebrows arch, but she doesn’t press further. Smart girl.

Ten fucking minutes later, Matteo and Eleanor show up. As they walk through the door, Eleanor's calling Matteo a fuckwit and promising he'll pay for some shit later. No idea what their beef is, but Matteo looks like a man in the doghouse. Serves him right, I guess.

"Hey, Felix," Matteo grunts out, trying to smile despite his obvious annoyance with Eleanor.

"Matteo, Eleanor." I nod, acknowledging them. "This is Aurora."

"Nice to meet you," Aurora says, extending her hand. Eleanor shakes it eagerly, eyeing her up and down with excitement. Matteo nods at her, still looking sheepish after the argument.

"Boys," Eleanor smirks, gesturing to Matteo and me, "fuck off to the murder dungeon so we can talk." Damn, she's bossy.

"Whatever you say, El." I snort, knowing damn well she won't hesitate to kick my ass if I don't listen. Matteo and I head downstairs to the basement, leaving the girls to their chatter.

As we step into the dimly lit room, the clinking of chains echoes off the walls and ceiling.

The musty scent of old blood lingers in the air.

I turn to Matteo and say, "Aurora's the girl from the newspaper clipping that Angel sent me.

Her past is... disturbing." My voice catches as I recall the details.

“She was kidnapped and held for three weeks, raped and tortured repeatedly.” A shiver runs down my spine at the thought.

“And there were two other girls with her... an Asian and a twelve-year-old. They spoke Italian and kept saying ‘Enzo’ over and over again.”

“Fuck,” Matteo mutters, rubbing his temples. “How are we supposed to find out who did this shit? Enzo’s dead. His seat has been dismantled.”

“Maybe someone from the Morelli side came over to your side?” I suggest, trying to piece it together. “We could ask them.”

“Leave it with me,” Matteo says, determination burning in his eyes. “Spike can hunt them down for answers.”

“Good,” I grunt out, clenching my fists. “I’m going to make those bastards pay for what they’ve done to Aurora.”

Chapter Twenty-Six

Aurora Henry

Eleanor is a fucking force to be reckoned with, bossing the men around like they're her goddamn pawns. She sends them off to the basement to talk shop, and I can't help but admire the strength it takes to do such a thing.

"Fucking impressive," I mutter under my breath.

"Damn right." She smirks, catching my comment. The men scurry away, leaving us alone in the living room. My gaze lingers on Felix for a moment, his controlled aggression making me weak in the knees.

"Come on, let's grab a drink," I say, leading Eleanor to the kitchen. As we walk, I can feel the weight of my past heavy in the air, the shadows of violence and abuse still lingering in every corner of my mind.

"What would you like?" I ask, opening the liquor cabinet.

"Whiskey. Two fingers over ice." She sighs, leaning against the bench. I pour her drink and hand it over, our fingers brushing together briefly before she takes a sip.

"You know, I've read all your books, Aurora," she says, studying me from behind her glass. "And let me tell you, you're one hell of a writer."

"Thanks," I reply, unsure of how to react. Praise doesn't come easy, especially when

it's about my work—words born from pain and scars etched into my soul. But Eleanor seems genuine, and there's something comforting about her presence.

“Your stories, they're raw, real, and so fucking powerful,” she continues, taking another swig of whiskey. “You got a way of putting emotions into words that hit like a goddamn freight train.”

“Didn't think I'd ever meet someone who could appreciate the darkness I write about,” I confess, swirling the whiskey in my glass before downing it in one gulp. “Most people just think I'm some twisted, fucked-up bitch,” I finish as I refill my glass.

“Hey now,” Eleanor says, her eyes full of fire as she pushes herself off the bench. “You're a survivor, Aurora. A warrior. Your words are weapons, and you wield them like a fucking master. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.”

“Thanks, Eleanor,” I say, my voice breaking slightly. For the first time in a long while, I feel seen and understood. And goddamn, it feels good.

“You looked a bit flustered when you arrived. Are you okay?” I ask, concerned.

She chuckles, brushing off my concern with a wave of her hand. “Oh yeah, I'm fine. Just gonna cut Matteo's dick off later,” she says with a grin that sends shivers down my spine .

“Fuck, what did he do?” I can't help but blurt out, surprised by her bold declaration.

Her grin widens as she leans in, conspiratorial-like. “That fucker switched out my birth control pills for placebos. Thinks he can trick me into having another kid.”

“Shit, really?” My jaw drops as I try to wrap my head around the audacity of such an

act. “What are you gonna do about it?”

Eleanor laughs like it’s the funniest thing in the world. “He pulls this shit all the time. He ain’t gonna win this fight. I’m done having kids. He’ll just have to accept it.”

It amazes me how she can brush off such a serious matter with laughter and a wicked smile.

“Damn, Eleanor,” I mutter, shaking my head.

“Damn right.” She smirks as she takes a swig of her whiskey, the ice clinking against the glass.

“Listen, Aurora...” she begins, her eyes locked on mine with a fierce intensity, “...

you gotta learn how to deal with men like these possessive dickheads, you know?

You let ‘em win most of the time, but when it comes to the big things, you stand your ground and say no.”

She chuckles darkly, swirling the amber liquid in her glass. “One single tear on my face sends that man into a tailspin. I get what I want easily.”

“Really?” I snort, unable to help myself. “You think that’ll work on Felix?”

“Maybe,” Eleanor says, suddenly serious.

“But I’m glad he found you. Never seen him so...

soft before. Normally, he’s hard as nails, rude, and mean all the time.

He's a dangerous man, Aurora. But there's something about you that seems to so ften him.

"She hesitates for a moment, then adds, "When we arrived and he introduced you to us, his face went all soft and proud. Only ever seen that look on one man's face before."

"Who?" I ask, curiosity piqued.

"Matteo." She beams at me. "Just know you got something special, girl."

I laugh, feeling a pang of gratitude for this woman who barely knows me yet has my back. Still, the thought of Felix, the man I'm falling in love with, being so dangerous sends a shiver down my spine.

"Thanks, Eleanor," I tell her sincerely. "I'll try to remember that."

"Good." She grins, raising her glass in a toast. "Here's to us and dealing with our fucked-up men."

"Cheers to that," I agree, clinking my glass against hers and relishing the burn as I swallow my whiskey.

Footsteps echo through the hallway as the men make their way up from the basement. I glance at Eleanor, who smirks knowingly, and we can't help but burst into laughter when they enter the kitchen. Their eyes narrow suspiciously, probably thinking we're hiding some deep, dark secret.

"Whatcha ladies giggling about?" Matteo asks, trying to sound intimidating but failing miserably.

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Eleanor teases, taking a swig of her whiskey.

Felix rolls his eyes at our antics and claps his hands together. “Alright, enough chit-chat. Let’s eat,” he commands, his voice firm but with a hint of amusement. “Darling, can you grab some plates and cutlery?” He moves to the bench and grabs the bag of pasta, placing it on the table.

“Sure thing,” I reply, walking to the cabinets. As I gather the necessary items, I can’t help but think about what Eleanor told me earlier. Could I really have such an effect on this dangerous man? What would it mean for our future together?

We all sit down to eat, the atmosphere more relaxed as we share stories and jokes. The hours pass by in a blur of laughter and camaraderie, something I never thought I’d experience with these hardened individuals.

Eventually, Eleanor and Matteo rise to leave, with the clock striking well past midnight. As she hugs me goodbye, Eleanor slips me a business card with her cell number on it.

“Call me anytime, alright?” She looks at me seriously, her eyes filled with genuine concern. “You’re gonna need someone to talk to in this crazy world.”

“Thanks, Eleanor,” I say, clutching the card tightly. “I appreciate it.”

With a final wave, Eleanor and Matteo depart, leaving Felix and me alone in the kitchen.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Felix Greyson

The door slams shut, and I can't help myself any longer. I turn to Aurora, her long, black hair cascading down her back, those dark eyes locking onto mine. I gently cup her face and lean in, pressing my lips softly against hers. "I love you," I murmur, feeling the words vibrate between us.

Aurora freezes like she's hit a damn wall or something. Her eyes widen, and I see a storm brewing behind them. Is this too much? Have I pushed her too far?

But then, something snaps. The next thing I know, she launches herself at me, her mouth crashing onto mine with a ferocity that takes my breath away.

Her kisses are rough, hard, demanding, and everything I never knew I needed.

Without breaking our connection, I scoop her up in my arms, her legs wrapping around my waist like a vice.

"Bedroom," she growls out between kisses, and I don't need to be told twice.

My heart pounds as I carry her through the house, both of us desperate for more. It's like we're two magnets pulled together by an unstoppable force. The past, the pain, the scars—none of it matters right now. All that exists is this moment and connection between us.

As we reach the bedroom, I kick open the door and stride inside, feeling Aurora's nails dig into my shoulders. She's a wild animal, untamed and fierce.

I lower Aurora's feet to the floor, her body trembling with anticipation. I step back, my eyes never leaving hers. "Strip," I demand, my voice firm and commanding.

She hesitates for a moment, but then her hands move swiftly, undressing herself without breaking eye contact.

Her clothes drop to the floor like shed skin, revealing the beautiful canvas of tattoos that dance across her body.

A shiver runs down my spine—she's never looked more vulnerable and enticing at the same time.

"Kneel," I order, and she complies immediately, sinking to the floor with her head bowed. The sight sends a surge of power through me, every muscle in my body tensing with excitement. I can feel myself growing harder by the second.

"Come here," I tell her, my voice barely above a whisper. She crawls towards me on her hands and knees, grace and submission blending into one intoxicating package. As she reaches my feet, she glances up at me, her dark eyes filled with an unspoken question.

"Undo my laces," I command, and she obeys without hesitation, her fingers nimble and quick as they work to free my feet from their leather confines. My shoes fall to the floor with a soft thud, and I can't help but smile at her kneeling before me, completely under my control .

"Good girl," I murmur, reaching down to gently stroke her hair.

“Now strip me,” I demand, both a command and an invitation.

I see Aurora’s eyes spark with determination.

She stands, her hands reaching out to grasp the hem of my shirt.

She slowly pulls it up, revealing the ink that adorns my torso.

The cool air brushes against my skin as she discards the shirt, leaving me bare-chested.

“Finish what you started,” I demand, my voice tense with anticipation.

Her fingers tremble slightly as they work on my pants’ button, but there’s no hesitation in her movements.

The moment she unzips my fly, my erection springs free, brushing against her hand in the process.

An involuntary shudder runs through me, and I can’t help but smirk at her reaction—wide-eyed fascination mixed with fear and desire.

“Get on the bed,” I order, barely able to contain my lust. “Show me that sweet little pussy of yours.”

Aurora makes her way to the bed, every movement calculated and deliberate.

Like a predator stalking its prey, my eyes lock on her ass as she gets on all fours.

Her body gleams with sweat, her dark hair clinging to the nape of her neck.

The sight of her wetness glistening between her thighs sends a primal surge of hunger through me.

“Look at you,” I taunt, my voice dripping with arrogance. “Begging for it without even saying a word.”

I can see her trembling now, vulnerability etched across her face.

It’s a sight that never fails to fuel my desire, the raw power of having her so willingly submit to me.

But beneath that surface of submission, I know that she’s strong and resilient—a survivor.

And it’s that knowledge that makes this dance all the more intoxicating.

“Are you ready for me, darling?” I ask, my words a mix of affection and menace. “Ready to take whatever I give you?”

“Y-yes,” she stammers, her voice barely audible.

“Good girl,” I purr, my hand reaching out to caress the curve of her ass.

“Can I spank you?” I ask, my voice low and cautious. The last thing I want is to trigger Aurora’s past trauma. “Have you ever been spanked before?”

She shakes her head, uncertainty clouding her dark eyes. “No, I haven’t,” she admits.

“Let me try something, and if you don’t like it, just say the word.

” I raise my hand and bring it down lightly on her ass, watching for any signs of

distress.

Instead, a soft moan escapes her lips. Encouraged, I spank her again, a little harder this time.

Her body reacts with shudders and more moans, clearly enjoying the sensation.

“Damn, you love this, don’t you?” I growl out, spanking her ass harder as it turns a delicious shade of pink. With each smack, her moans grow louder, fuelling my arousal. I slide my fingers along her wet pussy lips, feeling just how drenched she is. “Such a dirty girl, loving my hand on your ass.”

“Please, Felix,” she whimpers, desperate for more.

“Alright, darling. You’ve earned it.” I position myself behind her, my dick throbbing at the sight of her dripping entrance. Slowly, I push in, savouring the warmth and tightness that engulfs me. Her gasp fills the room as I bury myself deep inside her.

“Fuck,” I hiss, beginning to move in slow, deliberate strokes. My free hand reaches around her, my fingers finding her clit and rubbing it in time with my thrusts. I can feel her inner walls tightening around me, her impending orgasm sending shivers down my spine.

“Come for me, baby,” I urge, my voice a lascivious purr. “Show me how much you want it.”

Aurora’s body convulses as she reaches her climax, her moans turning into a high-pitched scream of ecstasy. The feeling of her tight, wet pussy clenching around me is nearly enough to push me over the edge, but I hold back—for now, at least.

“Fuck, Felix.” She gasps, her body still trembling from the aftershocks of her orgasm.

“Now, let’s see if we can make you come again.” I grin wickedly, pulling out of her. Her eyes meet mine, a hint of vulnerability mixed with desire. She nods, biting her lip.

“Please, Felix,” she begs.

“Turn over on your back,” I command. As she complies, I can’t help but admire her body—the curve of her waist, the soft swell of her breasts, and the way her legs part in anticipation.

I slide back inside her, feeling her warmth envelop me once again. “Fuck,” I groan, my fingers finding her nipples and pinching them gently. Her moans fill the room, urging me to go harder.

“Like that, baby?” I tease, watching her facial expressions as I increase the pressure on her nipples. Her eyes glaze over, lost in pleasure .

“Y-yes, Felix,” she stammers, barely able to form words. I smirk, knowing I have her right where I want her.

“Let’s see.” My hand travels from her chest up to her throat, wrapping around it gently at first. I feel her pulse quicken under my touch, her walls tightening around my dick. “You like this, don’t you, darling?”

Her eyes widen, a mix of fear and arousal swirling within them. “Yes... please, Felix,” she gasps between ragged breaths.

“Trust me,” I whisper, squeezing her neck tighter and cutting off her air slowly. As I fuck her harder, her face reddens. Her pussy clenches around me, desperate for release.

“Almost there, darling,” I growl, feeling my climax approaching. I slow my pace, releasing her neck and allowing her to catch her breath. “Now, take my dick like a good girl.”

“Felix,” she pants, struggling to regain her composure. I fuck her hard and fast, feeling her tighten around me once more.

“Can’t... hold on...” I hiss, reaching up to cut off her air again. Overwhelmed by the intensity, she doesn’t last long, her body shuddering as she comes all over me. The sensation of her juices drenching my dick sends me over the edge, and I release inside her, coating her walls with my cum.

“Fuck, Aurora.” I groan, letting go of her neck and collapsing on top of her. Our bodies are slick with sweat. I capture her lips in a heated kiss.

As we catch our breaths, she whispers between pants, “I love you, too, Felix.”

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Aurora Henry

Waking up, I feel the sticky mess between my thighs. Felix is clinging to me like I'm his damn teddy bear. It's suffocating. I'm sweaty, hot, and in desperate need of a shower.

"Fuck," I mutter under my breath, trying to wiggle out of his iron grip. His arms are like goddamn steel cables. But I manage, slithering out of his hold like a snake. He grunts in his sleep but doesn't wake. Good.

I pad to the bathroom, my thighs squishing together, reminding me of last night's rough romp. As I turn on the shower, the water blasts out ice cold. "Son of a bitch!" I curse, my teeth chattering.

The water heats up, and I step in, letting it wash away the filth. The mix of cum and sweat swirls down the drain, and I scrub my face hard, removing any trace of lingering makeup.

As I towel off, I glimpse at my reflection in the mirror. I look like shit—hair matted and bruises forming on my neck from where he gripped me too tight. "Goddamn bastard." I smile.

I pull on some clothes, not bothering with makeup or anything fancy. This isn't a beauty pageant, after all. I slip out of the bathroom and glance at Felix, still sleeping like a baby. How can someone so violent be so peaceful?

“Asshole.” I smile, more to myself than him. My feet slap the cold floor tiles as I head downstairs.

“Yoghurt and fruit,” I mumble, grabbing the only nutritious shit I can find. I wish I could cook something more decent. Maybe Felix will teach me. Not that I need his help or anything, but a girl has to eat, right?

I dump the food in two bowls and slump onto a stool at the breakfast bar. My laptop sits there, begging for attention. Fine, I’ll check my damn emails.

“Jeez, these fucking spammers,” I mutter under my breath. Three more messages with random-ass phrases like ‘I’m here’ and ‘I’m outside watching you’ stare back at me. Creepy shit.

“Enough’s enough.” Felix had previously mentioned Angel, his tech-wizard friend. Maybe he can block these assholes and set me up with a new account. I know Felix has connections in that world. He always brags about how Angel can do anything in three seconds flat. Show-off.

“Hey, Felix!” I bark out. No answer. A heavy sleeper, huh? Well, he’ll find out soon enough.

“Angel better be good,” I grumble, closing my laptop. I’ll wait until Felix wakes up to deal with this mess. For now, I’ll just shove some yoghurt and fruit into my mouth and pretend life’s all rainbows and butterflies.

“Morning, Sleeping Beauty,” I snark as Felix finally drags his ass into the kitchen. His eyes are half-open, and he’s still yawning. Pathetic.

“Look at this shit,” I shove my laptop in his face, pointing at the creepy spam emails.

“Can you get Angel to block these freaks and set me up with a new account or

something?”

Felix goes super still, his dark eyes narrowing as he scans the screen. He doesn't like what he sees, and neither do I. He snatches his phone from the bench and starts texting Angel. Within seconds, he gets a reply.

Angel : On it.

“Good riddance,” I mutter, slamming the laptop shut. Felix seems to deflate a bit, but he sticks by my side like a damn lion guarding its prey. What's his deal?

“Listen, Aurora,” he starts, his voice low and serious. “I just booked a job for a guy who wants his neighbour removed. The bastard has been beating his son, and the cops won't do shit about it. It's only twenty grand, but I'm excited to do it.”

“Great, another kidnapping mission.” I roll my eyes as if I need more violence in my life.

“Due to these emails, you're coming with me,” Felix orders, all possessive and shit. “Ride shotgun, stay close.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I snap, glaring at him. “ You think I wanna go on your twisted little adventures? What if it sets me off?”

“I don't care,” he growls out, gripping my arm. “I'm not letting you out of my sight.”

“Fine,” I spit, yanking my arm back. “But I swear to God, Felix...”

“Trust me, darling.” He smirks, his eyes dark and dangerous. “You're safe with me.”

“Whatever.” I huff, shoving past him to get ready for this fucked-up joyride.

Two hours drag by, and I'm pacing the damn house like a caged animal.

Finally, a group of rough-looking men show up, and they aren't here for a fucking tea party.

They're here to update Felix's old system and install a top-of-the-line security system Angel recommended.

Felix watches them like a hawk, making sure they don't pull any funny business.

"Angel said this is the best shit out there," Felix mutters as he nods at the men working away. "Gotta keep you safe, darling."

"Safe?" I snort. "From what? Annoying spam emails?"

"Better safe than sorry." He shrugs, his eyes never leaving the men.

"Whatever." I roll my eyes, but secretly, I feel a little safer knowing Felix gives a damn about me.

Once the installation is done, Felix rings Angel and puts him on speaker. "Hey, man, the security system's all set up."

"Good," Angel replies, his voice crackling through the phone. "By the way, I got that email issue sorted out. It was some punk in Victoria. I blocked their ass and set up a new personal email for Aurora. "

"Thanks, Angel," I say, genuinely grateful. "I owe you one."

"Anytime," he replies before hanging up.

“See? Everything’s under control.” Felix smirks, wrapping an arm around my waist. “Now we can focus on the real fun.”

“Fun?” I scoff. “You call kidnapping people ‘fun’?”

“Darling.” He grins wickedly, leaning in close so his lips brush my ear. “You have no idea. Get dressed in all black, darling. We’re going out for dinner, then we’ve got a job to do,” Felix says, his voice low and dangerous.

“Fine,” I mutter, slipping into a tight black dress that clings to my curves.

“Looking good, sweetheart.” He smirks, eyeing me up and down as if devouring me with his gaze. I shudder under his lustful stare but say nothing.

We leave the house around four o’clock, heading up the road to a cute little seafood place. The sun is still high, casting long shadows on the sidewalk. As we eat, I try to focus on the taste of the prawns or the buttery goodness of the crab legs, but my mind keeps drifting to the task ahead.

“Relax, Aurora,” Felix murmurs, sensing my unease. “I’ve got your back.”

“Whatever.” I huff, stabbing at my food with more force than necessary.

After dinner, we drive to the man’s house. It’s a drab suburban home with a manicured lawn and white picket fence—the perfect facade for a monster.

“Stay in the car,” Felix orders, his grip on the steering wheel tightening. “I’ll be just a minute. ”

He gets out of the car, striding confidently towards the front door. My heart pounds as he knocks with a purposeful knock that echoes through the empty street.

“Hey!” the man yells, opening the door. He doesn’t get another word out before Felix’s fist connects with his face. There’s a sickening crunch, and the man crumples to the floor, unconscious.

“Jesus...” I breathe out, gripping the edge of my seat.

Felix drags the limp body towards the car, heaving it into the boot with a grunt of effort. It’s all done in the open, on the man’s driveway, for anyone to see. But no one is around, only Felix and me.

“See, darling?” Felix says, climbing back into the driver’s seat. “Piece of cake.”

I stare at him, taking in his dangerous aura. He looks like he could kill a man without breaking a sweat, but when his eyes meet mine, they soften. He looks at me like I hung the moon, and despite everything—the violence and darkness—my heart races for a different reason.

“Let’s get out of here,” he growls out, starting the car. As we drive away from the scene, I can’t help but feel a twisted sense of excitement.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Felix Greyson

The engine hums softly as I pull up to our home, stealing a glance at Aurora. She's tense but composed, and I can't help but feel a surge of pride. My little darling didn't freak out like I thought she would.

"Good girl," I mutter under my breath, smirking at her before I jump out of the car. The evening air bites at my skin, the semidarkness wrapping around me like a cloak. It's time for some fun.

I hustle over to the boot, yanking it open with a vicious grin. The man inside squirms, trying to break free of his restraints, but he's got no chance. I haul him out and drag him towards the house, taking sick pleasure in every whimper and plea that escapes him. He's fucking pathetic.

"Please, man, I don't know what you want from me!" he stammers, but his words fall on deaf ears. I'm not here to talk.

"Save your breath," I snarl, shoving him down the stairs to the basement.

Cold concrete greets us as the door swings shut, sealing off any hope of escape.

I chain the bastard to the chair, making sure he's secure.

Tonight, he's going to get the shit beaten out of him until he's dead, and I can't

fucking wait.

“You know, you really shouldn’t have beat up your son,” I tell him, rolling up my sleeves.

There’s a thrill in the anticipation, and the knowledge that I’m about to hurt this piece of shit feels like a drug coursing through my veins.

I lean down, getting right in his face so he knows just how serious I am. “But now... now you’re gonna pay.”

Turning on my heels, I head back out the side entrance and into the evening air.

I hear the front door slam shut as Aurora disappears inside the house, leaving me to deal with the man chained up in my basement.

My blood is pumping, adrenaline surging through me like wildfire.

I finish securing the boot of my car and follow her inside.

“Aurora,” I call out as I step into the kitchen, finding her sitting at the table, brows furrowed in frustration. She’s got that sexy little pout she does when she’s irritated, and it stirs something dark in me.

“The fuck you doing?” I ask, leaning against the doorway, arms crossed.

“Damn publicist won’t leave me the fuck alone,” she mutters, her fingers flying across her laptop’s keyboard. “Thinks I should do one last book signing. Might give in just to shut her the fuck up.”

“Last one, huh?” I say, smirking at the thought of her fans eating it up.

“Very last for this damn book,” she snaps .

“Join me in the basement when you’re done,” I suggest, eyeing her with a wicked grin. “Might enjoy giving our guest a proper welcome.”

She hesitates, biting her lip, and I catch a glimpse of that fire flickering behind her eyes. She’s curious, but fuck if she isn’t too scared to admit it.

“Maybe,” she finally says, looking back at her laptop. “Gimme a minute.”

“Take your time, darling.” I chuckle and lean down to gently kiss her forehead. Her skin trembles beneath my lips, but she doesn’t pull away.

Grabbing a water bottle from the refrigerator, I walk back towards the basement. I have to stay hydrated for this kind of work. The door creaks open, and I descend into darkness, feeling the cold air wrap around me like an old friend.

“Alright,” I mutter, stepping down into the dimly-lit basement. My eyes lock onto the bastard tied up in the chair, his face a mix of fear and defiance. “Let’s do this.”

I roll up my sleeves, flexing my arms as I approach him. Something inside me stirs, that primal urge for violence taking over. And I’m not going to fight it.

“Hope you’re ready, motherfucker,” I snarl, pulling my arm back. The first punch lands square on his jaw, a satisfying crunch ringing through the air. He spits out blood and a tooth, but I’m not done yet. Not even close.

My fists fly like a fucking machine, each hit fuelled by all the shitstorm inside me. Every scream, every grunt of pain from him only pushes me further. This is what I need, what I crave— to let loose and fucking destroy.

Time blurs as I keep going, losing myself in the rush of it all. But then something catches my eye—a flicker of movement at the door.

“Didn’t think you’d show.” I huff between punches, feeling sweat run down my face.

There she is, Aurora, standing in the doorway with uncertainty etching her beautiful face. It’s been about forty minutes since I started, and part of me is surprised she came after all. But I can’t help but want her here to see if she’s got that fire in her too.

“Come on in, darling,” I say, holding out my bloody hand to her. “Don’t be shy now.”

For a moment, she hesitates, her dark eyes meeting mine. But then, something shifts in her expression, and she steps forward. I see the struggle inside her—that war between fear and desire. And it only makes me want her more.

She walks closer, her eyes darting between the man in the chair and me. Grabbing the hammer from the table, I hold it out to her.

“Go on, darling. Wanna take a swing at his knees?” I say challengingly.

Aurora’s face goes pale, and she shakes her head, handing the hammer back to me. “No thanks,” she mumbles. “I think I’ll just watch.”

“Suit yourself,” I grunt out, turning my attention back to the guy in front of me. With Aurora now perched on that metal gurney again, I can feel her eyes on me like a fucking hawk.

But this time, I won’t let her distract me. I’m in the zone, punching and pounding away at the guy’s face until he looks more like ground beef than a fucking person. I won’t stop until I’ve finished what I started.

As my knuckles grow sore and bloody, I finally glance at Aurora. Her eyes are wide, filled with lust and fascination. She licks her lips, and all I want to do is taste her right now.

“Never thought something so psychotically insane could be so beautiful,” she says, her voice a mix of awe and hunger. At that moment, all my anger turns to desire, and I stride over to her.

“Beautiful?” I snort, the word is foreign in my mouth. “You’re fucked up.”

“Maybe I am,” she admits, and there’s something so vulnerable in her confession.

I place my bloody hands on each side of her face, feeling the warmth of her skin beneath my fingertips.

For a second, I hesitate, unsure if I deserve this.

But then she leans in as if to say go ahead, take me, and our lips meet freely, fierce and hungry.

It’s a kiss that says we’re both damaged goods, and maybe, just maybe, we can find solace in each other’s darkness.

When we finally pull apart, gasping for air, I leave my mark on her—bloody handprints that mar her pale skin like ink on a blank canvas. The sight sends a shiver down my spine, and I know we’ve crossed into something deeper and darker than we ever intended.

“Are you scared?” I ask, my voice low and dangerous.

“Of you?” She smirks, her eyes glinting with defiance. “Not anymore.”

“Good,” I say, my heart pounding in my chest. “Because I’m just getting started.”

Chapter Thirty

Aurora Henry

“Fine,” I spit out, slamming my fist on the table. “One more pop-up signing and that’s it. No more promoting this goddamn book.”

It isn’t fair. I only wrote the thing to exorcise my demons, but of course, it had to go and become my biggest hit and best-selling book. Figures.

“Death and destruction really do sell,” I mutter under my breath, trying to make sense of it all. It’s been two days since I watched Felix beat a man’s head in, little pieces of brain stuck to his knuckles like sick confetti. And yet, I don’t feel scared of it. Why?

“Darling, are you sure about this?” Felix’s deep voice rumbles next to me, his dark eyes filled with concern. The tattoos on his arms flex as he leans in closer, and I can’t help but trace the scar at the base of his throat with my eyes.

“Y-yeah,” I stammer, trying to regain my composure. “I gotta do it. Just one more time, then I’m done with the book.”

“Alright,” he agrees, a hint of reluctance in his tone.

I sigh, feeling a strange mix of comfort and uneasiness. His love for violence and control scares me, but at the same time, I know he’s obsessed with protecting me from harm.

“Fuck this suit,” I mutter under my breath as I adjust the tight collar around my neck. The pantsuit is suffocating, constricting me like a damn snake. My fingers fumble with the buttons, cursing myself for agreeing to this bullshit signing.

“Darling, do you need help?” Felix’s voice is low and seductive, his hands hovering near my waist.

“Thanks, but no,” I snap, not wanting to show any weakness. “Can you drive me to the damn thing?”

“Of course,” he replies, unfazed by my harsh tone. He knows I’m tense and anxious about the book signing.

I haven’t driven since I was nineteen. Fucking city life makes it easier to catch trains and buses rather than deal with the hellish traffic.

Now, I have to rely on Felix or taxis to get around.

His place is twenty minutes from the city, close enough but far enough to give some semblance of privacy.

“Let’s go then.” I grab my purse and shove my phone into my blazer’s pocket

“Sure thing, darling.” Felix smirks, opening the door for me. I slide into the passenger seat, hating how good it feels to let someone else take control.

“Drive fast, will you? I wanna get this shit over with.” I sigh, leaning back in the seat as Felix starts the engine. His fingers grip the wheel with ease.

“Whatever you want, Aurora,” he says, pressing down on the gas pedal. The car lurches forward, and I can feel the engine’s power humming beneath me.

“Shit,” I whisper, feeling both excited and terrified by the speed. Felix glances at me, his dark eyes probing my thoughts.

“Are you scared?” he asks, his voice barely audible over the engine’s roar.

“Of you? Hell no.” I smirk, trying to play it cool. But this book signing, hell yes, leaving it unsaid.

“Good,” he replies, a wicked grin on his face. “Because I’ll always be here for you whether you like it or not.”

“Thanks, Felix,” I say, trying to sound grateful but knowing his presence is both a blessing and a curse. His obsession with protecting me is a double-edged sword, one that could easily cut me if I’m not careful.

The moment I exit the car, Felix’s eyes linger on me, dark and possessive. “You sure you don’t want me to come in?” he asks, concern etched into his features.

“Positive,” I insist, swallowing my anxiety. “It’ll take hours, and you’ve got work.”

“Alright. I’ll be back when I’m done with my drop-offs. I’ll wait for you in the car.” He leans out, planting a rough kiss on my lips that leaves me breathless.

“Thanks, Felix,” I whisper. With a deep breath, I force myself to walk into the bookstore.

“Fucking hell,” I mutter under my breath as I settle behind the signing table. There’s already a line snaking its way out the door. For four goddamn hours, I scribble my name onto page after page, each one a reminder of the darkness that birthed my bestselling book .

“Love your work,” one fan gushes while I sign their copy. I manage a tight smile, stifling the urge to tell them how fucked up they are for finding pleasure in my pain.

“Thanks,” I mutter, fighting against the suffocating feeling that threatens to overwhelm me. Four hours might as well be an eternity, and I just want it over.

Is it time to go yet? I’m desperate to escape, to crawl back into the safety of Felix’s arms, even though he terrifies me.

But there’s something intoxicating about him, something that keeps me tethered to his side.

Maybe it’s how he protects me like I’m his prized possession or the raw power that pulses beneath his skin. It’s hard to say.

My heart is hammering in my chest as I look up at one of the last few lingerers. A tall, slender man with brown hair locks eyes with me, those familiar green orbs piercing through me. He places my book down, and his voice sends shivers down my spine.

“Where’d you get the story from?” he asks, a sickly sweet smile on his face. The familiarity of his voice makes my skin crawl, but I can’t place it.

“From... my own experiences,” I say, my voice barely a whisper. His eyes bore into me, and my mind races, trying to figure out why this man seems so fucking familiar.

I sign the book, and as I hand it over, his hand touches mine. I shiver, feeling like a thousand tiny needles are pricking my skin. This man scares me.

“See you soon,” he whispers, leaning close to my ear. “You’re still mine.” He turns, walking away like he just dropped a fucking bomb on me. My body freezes, terror

clenching my throat. I know him. I know that voice. He was one of the men who kidnapped me all those years ago.

I scream, my voice raw and desperate. Tears blur my vision as panic overwhelms me. But then, strong tattooed arms wrap around me, pulling me into a solid chest. I smell cedar and old blood, and something in me relaxes, even though I know I shouldn't.

"Easy, darling, easy," Felix murmurs into my hair, his presence a strange comfort amidst the chaos in my head.

My head snaps up from Felix's chest, and I see the shock on everyone's face around me. My publicist's mouth is hanging open like she has never seen a full-blown panic attack before.

"Let's get outta here, darling," Felix says, scooping me up into his arms as easy as lifting a damn pillow. He strides out of the shop with me cradled against him, and nobody even tries to stop us.

"Felix," I mumble into his neck, breathing in that familiar cedar and blood scent. It's fucked up, but it's what grounds me right now.

"Darling, you're safe now," he reassures me as he opens the car door, sliding me inside.

As we drive home, tears pour down my face, unstoppable. I want to tell Felix everything about the man who came back from my past just to fuck with me, but I can't find the words. They cling to my throat like a goddamn noose.

"Hey," Felix says softly, glancing over at me. "Just breathe, Aurora. We'll deal with this shit."

I nod, trying to steady my breathing, but it feels like I'm drowning all over again. The world outside the car window blurs, and all I can think about is how that sick bastard is still out there, promising to come for me. And I know, deep down, that this fight is far from over.

Chapter Thirty-One

Felix Greyson

While I sit in my car parked just outside the quaint book, I impatiently tap my fingers on the steering wheel.

My eyes constantly flicker to the entrance, waiting for Aurora to finish her signing.

I had only completed a few quick errands, not wanting to be away from her for too long.

She hates feeling out of control, and these events always seem to trigger that feeling in her.

But I can't help but feel proud as she interacts with fans and signs copies of her bestselling book.

The sun casts a warm glow on the street, its rays bouncing off the shiny cars and storefronts.

A light breeze dances through the air, carrying the scent of freshly brewed coffee and baked goods from the nearby café.

Aurora, with her troubled past and constant struggle with anxiety in crowds, always seems to retreat into herself.

While I wait in the car for her to finish her book signing, I can't help but feel anxious.

My heart pounds against my chest like a relentless jackhammer, ready to spring into action at any moment.

Every passing minute feels like an eternity as I long for her to return so we can leave.

The thought of leaving her alone, even for this short time, fills me with dread.

I let out a deep breath, trying to calm my nerves. I have to keep it together for Aurora. She doesn't need me freaking out on her. But then—shit, I hear it—a blood-curdling scream that pierces through every goddamn nerve in my body. My gut clenches.

“Son of a bitch!” I growl, hurling myself from the car, not giving a single fuck about anything else. I barrel through the bookshop's door, nearly knocking some poor bastard off his feet. I don't have time for apologies. I must get to her.

“Get the fuck outta my way!” I snarl, pushing through the panicking crowd. And there she is, sitting in her chair with eyes wide and terror etched all over her beautiful face. She's still screaming, and it feels like somebody has taken a rusty blade to my insides.

“Easy, darling,” I say, wrapping my arms around her.

“Let's get out of here,” I say, scooping her in my arms. I can feel her trembling as I walk out of the bookshop, my heart beating like a fucking jackhammer. Every step we take feels like a battle—the crowd, the noise, the goddamn chaos that's following us.

“Felix,” she mumbles into my neck.

“Darling, you’re safe now,” I try to reassure her as I open the car door, slide her inside, slam the door shut, and sprint to the driver’s side. I slide behind the wheel and start the engine. The roar of it is somehow comforting, drowning out the fucking madness we’re leaving behind .

As I drive, I try to piece together what could’ve set her off like that, but nothing comes to mind. I don’t know why anyone would want to hurt her, but I swear to fuck, if I find out who’s responsible, they’ll regret it.

“Just breathe, Aurora. We’ll deal with this shit,” I tell her as we pull up to the house. I climb out of the car and walk around to Aurora’s side, opening the door and scooping her into my arms. She’s so light, like a delicate flower, that I’m afraid I might break her if I squeeze too tight.

With careful movements, I lower Aurora onto the soft couch, her body trembling like a frightened bird.

The fear in her eyes is palpable, and my heart clenches at the sight.

I need to know what happened. I can’t protect her if I don’t have all the information and don’t know what I’m up against. My fingers clench into fists as I try to control the anger and frustration bubbling inside me.

“Darling, can you tell me what happened?” I ask, trying to keep my voice steady and calm despite the rage boiling inside me.

A heavy silence hangs in the air as she stares blankly at the wall, her eyes searching for some hidden meaning within its surface.

I sit beside her, my hand reaching out and brushing against hers in a small gesture of comfort.

After what feels like an eternity, her lips part, and she speaks, her voice trembling with fear.

“I saw one of the kidnappers at the signing,” she says, her words shaky and uncertain. The memory of their encounter causes a visible shiver to run through her body.

Fuck. My fists clench, and I feel my nails dig into my palms. Just the thought of that motherfucker approaching her makes me want to rip his head off.

“Did he say anything? Threaten you?” I demand, trying to gather as much info as possible.

“Nothing specific,” she mumbles, still gazing at the wall. “Asked where I got the story from, and then told me he would see me soon and that I’m still his.”

“Fuck him,” I growl out, anger filling every cell in my body. “Spike needs to find out who this bastard is now. I’m gonna hunt him down, nail him to my wall, and take my sweet fucking time killing him.”

“Please, Felix,” she whispers, tears streaming down her face. “Don’t let him get me again.”

Her body trembles in my arms. “Never, darling. I swear on my life, he’ll never lay a finger on you again.

” I pull her close, feeling her heart race against mine and hold her tightly as she sobs into my chest. “You’re safe with me, Aurora.

Always.” My words are laced with determination and a fierce protectiveness for the woman in my arms.

As I look down at her tear-streaked face, something inside me explodes. This fucker who hurt her will pay for what he's done. I can feel a simmering rage building within me. He won't know what hit him when I'm through with him.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Aurora Henry

My head throbs and I'm drowning in darkness. My eyelids flutter open, but all I see is a haze. I try to focus on the room's details around me, but it's like trying to catch smoke with my fingers.

"Here, eat," Felix's voice cuts through the fog. He's holding a spoonful of soup, urging me to take it. I part my lips, and he shoves the spoon into my mouth. The taste is bland, but I swallow it, not caring about anything anymore. My throat burns from days of disuse, but I don't complain.

"Good girl," he says, his dark eyes watching me like a hawk. As he moves, his tattoos seem to writhe and slither like they're alive.

The days since my book signing have been a blur. I've been curled up in bed, drifting in and out of sleep, barely registering anything around me. And Felix has been there the whole time, feeding and caring for me. It's weirdly tender, considering who he is.

"Come on, one more bite," he urges, holding out another spoonful of soup. I sigh, opening my mouth again. At least he hasn't tried to do anything else to me while I've been like this, so small mercies, I guess.

"Enough," I croak, pushing his hand away when he tries to bring the spoon to my lips again. "I'm not hungry."

“Darling, you need to keep your strength up,” he murmurs, setting the bowl aside. “I’m here for you, no matter what. But you need to fight too.”

“Fight?” I chuckle darkly, the sound catching in my throat. “What’s the point?”

“Because I love you,” he says, his voice raw and vulnerable. But it only makes me angrier. He’s everywhere, consuming me like a fire until there’s nothing left but ashes.

“Fuck it,” I mutter, forcing myself out of bed on the fourth day.

My body aches, and my head is pounding, but I can’t stand another second of lying in this goddamn room.

Felix watches me closely as I pee, his dark eyes never leaving me.

I hate how he hovers over me like I’m some fragile porcelain doll that’ll shatter if he looks away.

“Going for a swim,” I announce, pulling on my swimsuit with shaky hands. He follows me to the pool, silent as a shadow. It’s suffocating, but at least it’s something different from the oppressive bedroom.

Water welcomes me like an old friend, and for a moment, I feel free. I push off the wall and start swimming laps, trying to drown my thoughts in the rhythmic movement. Felix is there, watching my every stroke from the edge of the pool .

His phone rings, shattering whatever peace I’ve found. His voice is low and dangerous when speaking with Matteo. I hear enough to know they’re talking about work. And by ‘work,’ I mean their shady fucking business.

“Go,” I snap when he hangs up, water streaming down my face. “You need to work, and I need to get out of my head.”

“Darling, I can’t leave you—” he starts, but I cut him off.

“Take me with you, then.” The words surprise both of us, but I refuse to back down. Anything has to be better than being trapped here. Felix hesitates but finally nods, agreeing to my demand.

After breakfast, I drag my ass into Felix’s car, the leather seat sticking to my damp skin.

We drive around the city, stopping at familiar spots where he picks up bags filled with cash.

He’s efficient, never lingering for too long, and I can’t help but notice how the exchanges are bigger this time, probably due to Felix not working for three days, instead hovering over me like an eagle waiting for an animal to die so it can pick at the bones.

I watch him from the car, a knot of anxiety twisting in my stomach as I keep expecting something to go wrong. But it never does. Instead, we make our last stop at Fratelli’s restaurant, unloading the money without any issues.

“Did that go too smoothly, or is it just me?” I ask, hating how my voice trembles.

“Relax, darling,” Felix replies, his eyes never leaving the road as we return home. “It’s just business as usual.”

“Right. Business,” I scoff, trying to push down the flood of questions swirling in my head. Finally, unable to resist any longer, I blurt out, “Does Matteo know who

kidnapped me?”

Felix’s grip on the wheel tightens, but he doesn’t slow down. “No. But he knew Enzo. The bastard’s dead now, though. He might’ve been one of the three or had them working for him.”

“Enzo... how did he know Enzo?”

“Enzo Morelli,” Felix says, jaw clenched.

“He used to be one of the Four Seats in Sydney. His son manipulated Matteo’s wife into running away.

No one knows why, but she was gone for ten fucking years.

Turns out, Enzo was involved. Matteo got Eleanor back, but Enzo and his son...

well, let’s just say they are not a problem anymore. ”

“Jesus,” I mutter, trying to process the twisted web of relationships. “So, what? Now there are only three Seats left?”

“Pretty much,” Felix confirms. “Enzo’s business got dismantled, and his followers were split among the remaining Seats. Spike’s been looking through Matteo’s new people to see if any of them know who did this to you.”

“And who exactly is Spike?”

“Matteo and Eleanor have two right-hand men... Angel and Spike,” Felix says with a small smile. “You have spoken to Angel. They’re named after characters from a show.”

“Seriously?” I can’t help but laugh, the tension inside me easing a little.

“Exactly.” He chuckles. “When you meet them, you’ll understand why.”

As we continue our drive home, my thoughts drift back to Enzo and those who had kidnapped me. Despite the twisted humour in Felix’s revelation about the Buffy Clan, I can’t shake the feeling of unease that’s settled over me, like more is coming.

When we pull up to the house, I spot a cardboard box on the porch. The bottom is soaked, and it looks like fucking blood is pooling on the tiles. My gut twists, a sick feeling spreading through me.

“Shit,” Felix mutters, his eyes darkening as he stares at the box. He parks the car, and we both get out, cautiously approaching the package.

“Is that...?” I trail off, unable to finish the question.

“Stay back,” Felix orders, reaching for his knife. He moves in front of me, shielding my body with his own. His voice vibrates with tension. “Let me check the cameras.”

My heart hammers as he pulls up the footage on his phone. The screen shows a young kid, maybe fifteen or sixteen, riding up to the house on a push bike. He walks up to the porch, sets down the box, and rings the doorbell. When no one answers, he leaves.

“Fuck,” Felix swears again. “He must’ve been used. Didn’t even know what he was delivering.”

“Who the hell would do this?” I demand, anger flaring inside me. “And why?”

“Stay here,” Felix murmurs, his face set in a hard line. “I’ll deal with it.”

“Like hell I will,” I snap back, crossing my arms over my chest. “This is my life, too, Felix. I’m not some fucking damsel you have to protect all the time.”

“Fine,” he grumbles, clearly not happy about it but knowing better than to argue with me right now .

We approach the bloody box, my pulse racing with fear and fury. We’re ready for whatever fucked-up message lies within. Whatever they want, we’ll face it head-on together.

The moment Felix lifts the box’s flaps, my stomach churns. Two severed hands rest inside, one male and one female, both wearing wedding rings. My throat tightens, bile rising in my throat as I try not to vomit.

“Jesus-fucking-Christ,” I mutter, unable to tear my eyes away from the gruesome sight.

Felix frowns, his jaw clenched as he stares at the mangled limbs. He carefully picks them up, cradling them like fragile treasures. “I’ll take care of this,” he says, his voice low and steady. “Wait here.”

“Fuck that,” I spit, anger burning through me like wildfire. “I’m not letting you handle this shit alone.” Our lives are twisted together now, entwined by violence and secrecy. If someone wants to send us a message, then we’ll fucking read it together.

“Fine,” he concedes, not bothering to argue. He carries the hands inside, and I follow, my heart still pounding hard.

“Here,” he says gruffly, handing me a bucket and bleach. “Pour this on the blood outside. Then fill the bucket with boiling water and pour it over the bleach after a few minutes.”

“Fuck off,” I snap, glaring at him. But he just smiles that infuriating smirk that somehow makes me want to kiss and slap him all at once.

“Please, darling,” he murmurs, his dark eyes locked on mine.

“Fine,” I mutter, snatching the bleach from his hand. I head outside, the harsh chemical scent stinging my nostrils as I pour it over the bloody tiles. My hands shake as I take deep breaths, trying to calm myself. Who would do this? Why?

Boiling water hisses as it meets the bleach, steam curling into the air as I scrub the blood away. My arms ache from the effort, but I don’t stop, driven by a desperate need to erase any trace of this nightmare.

Inside, Felix deals with the hands, probably googling how to pickle them in a jar.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Felix Greyson

The sun beats down mercilessly while Aurora scrubs the blood off our doorstep. Her long, black hair clings to her sweat-drenched neck, tattoos glistening on her arms as she works. I can't help but admire her determination, even in the face of this gruesome task.

"Fucking bastards," I mutter under my breath. Whatever sicko left those severed hands on our porch is going to pay.

I snapped a photo of the hands and sent it over a secure line to Angel. Maybe he can dig up some information on who these hands belonged to—if there's someone handless at a hospital or found dead missing any. Or maybe the wedding rings might mean something to somebody.

"Hey, don't forget to check the cracks in the tiles for any leftover blood," I yell to Aurora as I head inside. She gives me a short nod, eyes narrowed in concentration. I know she hates this, but we need to cover our tracks.

In the basement, I wrap the hands up in butcher paper, careful not to disturb the rings. Might need them later, who knows? The cooler hums softly in the corner, ready to store its gruesome cargo.

Fucking hell, I say to myself as I shove the package into the cooler.

I head back upstairs, closing the basement door behind me as I go, and head back into the kitchen. Aurora stomps back inside, sweat glistening on her forehead, her jaw set in a tight, pissed-off line. I can't blame her—cleaning blood isn't exactly a fun gig.

“Fucking nightmare,” she mutters, tossing the scrub brush into the sink with a loud clatter. Her chest heaves, her anger palpable, but there's also something wild and vulnerable beneath it all.

“Hey,” I say, my voice low and rough. As she walks past me, I reach out, grabbing her waist and pulling her close. She's tense, like a caged animal, but I don't let go. Our eyes lock, and for a moment, we're lost in each other's darkness.

“Listen,” I murmur, my lips brushing against hers. “I care about you, Aurora. No matter what fucked-up shit we gotta deal with, we got each other's backs.”

Her eyes flicker with doubt and gratitude before our mouths crash together. The kiss is hard and aggressive, but it's also filled with unspoken promises and shared pain. We're both survivors, bound by blood and secrets.

She breathes hard against my lips, her fingers clutching at my shirt.

“Need a fucking shower,” Aurora mumbles, her voice thick with exhaustion. She peels away from me, leaving my arms feeling empty and cold. She walks up the stairs, each step heavy with the weight of the day's events .

My body itches to follow her, the urge to be close to her gnawing at me like a starving dog. But as I take the first step, my phone buzzes in my pocket, ripping me away from that magnetic pull.

“Angel,” I answer, my voice strained.

“Got some info,” Angel says, his words clipped and to the point. “Nothin’ on the news or hospital lists ‘bout any handless stiff. As for the rings, they’re cheap shit, sold fifty years ago. Check if there are any markers, names, numbers, whatever.”

“Will do,” I grunt out, my eyes drifting back up the staircase, yearning for that hot water and steam rising off Aurora’s glistening skin. But this shit takes priority.

“Talk soon,” I say and hang up. My heart is pounding, but not just from the call. It’s the goddamn adrenaline still pumping through me.

Aurora is upstairs, washing away the gore and grime, but I know she’s also trying to scrub away the memories and fear. I want to be there, holding her, protecting her. But first, I have to deal with this. I need to figure out who’s fucking with us so we can rip them apart, piece by piece.

“Alright,” I mutter to myself, my fists clenching. “Let’s see what you got.”

As I head to the basement again, the darkness of our world wraps around me like a cloak, whispering promises of vengeance and redemption. It isn’t pretty and clean, but it’s ours, and we’ll fight tooth and nail to keep it that way.

The basement’s damp air wraps around me as I descend the stairs—cold and unforgiving, just like the life we’ve been forced into. But there isn’t time for sentimental bullshit. I need answers.

“Alright, you fucking rings,” I mutter under my breath, unwrapping the butcher paper they’re nestled in. “Give me something.”

I take a closer look at the male’s ring. Sure enough, there’s an engraving—LH with a small heart. “Fucking precious,” I scoff. Snapping a photo, I fire it off to Angel, hoping he can make something of it. As for the woman’s ring—plain as day, not a

single mark. Figures.

“Fuck, Aurora,” I whisper, my thoughts drifting back to her.

I imagine the water cascading down her body, washing away the blood and pain.

The thought of her moaning my name, her nails digging into my skin, it’s almost too much to bear.

Shoving the hands back into the cooler, I climb the stairs.

I can feel my pulse quicken with every step.

It’s not just the adrenaline from before but the anticipation, the raw desire I have for that woman.

She may be damaged, but so am I. We’re perfect for each other.

“Hey, darling,” I say, striding into the bathroom and stripping off my clothes without hesitation. Aurora’s tense form relaxes slightly, her eyes meeting mine in the steamy mirror. “Don’t mind if I join you, do you?”

“Whatever,” she grumbles, but I can see the flicker of something in her eyes. She isn’t as annoyed as she pretends to be.

I slip into the shower behind her, letting the hot water wash over me. Wrapping my arms around her waist, I pull her close. “You did well today,” I murmur into her ear, my breath hot on her skin .

“Thanks,” she mutters, leaning back against me. I can feel the tension ebbing away from her body. But I want more than that. I want her to feel alive, let go of everything

else, and be here with me.

“Remember who holds your body,” I growl out, nipping at her neck hard enough to make her squirm.

“Always,” she whispers, her voice barely audible above the sound of the water.

My hands glide down her belly, fingertips grazing her smooth skin. I can feel her breath hitch as my touch reaches her pussy, fingers teasing at her clit with a featherlight stroke. Her hips start to sway, her body panting for more, begging me without words.

“Fuck, Felix,” she gasps, the need in her tone sending a jolt of arousal up my spine.

“Tell me what you want, Aurora,” I growl out in her ear, my voice low and possessive.

“More... please,” she whimpers, her body arching towards my touch.

“Good girl,” I praise, my free hand guiding her to bend forward, exposing her wet pussy to me. My hard dick presses against her entrance, and I slip inside her tight walls, her inner muscles gripping me like a vice.

“Shit, you feel so good.” I grunt, pumping slowly, dragging every inch of my length out and then pushing back in, making her moan and squirm beneath me. The sound of our wet bodies coming together fills the steamy shower, mixing with her breathy pleas.

“Please... faster,” she begs, her voice cracking with desperation .

“Patience, baby,” I murmur, maintaining my torturously slow pace. My hand snakes

around her body, finding her clit once more, fingertips moving in deliberate circles as her arousal builds.

“God, don’t stop,” she moans, her legs trembling with the effort of holding herself up.

“Come for me,” I command, quickening my touch on her clit just enough to tip her over the edge. She cries out, her body shuddering as her orgasm rips through her, her walls clenching around me.

“Fuck, Aurora.” I groan, feeling my release building deep inside my balls. I tighten my grip on her hips, the need to claim her driving me wild. With a few rough thrusts, I pound into her, chasing her orgasm with another, making her scream my name as pleasure crashes over her again.

“Goddamn,” I gasp, my balls tightening before I shoot my load inside her, marking her as mine in the most primal way possible.

My dick slips out, and I press my lips to her slick back, breathing into her skin. “I love you, Aurora,” I say, letting the words hang in the steamy air.

“Stop fucking coming in me!” she snaps back, water streaming down her face. “I don’t want a damn kid! Get me on the pill already.”

“Sorry, baby,” I lie, knowing full well I won’t do that. She’ll carry my child whether she wants it or not.

“Fuck you, Felix,” she hisses, pushing away from me. Her dark eyes are flashing, but I can see the vulnerability underneath like she’s just trying to hold herself together.

“Fine,” I say, pretending to give in. “But for now, let’s just enjoy each other.” My hands glide over her soapy curves, feeling the warmth of her flesh beneath my

fingertips.

“Asshole,” she mutters under her breath, but she doesn’t resist as I pull her close again, our bodies melting together under the hot spray.

As the water washes away the evidence of our sins, I can’t help but wonder why she isn’t already pregnant. She’s been here months through two periods, but no baby yet. It’s frustrating, but I won’t give up.

“Hey,” I murmur, brushing a wet strand of hair away from her face. “It’ll be okay. Trust me.”

“Trust you?” she scoffs, looking at me like I’m a monster. Maybe I am, but when it comes to Aurora, I’ll do anything.

“Trust me, baby,” I whisper, my voice soft but firm. “No matter what you say, I’m gonna fill you again and again. One day, you’ll be round with my child, and maybe then you’ll see things differently.”

“Fuck you,” she repeats, but her words are hollow, the fight draining out of her as the water continues to flow over us, washing away everything but the raw truth of our desires.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Aurora Henry

The flickering light from the television dances across the room, barely reaching us under the covers. I'm snuggled up on Felix's chest, feeling the steady rhythm of his heartbeat beneath my cheek. It's soothing, almost like a lullaby.

"Can't believe we're watching this shit," I mutter, not really paying attention to the random movie playing on the screen. My mind is wandering, lost in daydreams and memories.

Felix's fingers fly across his phone, texting away like some fucking madman. His other hand rests on my shoulder, but I can tell he isn't really focused on the movie or me. What the hell is he doing? Who the fuck's he talking to?

I lift my head from Felix's chest, staring straight at him. His fingers pause on his phone screen, and he finally meets my gaze. He lets out a soft chuckle and sets his phone down.

"What's up?" he asks, his voice low and smooth.

"Who the fuck you texting?" I demand, my jealousy boiling over. I don't like being in the dark, especially when it comes to him.

Felix smirks, obviously amused by my bluntness. "Now, darling, there's no need to get all worked up," he drawls. "It isn't anything to worry about."

“Then why are you hiding it from me?” I ask, challenging him.

“Never said I was hiding anything,” he replies, leaning in close so that our noses are almost touching. His dark eyes bore into mine, daring me to keep pushing.

“Then tell me what you’re doing on your damn phone,” I say, not backing down. If he thinks he can intimidate me, he’s got another thing coming.

“Fine,” he says, his smirk growing wider. “You really wanna know?”

“Damn right, I do,” I shoot back, not breaking eye contact.

Felix’s laughter crackles like thunder, and I can feel its vibrations through his chest.

“Jealous, darling?” His smile is wicked as sin, and I’m caught in that predatory gaze.

“I got nothing to hide. Passcode’s 3423. Knock yourself out.”

He goes on, telling me he texted Angel about some inscription he found on the man’s wedding band. My curiosity ignites like a firework, and I prod him for more information.

“What did you find? Spill the beans, Felix.”

“Alright, alright,” he says, still grinning. “It’s just the initials LH with a tiny love heart. Seems sweet, right?”

My body locks up, stiff as an iron rod. I’m yanked back into a memory from when I was nine, holding my dad’s ring as he unclogged a rainwater pipe. The same damn initials were there, with the same shitty little heart. I’d asked my dad about it, and he told me it was for my mom, Laura Henry.

“Shit,” I mutter, my breath coming out shaky. Images of my parents flash before my

eyes, and I can't help but feel sick at the thought of them. I pushed them away after escaping hell, unable to even look at their faces without getting hit by a tidal wave of PTSD.

My body is still shaking as Felix sits up, snatching me from my thoughts. He grips my face with his rough hands, forcing me to look into his dark eyes. "What's wrong, darling?" he asks, concern lacing his voice.

"Those fucking initials..." I spit out, my heart racing. "They were on my dad's wedding band too. Laura-fucking-Henry."

"Shit," Felix mutters, his brows furrowed like he's trying to piece together a puzzle. "When was the last time you talked to your parents?"

"Years," I answer, swallowing the lump in my throat.

"After escaping that hellhole, I couldn't fucking stand being near them.

Every touch, every whispered 'I love you' felt like acid on my skin.

So, I ran to Queensland, leaving them behind.

They tried calling and visiting, but I just pushed them away.

Just seeing their faces brought back the horrors... "

"Fuck, Aurora," Felix says, anger simmering beneath his words. "We need to check on them. See if they're safe."

"Safe?" I scoff. "No one in this fucked-up world is ever truly safe, Felix."

“Maybe not,” he says, pulling out his phone. “But I’ll be damned if I don’t try to protect what’s important to you.” He quickly texts Angel and Spike, asking one of them to check out my parents’ home. I don’t even know if they still live there, but it’s the only address I have.

“Thanks,” I mumble, feeling a weird mix of grateful and pissed off.

I stare into Felix’s dark eyes, searching for any sign of doubt.

But all I see is that fierce determination I’ve learned to love and fear.

His grip on my face is firm but gentle as if he’s trying to hold me together when I’m falling apart.

“Listen to me, Aurora,” he says, his voice steady and commanding. “Whatever shit comes our way, we’ll handle it. Together.”

“Easy for you to say,” I snap back, pulling away from his touch. “You aren’t the one with a fucked-up past haunting every goddamn step you take.”

“Maybe not,” he admits, leaning back against the headboard. “But I got my own demons to wrestle with, and I’m not letting them win.”

I sigh, knowing he’s right. We’re both damaged goods in our own twisted ways. And maybe that’s why we cling to each other like two broken pieces of the same fucked-up puzzle.

“Fine,” I relent, curling up beside him, resting my head on his chest. “But don’t say I didn’t warn you when this whole thing goes to hell.”

“Never doubted it for a second, darling.” He chuckles, wrapping his tattooed arm

around me. “But we’ll burn together if that’s what it takes.”

“Fucking poetic, aren’t you?” I mutter, smirking despite myself. “Just remember, when the time comes, no one will save us but ourselves.”

“Wouldn’t have it any other way,” Felix whispers, pressing a rough kiss to my forehead before turning his attention back to the television.

As the movie plays, I can’t shake the feeling that we’re teetering on the edge of a goddamn abyss. And as much as Felix swears he’s got my back, part of me knows there aren’t any guarantees in this life.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Felix Greyson

I wake up to a fucking cold bed, and I know something is off. Aurora isn't there, but that isn't a surprise. She's probably down at the pool doing laps. Whenever that girl can't sleep, she's in the water, swimming like a goddamn fish.

"Shit," I mutter, scratching my head as I kick off the covers and throw on some pants and t-shirt.

I need to find her and check up on my girl.

Her dark eyes and long, black hair always haunt my thoughts.

And those tattoos? Damn. They cover her body like a second skin.

She's been through some real shit, but she's strong.

Resilient. A survivor of abuse and trauma, sure, but still vulnerable.

"Hey, darling!" I yell out, hoping she'll hear me from the pool. No answer. That's fine. I'll go find her myself.

"Fucking hell," I grumble, walking barefoot across the cold floor.

My feet barely make a sound, but my heart is pounding in my ears.

The thought of Aurora alone and swimming makes me feel all kinds of ways—protective, mostly, but also turned on.

She does things to me. Things I can't even begin to explain.

I walk down to the kitchen, and the back patio door is wide open, letting in a chilly morning breeze. Aurora must've left it like that when she went out for her swim.

"Fucking typical," I mutter, grabbing some yoghurt and fruit from the refrigerator. I know my girl likes her healthy breakfast when she's done with her laps. Nothing but the best for my Aurora. I head out to the pool, hoping to surprise her with this shit.

"Darling, I got your favourite..." I call out the open patio door. But as I step out, I find the pool fucking empty. Not a single sign of my girl. Her phone and towel are lying there on the seat next to the pool, looking all lonely and shit.

"Where the fuck is she?" I wonder aloud, trying to keep my voice steady. She must be around here somewhere, right? Maybe she just went to take a piss or something.

"Yo, Aurora!" I holler, hoping she'll hear me wherever she is. "You done with your swim already?"

Silence. No answer at all. It's like the whole world is holding its breath, waiting to fuck with me.

"Dammit," I say, pushing down the worry bubbling up in my chest. I'm not going to let this shit get to me. My girl is tough and can handle herself. And if she can't, then I will. That's a fucking promise.

"Come on out, darling," I whisper, glancing around the pool area. "I got our breakfast ready. Don't keep me hanging."

I plop my ass on the seat, yoghurt and fruit in hand. I'll give her ten minutes before I start busting down doors. Ten fucking minutes pass, though, and she still isn't back. A cold shiver runs down my spine, and the prickles on my neck scream that something is off.

"Alright, enough of this shit," I mutter, my heart pounding like a jackhammer. Time to play detective and find out where the hell Aurora is.

I grab my phone and pull up the cameras to see what's going on. My fingers grip the phone tightly, my knuckles turning white. I don't need anybody telling me something is wrong. I can feel it deep in my gut.

The footage pops up on my screen, and what I see chills me to the bone. My blood turns to ice, and a fire blazes in my gut, the kind that screams for vengeance. I watch the video again and again, every detail etching itself into my mind.

"Son of a bitch," I mutter, my eyes glued to the fucking screen.

The video shows my Aurora walking out at five this morning in her swimmers, getting ready for some laps like she always does when sleep is a no-show.

She places her towel on the seat, turning around just in time for this masked prick to grab her in a headlock.

He chokes her till she passes out, and I can feel the rage building inside me like a fucking volcano.

This bastard tosses her over his shoulder like she's nothing, walking out the back gate nonchalantly. Fuck him. I switch the camera view, watching as he carries her to the front like she's trash. My blood boils hotter, and I know I won't stop until I find her and make these fuckers pay.

“Angel,” I snap, dialling his number. “Pull up my fucking cameras right now.”

“Wha—” he starts, but I don’t give him time to finish.

“Watch it, Angel. Watch what happens to Aurora,” I snarl. I hear him swearing as he sees what I saw.

“Fuck, man, there’s a tattoo,” he says breathlessly. “Looks like a snake wrapped around his wrist. I’m not fuckin sure, but...”

“Find out who he is, Angel. Find out where they took her,” I growl, my heart pounding in my chest like a sledgehammer. This isn’t just about Aurora anymore. This is personal. Whoever did this, they’re going to wish they never laid a hand on her.

“On it,” Angel says, determination in his voice.

“Keep me updated. And be ready to move when we find her,” I say, clenching my fists so hard my knuckles turn white. Everything in me wants to tear these pricks apart, but first, we must find them.

“Understood,” he replies, and I hang up the phone.

“Whoever you fucks are...” I whisper, the fire in my gut burning brighter than ever, “... you’re gonna fucking pay.”

My hands tremble as I snatch the keys, fury pumping through my veins. I don’t have time for hesitation. I must get to Matteo’s place and fast. Aurora is counting on .

“Fuck!” I slam the car door, jamming on the gas pedal. The engine roars like a caged beast, eager to attack. My grip tightens on the wheel, and my knuckles are as white as

bone. “Hang on, darling. I’m coming.”

The asphalt blurs beneath me. Thirty minutes never felt so fucking long, but I push the pedal harder, trying to drown out the fear pounding in my chest. No one touches what’s mine. No one.

“Matteo better have some fucking answers,” I mutter, teeth grinding. He’s my last hope, and I won’t let him pussyfoot around this shit. Not when Aurora’s life is on the line.

I finally pull up to Matteo’s swanky pad in Double Bay, tyres screeching like banshees on the pavement. My heart races, the fire in my gut blazing hotter than ever. I drive up to his front gate and hold my horn flat.

“Matteo!” I shout, eyes wide and wild. “We got a fucking problem!”

“What the fuck, Felix?” Matteo growls, walking out the front door, eyes cold as ice. “You can’t just?—”

“Shut your goddamn mouth!” I snap, cutting him off. “Someone’s taken Aurora, and we need to find her. Now!”

“Jesus Christ,” he murmurs and runs a hand down his face. “What happened?”

“Does it fucking matter?” I spit, fists clenched. “We need to find her, and I don’t have the time for your bullshit questions!”

“Alright, alright,” Matteo says, holding up his hands in surrender. “Let me just make some calls.”

“Make it quick,” I warn, pacing the driveway like a caged animal. “And you better

pray we find her before I burn this city down.”

“Trust me, Felix...” He pulls his phone out of his pocket, dialling with steady hands. Whoever he calls answers straightaway. “Spike, get here now and grab Angel... someone has taken Aurora,” he says and hangs up.

As Matteo ends the call, Eleanor emerges from the front door wearing luxurious silk pyjamas. Her eyebrows are furrowed, and her expression is full of irritation. “What in the world is going on?” she demands, her voice sharp and impatient.

Matteo turns to face her, his own expression grave. “Someone has kidnapped Aurora. I have to go help Felix find her,” he explains as he approaches Eleanor and plants a soft kiss on her forehead. A determined look crosses her features as she turns to me with shock in her eyes.

“You better damn well find her,” she says firmly to Matteo before turning on her heels and striding back inside. “I’ll go wake up Niko. He can help,” she calls over her shoulder.

Who the fuck is Niko?

Chapter Thirty-Six

Aurora Henry

Restless, I toss and turn in the sheets. The goddamn clock mocks me—four a.m. Sleep isn't going to happen. By five, I'm done with this shit. Maybe a swim will help.

"Fuck it," I mumble to myself, slinking out of bed as quietly as possible. Felix won't be up for another hour or so, and I hate waking him. I've seen enough of his dark side, and it isn't something I want to be on the receiving end of first thing in the morning.

I creep through the dimly lit hallway, my bare feet padding against the cold floor. Shadows play tricks on the walls, but I know what is real and what is just my tired mind playing games.

"Alright, pool time it is," I grumble to myself, pushing the back doors open and stepping out into the cool morning air. The light casts shadows across the yard as I walk to the pool. My phone and towel land on a nearby chair with a soft thud.

"Fuck it," I mutter, straightening up with determination. Not even a second passes before an arm snakes around my neck, cutting off my air supply. Panic sets in, my heartbeat pounding in my ears as I claw at the vice-like grip.

"Shit, shit, shit," I gasp out, choking on the lack of air. My vision dims, white spots dancing across my sight like some twisted fireworks show. Is this it? Am I going to die with my fingers scratching at the forearm of whoever the fuck is doing this?

“Motherfucker,” I whisper, darkness swallowing me whole.

Cold sweat clings to my skin as I struggle back to consciousness. Fuck, what the hell happened? My throat feels like it’s been rubbed raw with sandpaper.

“Ugh,” I groan, trying to move, but something is holding me down. My wrists and ankles are tied tight to a chair, the ropes biting into my skin like a rabid dog.

“Shit.” It’s hard to breathe in this place. It smells like damp soil and manure—a stench so thick you could choke on it. Lifting my head, I scan the room, searching for any sign of life, but I’m alone for now.

The space around me screams ‘old barn’—dirt floor, piles of dirt in the corners, and the smell of rotting wood. Yeah, definitely a barn. But why? And who the fuck dragged me here?

My heart races, thudding against my ribcage. This isn’t good. No one should be able to get that close to me without me knowing. Felix is going to flip.

“Fuck,” I curse under my breath, testing the restraints. They’re not budging, not even a little. Whoever did this knew what they were doing.

“Alright, Aurora... think,” I tell myself, trying to control the panic rising in my chest. “What was the last thing you remember?”

Swimming. The pool. Someone choking me. Darkness. But who? Why?

“Come on, come on,” I mutter, straining against the ropes again. It’s useless, but it’s all I can do right now.

“Hey!” I shout, my voice hoarse. “Anyone out there? You wanna tell me what the

fuck is going on?”

Silence answers me, mocking my desperation. My chest heaves as I fight to hold back tears. I can't show weakness, not now.

My vision is blurred, but I focus on the ropes that dig into my wrists like fucking razors. Sweat and blood mix, staining the rough fibres a sickly shade of crimson. My hands are numb, but there is no way I'm giving up.

“Shit.” I grunt, tugging at them again. The pain is barely registering anymore—it's just fuel for my rage. My legs are tied even tighter. I can feel the circulation being cut off, but there's no time to worry about that now.

“Motherfucker's gonna pay. Gonna break his goddamn face when I get outta this,” I snarl.

“Ah, so you're awake.” A cold voice cuts through the darkness.

The barn door creaks open, and there he is. The masked man. The one from my nightmares. He has me all tied up in this shithole. My heart pounds as memories flood back—fear, pain, anger.

“Long time no see, Aurora,” he says, an eerie calm in his voice.

“Fuck you!” I spit. “You think tying me up is gonna make a difference? I'll rip you apart with my bare fucking hands!”

“Feisty as always.” He chuckles darkly, walking closer. “But you forget, my dear... I've dealt with you before.”

“Go to hell!” I growl out, straining against my bonds. But they don't budge, not one

goddamn inch.

“Brave words,” he taunts. “But we both know what happens next, don’t we?”

“Bring it on, asshole!” I shout, glaring at him with every ounce of hatred inside me. “I’m not scared of you!”

“Good,” he replies as if pleased. “That makes this so much more... exciting.”

“Fuck you and your sick games!” I hiss.

“Ah, but that’s where you’re wrong. You see...” he leans in closer, his breath hot on my face, “... you’re the one who’s been playing games, Aurora. And now it’s time for you to pay.”

“Like hell,” I snarl, tensing up as he circles me like a predator stalking its prey. “You think tying me up and throwing me in some shitty barn is gonna break me? You don’t know shit!”

He stops behind me, and I feel the cold press of a knife against my throat. My pulse races, but I refuse to give him the satisfaction of seeing me scared.

“Wh-what’s that?” I force out, trying to keep my voice steady .

“By the time I’m done with you...” he whispers, “... you’ll be begging for death.”

“Fuck. You.” I choke out, fighting the urge to scream. “Just fucking try it.”

“Welcome back,” he sneers, slamming his fist into my face. Instantly, darkness swallows me whole.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Felix Greyson

I 'm sitting at Matteo's place, waiting for Spike and Angel to show their damn faces. Eleanor, ever the hostess, comes up to me with a concerned look in her eyes. "Would you like some tea, Felix?" she asks, holding a dainty little cup and saucer.

"Fuck no," I say, my stomach churning like it's trying to escape my body. The adrenaline coursing through my veins makes me feel like I'm about to explode. I'm not used to this shit. Normally, I'd have someone's face to smash in by now, but all I got is this goddamn worry for Aurora.

Eleanor shrugs and sets the teacup on a nearby table.

She knows better than to push me when I'm like this.

My thoughts are racing, images of Aurora haunting every corner of my mind.

I can see her dark eyes, the pain hidden deep within them.

Then I see her long, black hair and the tattoos that tell her story, each one a reminder of the life she's been fighting to survive.

I'm sitting here, my mind racing, when the door opens and in walks a kid. He must be around twelve or so, with shaggy black hair and blue eyes that look oddly familiar. He's carrying a laptop under one arm, and he makes himself at home, plopping down

right next to me on the couch.

“Hi,” he says, sticking out his hand. “I’m Niko.”

“Great,” I mutter, not giving a shit who he is as long as he can help me find Aurora.
“What do you need?”

“Can you describe Aurora to me?” Niko asks, opening up his laptop. “I’m developing this facial recognition software, and if you can give me enough details, maybe I can find her. Or y’know, if you have a photo, that’d be even better.”

“Seriously?” I say, staring at him in disbelief. “You’re what, fucking twelve? What the hell do you know about facial recognition?”

“More than you, probably,” he shoots back, unfazed by my attitude. His fingers are already flying across the keyboard, tap-tap-tapping away like he was born to do this shit.

“Fine,” I growl, digging through my phone for a picture of Aurora.

I find one from a few weeks back when we went out for dinner.

She’s smiling, with her dark eyes sparkling and her long, black hair cascading over her shoulders.

I hate looking at it, thinking about how far away she is now, but I don’t have a choice.

“Here,” I say, airdropping the photo to Niko’s laptop. “You better find her.”

“Chill out, man,” he says, taking the photo and starting his program. “I’ll do my best,

but it's not like she's just gonna pop up on the screen right away."

"Whatever," I snap, leaning back in my seat and running a hand through my hair. My heart is still racing, and I can't help but imagine all the fucked-up things that might be happening to Aurora right now. And all I can do is sit here, waiting for some kid to work his magic.

I glare at the kid, then whip my head around to Eleanor standing in the doorway. "Who the fuck is this kid?" I demand.

"Watch your language," she snaps back, her eyes flashing daggers. "Say hi to Niko Ricci. He's mine and Matteo's son, but that information never leaves this house. You hear me?"

I stare at her, speechless for a moment. "What the fuck," I manage, still trying to wrap my head 'round it. "You guys have a kid no one knows about?"

The pieces start falling into place like dominos toppling in my brain. "You ran away for ten years, been back two. You ran 'cause of him?" I say, pointing at Niko.

Eleanor nods, her face softening for just a second. "Something like that," she admits, looking at her son with pride and worry. "I'll just go grab you some Scooby snacks so you can work," she tells Niko before leaving the room.

"Keep it down, will ya?" Niko grumbles, obviously more focused on his laptop than our little drama. I can't blame him, really. We've all got shit to deal with, and right now, finding Aurora is the most important thing.

"Fuck," I mutter, scrubbing a hand over my face. This whole situation is twisted as hell, and I can't stop thinking about what might happen to Aurora if we don't get to her in time. My gut churns, an angry mixture of fear, anxiety, and rage boiling inside

me.

“Hey, Felix,” Spike greets me with that cocky smirk, Angel following right behind him. They both sit, looking all serious and broody-like.

That’s when Matteo walks in, looking as calm and collected as ever. He glances at us, then focuses on Niko. “Anything yet, kid?”

“Give it a minute, Dad,” Niko mutters, not even breaking eye contact with the screen. “It’s only been running for a few minutes.”

I glance at Angel, my eyes wide with disbelief. “All this time, I thought you were the tech nerd,” I say, half-laughing, half-annoyed.

He chuckles, clapping me on the back. “I was, but now I got help.”

Help is a fucking understatement. Niko has skills that make Angel look like a goddamn amateur. And here I thought I was working with the best of the best.

“Speaking of which...” Angel continues, “... I’ve got a program running on my laptop for the tattoo. See if it’s been picked up on any cameras anywhere.”

“Fucking hell,” I mutter, impressed by his resourcefulness.

“But Spike reckons it belongs to Antonio Costa,” Angel adds.

“He is one of the Costa brothers, yeah,” Spike confirms, a grim look in his eyes. “They were well-known in Sydney. Used to work for Enzo.”

“Those sick fucks...” I growl under my breath.

They were brutal and cruel, used to bring girls to Enzo—ones who never made it back out of his compound.

Now I'm starting to realise why. They tortured and killed women, and my Aurora will be next.

She's the one who got away, and for men like them, I can see nothing but horrific pain in her future.

My heart hammers in my chest, a fucking jackhammer beating against my ribs. I clench and unclench my fists, trying to stop the tremors that threaten to shake me apart. The room feels like it's closing in on me—too many eyes, too many ears, too many fucking people.

"Hey, you good?" Spike asks, lighting up a cigarette and blowing out a lungful of smoke. His voice is raspy, like gravel crunching underfoot as he walks towards the back doors and onto the balcony.

"Fuck no, I'm not good," I snap back. "Every second we're sitting here, Aurora is out there with those sick fucks."

"Keep your shit together, man," Angel chimes in, his expression steely. "We're doing everything we can. We'll find her."

"Easy for you to fucking say," I growl out, my gaze flickering between them. "She isn't your girl."

"Enough!" Matteo barks from across the room, his phone pressed tight to his ear. He shoots me a glare, warning me not to push my luck. Sometimes, it's easy to forget that he is more insane than any of us. "I need to take this call. Sit tight."

He steps away, his voice low and urgent as he speaks into the phone. My fingers drum impatiently on the armrest, the seconds ticking by feeling like fucking hours. I can't sit still or wait, but what else can I do?

"Look, Felix," Spike says, walking back in after finishing his cigarette. "We all want Aurora back safe. But if you lose your shit now, you ain't helping anyone."

"Fuck off," I mutter, but I know he's right. I need to keep it together and focus on the endgame. Aurora needs me to be strong, not a fucking mess.

"Any news?" I ask Angel again, hoping for anything—a lead, clue, anything to get us closer.

"Still running the programs," he replies, eyes glued to his laptop. "It's only been a few minutes, man. Just hang tight."

"Tick-tock, motherfucker," I mutter under my breath, trying to ignore the desperate thoughts racing through my mind. Every second counts, and we're wasting them all.

Matteo ends his call, striding back into the room with a grim expression. My gut twists like a fucking knot. I can't tell if it's good or bad news, but either way, it's something.

"Just spoke to Gabe. The brothers moved down to Melbourne into Gallo's territory to join in on the trafficking ring they run. Gabe said he let them go about six months ago. They roughed up the girls too much between buyers, and girls went missing too often."

Chapter Thirty-Eight

Aurora Henry

The second time I wake, the cold metal gurney digs into my face. It's the same goddamn one they used before. I'm tied up tight, face down, and exposed like a piece of meat on a slab.

"Good morning, sunshine," a gruff voice growls. One of the masked men appears in my line of sight, his twisted smile obscured by the shadows. "I love the artwork you covered your scars with. I love it so fucking much, I'm gonna cut some off."

"Fuck you," I spit out, trying to sound braver than I feel. But deep down, I know I can't escape this nightmare.

"Feisty." He chuckles, relishing in my defiance. The bastard takes a sharp knife from his belt. My heart races, pounding against the unyielding metal pressing into my chest.

"Please," I beg, pain and desperation seeping into my voice. "Don't do this. "

"Sorry, sweetheart," he says, no trace of remorse in his tone. "This is gonna hurt."

The blade pierces my flesh, slicing into the tattoos that cover my back. Pain explodes through my body, forcing a scream from my lips. It feels like he's ripping my soul apart, tearing away the very essence of who I am.

“Fuck!” I yell, tears streaming down my face. “Fucking stop!”

“Shh,” he coos, mocking me. “You don’t want your precious Felix to hear you suffer, do you?”

Felix. The thought of him gives me a flicker of hope. He won’t let them break me. He will burn the city down to find me.

“Go to hell!” I scream through clenched teeth, refusing to give them the satisfaction of breaking me completely.

“Been there, done that, got the T-shirt.” The masked man laughs, his laughter echoing in my ears as the pain intensifies. I can feel my consciousness slipping away, but I cling to it, unwilling to let go.

“Is that all you got?” I taunt, my voice shaking. “You’ll have to do better than that if you wanna break me.”

“Brave words,” he sneers out, pressing the knife deeper into my back, skinning my flesh with agonizing precision. The pain is too much. It swallows me whole, and once again, darkness claims me.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Felix Greyson

Blood. It's everywhere—on my hands, clothes, and staining the floor beneath the latest corpse. Four fucking days, and we still can't find Aurora.

"Got anything?" Matteo asks, standing over another body. He doesn't stop me. He knows how important this is.

"Nothing," I growl, frustration clawing at my insides. "These fuckers don't know shit."

"Keep looking. Someone's bound to talk," he says, unfazed by the carnage around us.

I grab the nearest man by his collar, my grip tightening like a vice. "You! Tell me where the Costa brothers are!" I snarl, my face inches from his.

"Fuck you!" he spits back. Big mistake.

With a fierce and calculated movement, I slam him into the rough brick wall, my fingers digging into his throat like sharp talons.

His eyes widen in terror as he struggles to gasp for precious air.

"Wrong answer," I hiss through gritted teeth, my patience wearing thin.

Every muscle in my body is tense and ready to strike.

I squeeze my hand around his fragile neck, feeling the bones crunching beneath my grip.

In a desperate attempt to save himself, the man's hands claw at mine, but it only fuels my rage.

With a primal scream, I pull harder, determined to rip out his throat with my bare hands.

As he chokes and sputters, his lifeless body slumps against the wall, leaving me standing there holding his corpse.

Day six, and I'm fucking exhausted. My knuckles are bruised from beating the shit out of every lowlife in this godforsaken city. But Matteo is right—we're getting closer.

"Hey!" Spike yells as he bursts into our makeshift office, his face flushed with excitement. "We got somethin', Felix!"

"Spit it out," I demand, adrenaline coursing through me.

"Got a call from one of our guys," Spike recounts, breathless. "Says there's this junkie who's been approached by some guy with a snake tattoo on his arm. Wants bags of fluid, local anaesthetic, antibiotics, burn cream... the works."

"Sounds like the Costa brothers," Matteo murmurs.

"Where is he?" I ask my voice tense, fists clenching.

“Waiting for us at the warehouse,” Spike says. “He’s shitting bricks... thinks we’re gonna kill him or something.”

“Good. Let him sweat,” I growl out, stalking towards the door.

As we pull up to the warehouse, I see him—skinny, twitchy bastard, eyes darting around like he’s expecting a bullet any second. Good .

“Who’s your new friend?” I sneer, slamming the car door behind me.

“Name’s Ratty,” he replies, his voice shaking. “H-heard you were lookin’ for the Costa brothers?”

“Cut the shit,” I snap, grabbing him by his filthy shirt. “What do you know?”

“Man with a snake tattoo...” Ratty stammers, “... a-asked me for supplies. Strange stuff. Told your guy, Spike, about it. Thought it might help.”

“Where did he want to meet you for the supplies?” Matteo asks, his voice icy calm compared to my rage.

“Abandoned building in Campbelltown,” Ratty mutters, sweat beading on his brow. “W-wants me to meet him tonight.”

“Looks like we’ve got a date,” I say, shoving Ratty back and turning to Matteo. “Let’s find this fucker.”

“Wait,” Matteo cautions, his eyes darkening. “We need to be careful. This could be a trap.”

“Doesn’t matter.” My voice is low and lethal. “If it gets us closer to Aurora, I don’t

care if it's a fucking minefield.

"Alright," Matteo sighs, knowing there's no stopping me now.

I climb back into the car, every muscle in my body coiled with rage that won't be sated until I find her.

The setting sun casts long, dark shadows around the overgrown bush where I'm crouching.

Sweat trickles down my face as I wait, my heart pounding like a damn jackhammer.

Ratty is on the rotting porch, holding the supplies, looking nervous as fuck.

We plan to follow that cunt back to wherever he's hiding out.

And God, I hope Aurora is stashed there.

"Patience," I mutter under my breath. We've been here for hours, and my legs ache from staying so still. But I can't risk blowing this. Not when it means getting Aurora back.

I hear the low rumble of an engine approaching, and my grip tightens on the knife in my hand.

An Audi A5 pulls up, sleek as a predator.

Antonio Costa steps out, smirking like he owns the goddamn world.

He's wearing a tailored suit, the sleeves rolled up to his elbow, showing off that snake tattoo coiling around his arm.

I want to run from my hiding spot and gut him right now, but no, that won't get me Aurora.

Play it cool, Felix , I tell myself as Ratty hands over the supplies to Antonio. Just a little longer .

“Here's your shit,” Ratty says, voice trembling. Antonio nods, barely glancing at the goods before tossing a stack of cash Ratty's way. It's like he doesn't even care about the supplies.

“Thanks for the prompt delivery,” Antonio sneers, climbing back into his car. “Now fuck off.”

“Y-yeah, sure thing,” Ratty stammers, clutching the money.

My jaw clenches as the Audi drives away. “Now, we follow,” I whisper, feeling the rage building in my chest. We'll find Aurora, and I'll make that bastard pay for what he's done to her.

Aurora, hold on. I'm coming for you.

Chapter Forty

Aurora Henry

I 'm not even sure I know how long I've been here. I can't count the sun or moon as I don't have a view, I'm just stuck in this goddamn room with cement walls and no windows. The air is stale and thick with the stench of sweat and blood.

"Time to eat," one of them sneers, dragging me back to reality. I clench my teeth, refusing to open my mouth. They can hold me captive, they can torture me, but I'll be damned if I give them the satisfaction of feeding me like some animal.

"Stubborn bitch," he mumbles, his hands gripping my face hard enough to bruise. "Fine, we'll do it the hard way."

"Fuck you," I spit at him. It's not much, but it's a small act of defiance that makes me feel slightly more alive.

"Your choice, darling," he says mockingly before shoving a feeding tube down my throat, forcing me to choke on it.

My eyes water, and I gag, trying to breathe around the intrusion.

They think they've won, but I refuse to cave in.

As soon as they turn their backs, I tear the tube out, feeling satisfaction as bile rises in my throat.

“Son of a bitch!” one yells when he sees what I’ve done. He grabs my arms, yanking them behind my back and tying them with rough rope.

“Learn your fucking place,” he snarls, giving me a vicious shove onto the cold floor. I struggle against the bonds, but it’s useless. My hands are permanently tied behind my back now, all because I refused their sick version of care.

“Fuck you,” I whisper again, too weak to put up more of a fight. My heart clenches at the thought of Felix. Why hasn’t he come for me? Is he even looking for me? I need him more than ever. But for now, I’m alone in this hellhole, and it’s up to me to survive and find a way out.

My body aches, the pain radiating from every gash and bruise. I drift in and out of consciousness, each time praying it’s my last, but I keep waking up to this nightmare.

“Hey, bitch! Time for some fun,” one of them sneers as he yanks me off the floor. My legs barely support me, but I stand, glaring at him with all the hatred I can muster.

“Fuck you,” I spit back, though the words lack force. My vision blurs as they start their sick games. I won’t give them the satisfaction of seeing me break, even as they slice into my flesh, leaving more jagged cuts than before.

“Please.” I want to scream, but I bite my lip instead, tasting blood. They laugh as they violate me again and again, their twisted grins haunting my thoughts. It hurts worse than anything I’ve ever experienced, and I know I’m nearing death .

“Look at her,” one of them taunts while he lashes me with barbed wire. “Not so tough now, are you?”

“Fuck... you,” I gasp through clenched teeth. Every breath feels like fire, my chest tight and heavy. The infection spreading beneath my skin threatens to claim my life,

and I welcome it—anything to be free of this hell.

“Pathetic,” another says, his eyes cold and cruel. “Thought you’d last longer.”

“Go to hell,” I choke out, tears streaming down my face.

Where are you, Felix? Why haven’t you come for me?

I collapse onto the floor, my body failing me. No one is coming. No one will rescue me from this torment. Despair settles in my bones, and I can’t hold on any longer.

“Is that all you got?” I whisper, my voice barely audible. Let them think they’ve won. I’m already dead inside.

Chapter Forty-One

Felix Greyson

The sun is bleeding out across the sky like a fucking masterpiece of bruises and blood.

I can feel my heart pounding, adrenaline pumping through my veins as we follow Antonio from a safe distance—close enough to tail him but far enough so he won't catch on.

My hands grip the steering wheel tight, knuckles turning white.

"Keep your eyes peeled," Matteo growls, his voice low and menacing. He's got that killer instinct in his eyes, and I know he's ready for whatever shit might go down.

"Got it," I reply, not taking my eyes off the road. We're way past Sydney now, surrounded by nothing but open land and dense gum trees. It feels like we're stepping into enemy territory, and it makes my blood boil just thinking about what they might be doing to Aurora.

"Turn here!" Spike commands suddenly, his finger pointing at a dirt road up ahead. Antonio's car swerves onto it, and we don't hesitate to follow suit. The wheels kick up dust, and the car bounces over the uneven terrain, but I won't let this bastard get away.

"Slow down, Felix," Angel whispers, his voice barely audible over the engine's roar.

“We can’t risk being spotted.”

“Fine,” I mutter, easing off the gas pedal. It takes every ounce of self-control not to floor it again. My fingers itch to wrap around Antonio’s throat, to make him pay for touching what’s mine.

“Good call, Angel,” Matteo says, nodding in agreement. “We need to be smart about this.”

“Right,” I acknowledge, though I’m not feeling patient or rational right now. All I want is to get Aurora back, to protect her from the darkness that threatens to swallow her whole.

I glance at Matteo, his eyes glued to the phone, talking to his son, Niko. He’s been on that fucking thing the whole ride, trying to get as much intel as possible.

“Right, so the road Antonio went down has an old farmhouse, cattle yard, and a milking station,” Matteo says, relaying the information Niko got from the satellite images.

“Got it,” I reply. The image of Aurora held captive in that shithole is burning through my mind like acid. I grip the steering wheel tighter.

Next to me, Spike looks ready for a bloody massacre. His arsenal of knives strapped to every part of his body is impressive—if someone threw him in a river, the cunt would sink. The way he fits that many blades on one person is a fucking accomplishment, and I can’t help but envy his lethal skill.

“Nice collection you got there,” I say, admiring the assortment of deadly weapons .

“Thanks, mate,” Spike responds, a twisted grin spreads across his face. “Just wait till

you see what they can do.”

“Focus, guys,” Angel interjects, his voice as sharp as the blades we’re all carrying. “We need to be ready for anything.”

“Fuck yeah, we do,” I agree. My heart beats faster, and my adrenaline pumps hard. This isn’t just another job—it’s personal. It’s about saving my darling Aurora from the filth that wants to destroy her.

We park the car behind thick blackberry bushes. I can feel the tension building in my chest like a fucking pressure cooker, ready to explode.

“Fuck, I wish we had those earpieces,” Matteo mutters, struggling to balance his phone against his shoulder while he talks to Niko. “Making this shit harder than it needs to be.”

“Stop bitching,” I snap at him, grabbing my gear and heading out of the car. “I’m sure Niko can arrange some for the next kidnapping rescue mission.”

“I’m hoping this is the last one,” Matteo grumbles but follows me into the bushes anyway. Moody bastard.

The dried leaves crunch under our boots as we scramble through the scrub. The hot air is suffocating. My heart is pounding in my ears, drowning out the sound of insects buzzing around us. I fucking hate this place, but if it means finding Aurora, I’ll tear it apart with my bare hands.

“Up ahead,” Angel whispers, pointing to where the old cattle station looms in the distance. The red brick house looks like it’s seen better days—cracked and weather-beaten. Behind it is a concrete milking station, looking just as fucked up as the rest of this godforsaken place .

“Christ, who’d live in a shithole like this?” Spike murmurs, his eyes glinting with an unsettling hunger for violence. I can tell he’s itching to use his knives.

“Doesn’t matter,” I growl, my mind focused on one thing—finding Aurora. “Let’s just get this over with, yeah? We got a job to do.”

“Right,” Angel agrees, his eyes cold and determined. “We’ll get her back, Felix. Don’t worry.”

“Fucking better,” I mutter. The thought of anything happening to Aurora is gnawing at my insides like a pack of rabid dogs.

“Matteo, what’s the fucking plan?” I ask, my voice low and gravelly. I need to know how we’re going to tackle this shitstorm.

“Let’s split up,” Matteo says, his eyes scanning the decrepit buildings before us. “One takes the house, the other takes the milking station.”

Angel sidles up beside me, his gaze locked on the house. “Let’s go, Felix,” he says, determination dripping from his words.

“Fuck yeah,” I agree, feeling the adrenaline pumping through my veins. We start our sneaky walk towards the house, hoping like hell that Aurora is still alive.

The grass crunches beneath our feet, each step closing in on the goddamn place where they’re holding her. I can feel my heart pounding in my chest, louder than a fucking drum. My blood is boiling, ready to explode at the slightest provocation.

“Keep it down,” Angel warns, his eyes darting around the property. We both know that making too much noise could tip off whoever is inside, but I can’t help it. I’m fucking furious. I clench my fists tight, trying to contain my rage.

Stay focused, Felix , I tell myself, my thoughts racing. We've got one shot at this, so don't fuck it up . We need to stay sharp if we're going to get Aurora out of here in one piece.

As we approach the house, every muscle in my body tenses up like a coiled spring. The smell of decay hangs heavy in the air, mixing with the stench of fear and desperation. It's a vile combination that makes me want to hurl, but I push it down, keeping my focus on the task at hand.

"Ready?" Angel whispers, his eyes locked on the door. I nod, feeling a shiver run down my spine as we prepare to storm the house. Whoever is in there, they better be ready for a fucking fight because that's exactly what they're going to get.

Chapter Forty-Two

Aurora Henry

I 'm hanging there, wrists bound tight above my head in this godforsaken cement room, naked as the day I was born. The masked man beside me has this sick grin plastered on his face. I can tell by the squinting eyes and tense brows.

Fuck him!

“Ready for some heat, sweetheart?” he taunts, rubbing oil on the bottom half of my left leg. My heart throbs and my breath is ragged with fear and anticipation. But I’ll be damned if I let him see it.

“Go to hell,” I spit back, staring him down with all the rage I can muster. He chuckles darkly, flicking a lighter to life. I brace myself for the pain, but nothing could’ve prepared me for what comes next.

In an instant, my leg is ablaze, flames dancing up my skin like a lover’s caress. There’s no pain at first, just the stench of burning flesh filling my nostrils, making bile rise in my throat. My mind races, thoughts of Felix flooding through me. I need him so he can end this pain.

The masked man watches me intently, waiting for my reaction.

I grit my teeth, refusing to give him the satisfaction of seeing me break.

But then, after a few agonising seconds, he wraps a wet cloth around my leg, smothering the flames.

And that's when it hits me—the burning, white-hot pain, worse than anything I've ever felt.

“ Aaahhh !” I scream, unable to hold back any longer. Tears stream down my face as I writhe in agony, flames of torment searing through my body. My vision blurs, the world around me fading to black.

“See you soon,” I hear the man's voice echo through the darkness before it all fades away. At that moment, I know my only hope is Felix, and I pray he's coming for me.

Chapter Forty-Three

Felix Greyson

The fucking air is thick with tension as Angel and I make our way towards the house while Matteo heads off to the milking station. I can't shake this feeling that something is off, and I grip my knife's handle in anticipation.

"Keep your eyes peeled," I mutter to Angel as we pick up the pace, my muscles tensing.

"Got it," he replies, his jaw clenched.

Then it happens—an ear-splitting scream pierces through the night like a goddamn bullet. It's coming from the house, and it sounds like pure fucking terror. Aurora.

"Shit!" I snap, the words barely leaving my lips before Angel and I start sprinting towards the source of the sound.

"Matteo! Spike!" I yell, not caring about giving away our position anymore. Whatever is going on in there, Aurora is hurt—or worse.

Matteo and Spike turn and race towards us, forgoing the milking station. The urgency in their movements makes it clear that the action is in the house. We're all on high alert now, adrenaline pumping through our veins like liquid fire.

We reach the house's entrance, each of us ready for a fight. I can feel my heart

pounding in my chest, a mix of rage and fear threatening to consume me. But I can't let that happen—Aurora needs me. And for her, I'd walk through fire and come out the other side to keep her safe.

The door looms before us, a barrier between the source of that gut-wrenching scream and me. There is no fucking way I'm letting this stand between Aurora and me.

“Stand back,” Angel growls, his boot connecting with the door like a goddamn wrecking ball. Splinters fly, and the door crashes inwards. Weapons raised, we charge inside, ready for anything.

“Upstairs!” Matteo barks to Spike, who wastes no time following. They pound up the steps, leaving Angel and me to scour the first floor. My heart is racing, fear clawing at my insides. That scream! I know the sound of pain all too well. And if someone is hurting Aurora?—

“Basement!” Angel shouts from the kitchen, his voice strained and urgent. Fuck. I sprint towards him, every muscle in my body tensing as I prepare for what's coming. I'm not afraid of fighting, but the thought of losing sends cold chills down my spine when it comes to her.

I bolt towards the basement door, my heart pounding like a fucking jackhammer. There is no time to be careful or strategise. Aurora's life is on the line, and if it costs me mine, so be it.

“Shit!” I hiss, stumbling down the stairs, my hands gripping the railing tight enough to turn my knuckles white. The smell of dampness and decay fills my nostrils as the darkness threatens to swallow me whole.

“Fuck's sake, Felix,” Angel barks from behind me. “Slow the fuck down!”

“Can’t,” I grit out, my pulse throbbing in my ears.

“Matteo, we’re in the basement!” Angel shouts up the stairs, his voice echoing through the house. He follows, his heavy footsteps reigniting the fear that grips my chest. We don’t have much time.

“Keep your eyes peeled,” he warns, his gun at the ready. “No telling what kind of shit we’ll find down here.”

“Got it,” I mutter, scanning the shadows for any sign of danger or Aurora. She has to be here. She has to be.

The stale scent of dampness and decay floods my nostrils as Angel and I round the last step, the concrete walls echoing our heavy breaths.

Four doors line the hallway, their paint chipped and aged like the memories of hope I’m trying to cling to.

One of these fucking doors has to be hiding Aurora.

She has to be in this godforsaken place.

“Stay alert,” Angel mutters, his voice low and tense. His eyes dissect the darkness, searching for anything that might pose a threat.

“Got it,” I reply, my hand gripping my knife’s cold steel even tighter. No way I’m letting Aurora stay in this hellhole any longer.

We haven’t walked more than a few steps when the door to the right of me suddenly smashes open. A masked man explodes into view, his gun raised like a fucking psychopath. My heart skips a beat, but Angel is quicker than the bastard.

“ Duck !” he yells, and I obey without question. Crouching down, I can feel the heat of a bullet whizzing past my head as Angel takes his shot. Gunfire ricochets off the walls, deafening me for an instant.

The masked man drops like a sack of potatoes, his lifeless body hitting the floor with a sickening thud. Blood pools around his head, the one shot between his eyes leaving no room for doubt. He’s dead, and he fucking deserves it.

“Nice shot,” I say, adrenaline pumping through me as I stand back up.

“Thanks,” Angel replies, his eyes already scanning the remaining doors. “We need to find her... fast.”

“Right,” I agree, shaking off the violent encounter like a predator refocusing on its prey. We’re here for Aurora, and nothing will stand in our way. Not now, not ever.

“Let’s check these rooms,” Angel says, his voice as determined as mine.

“Fucking hell,” I mutter, the sweat dripping off my brow as Angel and I clear two rooms. My heart is pounding in my chest. Every inch of this place reeks of darkness and pain.

“Shit,” Angel hisses when we crack open the third door. A little girl, no older than ten, is tied up, looking at us with wide eyes. She isn’t supposed to be part of this fucking nightmare.

“Dammit,” Angel curses, rushing into the room without a second thought. “I got her, Felix. Go find Aurora.”

“Will do.” I grit through clenched teeth, my blood boiling. That masked fucker is going to pay for bringing this innocent kid into the mix. I storm out, heading towards

the last room.

The moment I step inside, two things slam into me like a freight train. The stench of burning flesh makes my stomach churn, and there's Aurora, hanging from the ceiling by her wrists. She's naked, bruised, and covered in blood. And she's fucking unconscious.

"Jesus Christ," I breathe out, my vision going red with rage. "Aurora!"

My hands shake as I fumble with the rope that binds her, trying to get her down. I can't help but think about how strong she is, how she's survived so much already, and now this sick fuck has her strung up like some sort of twisted display. This isn't right. It fucking isn't right.

"Stay with me, darling," I plead as I finally manage to loosen her bonds. Her limp body slumps into my arms, and I wince at the sight of her battered skin. "You'll be okay, Aurora. I swear it."

Aurora's limp body weighs heavy in my arms, but I won't let her down. Never again. I storm out into the hallway, and there's Angel, like a goddamn reflection of myself. He's clutching a little girl to his chest, eyes burning with rage as he barrels towards me.

"Shit," he mutters when he reaches me, his boot slamming into the masked fucker on the ground. The mask skitters across the floor, revealing the bastard's twisted face. Angel snaps a photo with one hand and fires it off to Niko without missing a beat.

"Fuck this place," he growls out, turning on his heels and heading back up the stairs. Just then, Matteo and Spike come charging down, bloodlust in their eyes. Matteo stops dead when he sees the girl in Angel's arms.

“What the fuck? She’s like ten!” he spits out, disgust dripping from every word. His gaze shifts to me, taking in Aurora’s battered form. He swears again, anger flaring. “Come on, let’s go. We got one of the brothers on the second level. He’s dead. Spike put a knife right through his eye.”

“Angel shot one down here, too,” I grit out, adjusting my grip on Aurora.

“Shit...” Spike growls under his breath, “... that leaves one brother unaccounted for.”

We can’t waste time searching the whole goddamn place. My mind races, trying to push aside the fear that grips me. Aurora’s breathing is laboured in my arms, and I know we need to get her out of here as soon as possible.

“Let’s just hope he isn’t anywhere close as we exit,” Matteo mutters, echoing my thoughts. “Keep your eyes peeled.”

“Right,” I snarl, feeling the adrenaline surge through me as we burst into action.

We barrel up the stairs like a pack of rabid wolves, fuelled by rage and the desperation to protect those we care about.

Aurora’s pain burns inside me, pushing me forward like a white-hot fire.

Every muscle in my body screams with tension, but I force myself to keep going.

I have to get her out and keep her safe.

“Stay close,” Angel barks, clutching the little girl tightly to his chest as we reach the top of the stairs. Spike and Matteo are right in front of us, weapons at the ready, scanning every shadow for any signs of danger.

“Front door’s clear,” Spike hisses, peering around the corner. That twisted son of a bitch better not show his face, or I swear to God, I’ll tear him limb from fucking limb. No one hurts Aurora and gets away with it.

“Go!” Matteo shouts, and we charge for the front door, hearts pounding in our ears. The cold night air hits us like a slap in the face as we explode out of that hellhole, but there’s no relief in it. Not yet. Not until we know we’re safe.

“Car’s this way,” I grunt out, adjusting my grip on Aurora as I sprint towards where we stashed the vehicle. The others follow close behind, our boots pounding against the dirt road.

I kick up dust as I tear through the underbrush, Aurora’s limp form cradled in my arms. Her long, black hair whips against my face, her dark eyes closed and oblivious to the danger we’re in. Sweat drips down my brow, mixing with the dirt as I grit my teeth, pushing myself harder.

“Almost there!” I grunt to Angel and Spike, who follow close behind me. “We’re gonna make it!”

At last, we burst from the brush, our car waiting for us like a beacon of hope. A goddamn lifeline. But shit doesn’t go as planned, does it? Standing by the car, his sick grin twisting his face, is the last brother with a gun raised at us.

“Drop the girl,” he snarls, thinking he has the upper hand. He hasn’t met us yet.

“Fuck you,” I spit back, tightening my grip on Aurora.

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Without any hesitation, Angel raises his gun one-handed, takes aim, and fires, but the asshole is quick and squeezes off a shot just before ours hits him.

I see it all in slow motion—the bullet tearing through the air, seeking its target.

And then it slams into Spike's chest, sending him crumpling to the ground like a sack of bricks .

“ Spike !” I scream, rage boiling over as Angel's shot finds its mark, dropping the fucker by the car.

“You okay, Spike,” Angel shouts, his voice frantic.

The world slows down as Matteo's scream rips through the air. I watch, heart pounding, as his eyes go black with rage. He's like a fucking demon, racing towards the man who Angel shot.

“Matteo, stop!” I yell, but it's too late. He's lost in his anger.

He unloads his clip into the bastard's face, blood and flesh splattering everywhere. Gunfire echoes in my ears, drowning out the rest. But Matteo isn't done yet. He leans down, grabs his knife, and starts stabbing the lifeless body, hacking at it with every ounce of strength he has.

“Jesus Christ,” I mutter, unable to look away from the glorious sight.

Angel ignores the carnage, focusing on the task at hand. He races to the car with the

little girl still in his arms and places her in the back seat, securing her in as fast as he can.

I follow Angel's lead, tossing Aurora's limp body onto the back seat next to the little girl. Her small hand reaches out, grabbing onto Aurora's like it's a fucking lifeline. Even though she's out cold, the kid still wants some kind of reassurance that shit isn't going to go south again.

"Stay strong, kid," I mutter, sliding in next to Aurora and placing her unconscious head on my lap.

I can't help but think how fucked up our lives have become.

My eyes shift to the window as Angel helps Spike up.

That cunt must have nine lives or some shit, always bouncing back like nothing happened .

"Come on, Spike, get your ass in here!" Angel growls, opening the back hatch door of the car and helping him lie down.

"Fucking finally," I grumble under my breath. But there isn't time to waste. Angel takes off towards, who's still hacking away at that bastard like he's a piece of meat.

"Matteo, stop! It's done, man," Angel pleads, approaching him like he's a caged animal, talking softly and slowly. "We gotta go."

"Fuck... yeah..." Matteo mumbles, his eyes glazed over like he's somewhere else entirely.

Blood and brain matter cover him from head to toe.

But he snaps out of it, or at least enough to stumble back into the car and jump into the passenger seat.

Angel jumps behind the wheel and starts the engine, revving it like we're in some goddamn action flick.

"Let's get the fuck outta here," I say, my words laced with anger and grit.

I can't tear my eyes away as Angel manoeuvres the car down the dirt road, kicking up a cloud of dust behind us. The tyres screech as we merge back onto the highway, and I finally force myself to blink.

Aurora's head is still in my lap, her hair tangled and matted with sweat and blood.

My heart aches for her—she's been through so much already.

I glance down at Matteo's discarded jacket on the floor, and without a second thought, I snatch it up and drape it over her naked body. It isn't much, but it's something.

"Fuck," I mutter under my breath, taking in the damage done to her skin.

Massive sections are missing from her back as if someone had tried to peel her like a goddamn fruit.

Deep cuts and bruises pepper every inch of her exposed flesh, evidence of the torture she's endured.

I clench my fists, my nails digging into my palms until I feel the sting of my skin breaking.

“Shit, man,” Angel says, glancing at me through the rearview mirror. “You okay?”

“Am I okay?” I snap, my voice cracking. “Look at her, Angel. Just fucking look at her.”

Aurora stirs slightly at the sound of our voices, and I stroke her hair gently, trying not to disturb any of the patches where her scalp is visible beneath the strands. Her leg catches my eye—the entire bottom half covered in a nasty burn that makes my stomach churn.

“Easy, Aurora,” I whisper to her, my voice barely audible above the engine’s hum. “We got you now.”

A tangled mess of emotions swirls within me—rage at the fuckers who hurt her, relief that we found her in time, and a fierce, protective love that threatens to consume me whole.

“Matteo...” Angel says gently, “... call Niko and put him on speaker.”

“Right,” Matteo mutters, fumbling with his phone. His blood-soaked hands slip on the screen, but he manages to press Niko’s name and place it on speaker. The ringing echoes through the car, a harsh reminder of the chaos we just endured.

“Dad?” Niko’s voice comes through the speakers, tense and worried.

“Get the warehouse ready for an emergency. We’re coming now,” Angel orders, urgency lacing his words .

“Shit,” Niko curses. “You guys alright? Need a cleanup crew?”

Angel glances at me through the rearview mirror, our eyes locking for a brief

moment. “What do you want to do, Felix?”

I don’t hesitate. “Scout the whole place first. Then burn it all down.”

“Alright, Felix. I’ll make it happen,” Niko says. The line goes dead, and we’re left in silence once more.

Chapter Forty-Four

Aurora Henry

Climbing out of unconsciousness feels like swimming through fucking porridge. The light is too bright, stabbing my eyes like a thousand needles. I close them instantly, again trying to escape the assault.

“Shit,” I mutter, my tongue heavy and cotton-dry in my mouth.

I force myself to crack open my eyelids, squinting against the glare. There’s Felix, sitting at my side, his dark eyes locked on me with that intense stare he has. He looks like he’s been up for days.

A sudden jolt of pain rips through my body. Felix is here, not even a heartbeat away. He jumps from his seat and races to my side like a goddamn superhero.

“Easy, darling,” he breathes out, his hand on my cheek, feeling like ice against my feverish skin. “You’re safe now. You’re with me.”

I stare into his dark eyes. I can’t help but feel relief wash over me in waves, knowing it really is him this time. Felix-fucking-Greyson found me and saved my ass from whatever hellhole I was in.

“Shit, Felix.” I gasp, the words just tumbling out of my mouth. “You actually... you came for me.”

“Of course I did,” he replies, his voice all gravelly and low.

The door creaks open, and a man in a white coat strides into the room. He’s got this air about him like he knows some shit I don’t. I squint at him through the haze of pain and exhaustion, trying to make out his face better.

“Miss...” he starts, voice all clinical and distant, “... you’ve been back for about six hours now.

There’s a blood infection running through your system, infected cuts, and injuries that require immediate surgery.

” His words sound like they’re coming from underwater, my mind slugging its way through the thick fog.

“Wha—?” I try to force the words out, but it’s like my brain short-circuits, smothering me under a wave of darkness.

Felix’s voice cuts through the murk, talking to the doctor. “What are her chances?”

“Difficult to say. We’ll do our best, but complications can arise.”

“Fuck that,” Felix growls, low and dangerous. “You fix her, or I swear to God...”

“Mr Greyson, I will do everything in my power to help her.”

“See that you do.”

Their voices fade as the darkness engulfs me again, dragging me under like a goddamn anchor.

Chapter Forty-Five

Felix Greyson

I sit next to Aurora, her pale face barely visible in the dim light of the warehouse. The infection coursing through her veins keeps her eyelids heavy, barely able to stay open for more than a few minutes at a time. It pisses me off.

“Doc,” I growl, fists clenched. “How long is this gonna take?”

“Patience, Felix,” he replies, adjusting the IV drip. “The antibiotics need at least twenty-four hours to work before we can even think about surgery. The risk of hurting her more is too great otherwise.”

“Fuck.” I run my hand through my hair, frustration mounting. “There’s gotta be something else we can do.”

The doctor hesitates, glancing towards the unconscious form of Aurora. “Well, there is one other option... a medically-induced coma. Given what needs to be done, it might be best if she slept through the worst of it.”

“Jesus Christ.” The thought of putting her under like that makes my stomach twist into knots. But if it’ll help her heal, then maybe it’s worth considering.

On the third day of Aurora being back with me, Doc preps her for surgery in this godforsaken warehouse. It’s fucking insane, but Matteo swears by him. Hell, he even helped Matteo find Eleanor, so there must be something to him.

“Alright, Felix,” Doc says, snapping on a pair of gloves. “This is gonna take a while. You don’t have to stay for the whole thing.”

“Try and fucking stop me,” I growl out, my arms crossed over my chest. “I’m not leaving her side.”

“Suit yourself,” Doc replies, unfazed. He starts with her lower leg, cutting away the dead skin. The sickening sound of the scalpel slicing flesh echoes through the warehouse, but I don’t look away. I’m here for every moment, no matter how brutal it gets.

“Can’t you use skin grafts or some shit?” I ask, trying not to gag at the sight of her exposed dermis. For someone who cuts up bodies regularly, you would think this would be easy for me, but something about it being Aurora has me acting like a regular human towards the gore.

“Her body’s too scarred and damaged,” Doc answers, his voice steady despite the gruesome task. “There’s nowhere I can take skin from.”

“Fuck,” I mutter, clenching my fists. What those bastards did to her... it’s a miracle she’s still alive.

The hours tick by as the doctor cleans the cuts on her back, removing the infected sections around her skin that were torn from her.

My stomach churns, but I force myself to watch.

She deserves that much. When he moves on to the most severe part of the surgery, I brace myself for the gut-wrenching reality of what they did to her.

“Her uterus is beyond repair,” Doc informs me, his eyes never leaving his work. “It’s

better to remove it than try to fix it.”

“Never thought I’d say this, but I’m glad she won’t have kids,” I mutter, swallowing hard. “Can’t imagine her trying to be a mother after what she’s been through.”

“Sometimes it’s for the best,” Doc agrees, continuing his work.

Seven long, agonizing hours pass before he finally stitches her up and steps back. “That’s all I can do for now,” he says, wiping sweat from his brow.

“Thanks, Doc,” I say, my voice raw with emotion. “You better have done a fucking good job, or I’ll?—”

“Relax, Felix,” he interrupts, raising his hands defensively. “I know what’s at stake here.”

“Damn right, you do,” I snarl, glancing back at Aurora’s unconscious form. “She better wake up from this, Doc. She’s gotta come back to me.”

“Let’s hope so,” he murmurs, gathering his instruments. “I’m going to put her in a coma now and have her transported back to your place, where I will stay and care for her around the clock till we reverse it.”

My heart is pounding as Aurora lies there, so damn vulnerable. The doctor is right, this warehouse is no place for her to be recovering. I grip my phone tightly, fingers tapping impatiently against the screen. “Niko, I need an ambulance here, pronto.”

“Alright, Felix, I’ll get it arranged.” Niko sighs on the other end. “You sure you don’t want to go home and clean up first?”

“Fuck no,” I growl. “Haven’t been home since we got her out of that hellhole. I’m

still wearing the same goddamn clothes.”

I glance down at the bloodstains, dirt, and sweat caked on my shirt. I should feel disgusted, but all I feel is determination. I need to shower, yeah, but I refuse to do any of that shit until Aurora is home where I can see her.

“Fine, fine,” Niko relents. “I’ll send the ambulance over as soon as possible.” This kid is well above his age.

“Damn right, you will,” I say, hanging up the call.

I pace back and forth, feeling like a caged animal. The doctor says Aurora will pull through, but I can’t shake the unease gnawing at my gut. She’s been through too much and seen too much darkness. I know what that does to a person. I see it in her eyes every time she looks at me.

An hour or so later, the ambulance screeches to a halt outside, and I rush to open the doors, guiding the paramedics inside. They load Aurora onto a stretcher, her fragile body looking so small and lost amidst the chaos.

“Please,” I plead with the paramedic, my voice cracking. “Take care of her.” Doc files in beside her, making sure the machines are hooked up, running, and ready for transport.

“Of course,” she replies softly, her eyes filled with understanding. “We’ll do everything we can.” I’m not sure where or how Matteo got these paramedics on his payroll, but I am thankful.

They carefully manoeuvre her into the ambulance, my heart in my throat. I climb in after them, refusing to leave her side for even a moment. As the vehicle lurches forward, I keep my gaze locked on Aurora’s face, silently begging her to be okay.

“Stay strong, baby,” I whisper, reaching out to brush a strand of her hair from her face. “You’re gonna be alright. I promise.”

Chapter Forty-Six

Felix Greyson

Day seven, and I'm still here. Aurora has been out cold, her chest rising and falling in a slow rhythm like some morbid lullaby.

"Felix," the doc says, snapping me from my thoughts. "It's time we try waking her up."

I nod, clenching my fists. He's been true to his word, sticking around and watching over Aurora like a hawk. But, damn, I don't know what'll happen if she doesn't wake up. I swallow hard and push that thought away.

"Alright, Doc," I mutter, steeling myself for whatever comes next.

He starts fiddling with the machines hooked up to her, and I can't help but think about how vulnerable she looks, her long, black hair splayed out across the pillow.

"Remember, it might take some time for her to regain consciousness," the doc warns, casting me a concerned glance. I know that, and he knows I know, but it doesn't do shit to quell my anxiety.

"Got it," I grunt out, watching him closely as he tapers down the medications pumping into her veins.

The minutes drag on, feeling more like hours or even days. My heart pounds in my

chest, each beat a silent plea for her to open those dark eyes and look at me. But she just lies there, breathing, not giving any sign that she's going to wake up anytime soon.

"Fuck, Aurora, please," I whisper, reaching out to stroke her hair. It's soft between my fingers, a stark contrast to the harsh reality of our situation.

"Give it time, Felix," the doc says gently, standing by and monitoring her progress. "She's a strong woman, and we've done all we can."

I nod, clenching my jaw in frustration. I know he's right, but it doesn't make this wait any easier. All I want is for her to come back to me and for us to figure out how to navigate this fucked-up world together.

"Come on, Aurora," I mutter again, my voice barely audible. "I need you to wake up."

"Hey, Doc," I say, trying to keep the desperation out of my voice. "What if she doesn't wake up?"

He sighs and rubs his temples. "As I've explained, Felix, waking up from a coma can be a slow process. You must be patient."

"Patient?" I snort, the word feeling foreign on my tongue. "I've been fucking patient for seven goddamn days. I want her awake now."

"Please, Felix," he pleads, his eyes filled with something like pity. "You have to trust that I've done everything possible. Now it's up to her. "

My fingers interlock with hers, her skin warm against mine. C'mon, darling, open those beautiful eyes. Show me you are still fighting.

“Alright, Felix,” the doctor says, his voice clinical as he turns off Aurora’s medication completely. “I’ve stopped all the medication now. The process is complete.”

I watch with bated breath, my hand gripping hers tighter as he switches her ventilator off. Every second feels like a fucking eternity, but she starts to breathe on her own, and the tension in my chest eases up just a fraction.

“Good girl,” I murmur, more to myself than anyone else. “You’re fighting, darling. That’s it.”

The hours tick by, and the room is filled with the steady rhythm of her breathing. I don’t take my eyes off her for a single second, too scared I’ll miss the moment she finally wakes up.

“Doc,” I bark, impatience clawing at me. “What the fuck? When is she gonna open her eyes?”

“Felix,” he says calmly, that goddamn pity back in his eyes. “These things take time. We must wait.”

“Fuck waiting,” I growl, clenching my fists. “This is bullshit.”

But there isn’t anything I can do, so I sit there seething and watching her sleep while the hours crawl by. And then, finally, after what feels like forever, her eyelids flutter, and my heart leaps into my throat.

“Hey,” I say, leaning in closer, trying to keep my voice steady. “Aurora, darling, can you hear me?”

Her hands twitch, the movement barely there, but it’s enough to make me hold my

breath. She's waking up, and I swear if I could, I'd rip out my heart and give it to her just to see the light come back into her eyes.

"Come on, Aurora," I mutter under my breath, desperate for her to wake up. "I need you, darling."

And that's when it happens. Her hands tremble, so fucking fragile and delicate like they could break at any second. I don't hesitate. I reach out and grab them, holding them in mine. They're so small compared to mine, like a child's. But I know she's anything but weak.

"Open your eyes, baby," I coax, trying to will her back to the land of the living. "Show me those beautiful dark eyes of yours."

Her eyelids flutter, dancing like damn butterflies. She's struggling, fighting against the light like it's some kind of demon.

"Fuck," I hiss as she struggles. "This is taking too fucking long."

"Be patient, Felix," Doc chides me, but I don't give a shit what he thinks. He isn't the one who's been waiting for seven goddamn days, staring at the woman he loves lying there, barely breathing.

"Patience isn't my fucking strong suit," I snap back, my gaze locked on Aurora's face. But then, something changes. She opens her eyes, just a crack, and then slams them shut again. It's like she's testing the waters, trying to see if she can handle it.

"Come on, darling," I whisper, gently squeezing her hands. "You can do this. I know you can."

"Doc, how's she doing?" I ask, my voice tight with worry. Aurora's eyes flutter open

and closed, her breathing still shallow.

“Her vitals are stable, but it’ll be a while before she’s fully awake,” the doctor replies, scribbling something down on his notepad. “Expect her to drift in and out of consciousness for a few hours.”

“Fucking hell,” I mutter under my breath, my fingers clenching at her small hands. My heart races, my chest heaving every time she slips back into sleep, afraid she won’t wake up again.

“Hey...” Her voice is barely audible, and it takes all my strength not to break down right there and then. Her dark eyes find mine, holding onto me like a lifeline.

“Hey, darling. Don’t push yourself, alright?” I say, trying to sound calm, but inside I’m screaming.

“Can’t... promise that,” she whispers, her lips curving into a weak smile. It’s fucking killing me to see her like this, so fragile and vulnerable.

“Stubborn as always.” I smirk, stroking her cheek gently with my thumb.

“Like you’re any better.” She manages to chuckle, her eyes drooping shut once more.

“Doc, what about the pain? She gonna be hurting when she fully wakes up?”

The doctor nods, his face solemn. “Yes, I expect she’ll be in quite a bit of pain. We’ll manage it as best we can.”

“Damn right, you will,” I growl out, protectiveness flaring up like fire in my chest. “Don’t want her suffering any more than she has to.”

“Of course, Felix,” he says, shooting me an annoyingly sympathetic look.

“Whatever. Just make sure she’s fucking alright,” I snap, returning my attention to Aurora. As the hours pass, she gains strength, waking for longer periods. The pain in her body becomes more evident, but she fights through it like the goddamn warrior she is.

“Thank you... Felix,” she murmurs, her eyes locking onto mine, full of gratitude and something else I can’t quite put my finger on.

“Just doing what I gotta do, baby. We’ll get through this together,” I promise, leaning down to gently kiss her forehead.

Chapter Forty-Seven

Aurora Henry

F uck, it's been three days since I woke up from that coma, and the pain isn't going anywhere. Felix hovers over me like a goddamn blowfly, always there, ready to fuss over every wince or groan. He thinks he's some badass hitman, but he isn't as strong as he seems.

"Quit it, Felix," I snap, pushing his hand away when he tries to help me sit up. "I can do it myself."

"Darling, you're still recovering," he says, all soft-like as if I'm going to break. His dark eyes are filled with worry, but I don't need his pity.

"Let me be, Felix. I should heal naturally rather than fill my body with shit that just masks the pain." My words come out fierce, like a snarl.

"Alright, alright," he relents, backing off a little. But I can tell he's still watching me, waiting for any sign of weakness.

"Besides..." I continue, "... painkillers make me tired and dizzy, and I've slept enough now." If I could roll my eyes without making my head spin, I would .

Felix leans against the wall, his arms crossed, tattoos rippling on his muscled arms. His black hair is styled in a way that makes him look dangerous. But right now, he's just annoying me with his overprotectiveness.

“Here, let me help you to the bathroom,” Felix insists, moving towards me again.

“Will you stop?” I growl, swatting his arm away. “I can walk on my own, Felix. Just give me some space, for fuck’s sake.”

“Fine,” he mutters, stepping back as I struggle to stand. But he doesn’t go far, just in case I need him.

“See?” I grit out, taking a shaky step forward. “I can do it.”

Felix watches me like a hawk as I limp to the bathroom, wincing with every step. But I refuse to let him see how much it hurts. I’ve got enough pain without his goddamn worrying.

“Alright, darling.” He sighs, finally giving me some space. “But if you need anything, I’m right here.”

I sit on the edge of the bed, nursing my aching body and trying to hide my grimace. I know Felix can see it, though. He’s been hovering around me like a fucking vulture since I woke up from that coma. Sure, I love the man, but I need some space to breathe.

“Hey, Felix,” I say, swallowing the lump in my throat. “Why don’t you go back to work? You’ve been with me every minute. ”

His dark eyes narrow, and he shakes his head. “Not happening, darling. I’m not leaving your side.”

“Come on,” I push, feeling the frustration boil inside me. “You’re driving me insane. Just get me a bodyguard or something.”

“Anyone but me?” he asks, clearly hurt, but I can’t help but roll my eyes.

“Fine,” he finally relents. “I’ll ask Spike to babysit you for a few hours.”

“Thank fuck,” I mutter, my heart pounding with relief as he leaves the room to call Spike.

The door swings open at two o’clock sharp, and Spike is standing in the doorway like a goddamn superhero. I can’t help but smirk at his entrance.

“Hey, Aurora,” he greets me, stepping inside as Felix pulls on his jacket.

“Be careful out there,” I warn Felix, trying to keep my voice nonchalant like I don’t give a shit about his safety. But I do. Dammit, I do.

“Always am, darling,” he replies with a cocky grin. He walks over to me, leans down, and kisses me hard and possessively like he’s marking me as his territory before he leaves. “I’ll see you soon.”

I roll my eyes, even though my heart clenches at his words. Felix turns to leave, and I call out, “Love you.”

He turns and looks at me. “I love you beyond measure, Aurora,” he says softly, and then he’s gone.

“Alright,” Spike says, plopping down on the couch across from me like he owns the place. “You’re stuck with me now.”

“Joy,” I mutter, but honestly, it’s a relief to have someone other than Felix hovering over me. Maybe Spike will actually let me breathe.

Sitting on the couch, I look at Spike, a living embodiment of lethal grace.

No wonder Eleanor named him Spike. The guy is tall and lean, his long, blond hair tied back in a ridiculous man bun, which somehow suits him.

But it's the knives, so many fucking knives strapped to his body that have me laughing.

"Damn, you're really into your knives, huh?" I say, raising an eyebrow.

"Guess you could say that," he replies with a grin

"Hey, tell me what happened when you guys came to get me. Felix won't talk about it."

Spike hesitates for a moment but then starts his story. "We tracked you down using one of the brothers. Found you at that farm. Cleared the place out before we found you and a little girl. She's safe now, staying with Matteo and Eleanor till we figure out what to do with her."

"Shit, there was a kid involved?" I mutter, shaking my head. Fucking monsters.

"Anyway..." Spike continues, "... we killed two of the brothers in the house, but one was waiting by the car when we were leaving. He shot me, but Angel and Matteo finished him off."

"You got shot?" My eyes widen.

Laughing, Spike unbuttons his shirt, revealing a whole arsenal of butcher knives underneath. "Yeah, but Lucy here saved me." He points to a knife with a massive dent in it.

“Of course, Felix leaves me with a knife-loving psycho. Just perfect.” I roll my eyes, but there’s a hint of amusement in my voice.

“Hey, I’m not that bad.” Spike smirks, buttoning his shirt back up and reclining against the couch.

“Let’s agree to disagree,” I say and shrug.

Chapter Forty-Eight

Felix Greyson

Three Months Later

Aurora sits on the edge of our bed, her long, black hair cascading over her back. It's been three months since she woke up from that goddamn coma, and I'm still amazed at how she's managed to push through the pain without even taking a single painkiller. That woman has strength like no other.

"Feeling better today?" I ask, trying to keep the concern out of my voice. I don't want her to think I'm weak.

"Yeah," she replies softly, rubbing her wrist where one of her many tattoos hides the old scars from her past. "I feel stronger every day."

I can't help but feel relieved. I expected her to be more messed up in the head after everything she went through, but somehow, she seems better than before she was kidnapped. How the hell does that work?

"Hey..." she looks up at me with those dark eyes, "... you know , I think my demons aren't so bad now that I know they're dead and can't hurt me anymore."

I nod, my heart heavy with the weight of what she's been through.

The monsters that haunted her nightmares are gone, their charred remains obliterated

by the cleanup crew.

I can't bring myself to tell her about the discovery of her parents' bodies in the milking building, hoping she won't mention it and force me to relive that gruesome scene.

The thought alone sends shivers down my spine.

"Good," I say gruffly, clenching my fists. "You deserve some fucking peace, Aurora. You've been through enough shit."

"Thanks, Felix." She smiles at me, and I feel a warmth spreading through my chest. It isn't often I get to see her smile, and I'll do anything to protect it.

"Anytime, babe," I reply, wrapping my arm around her shoulders and pulling her close.

My dick twitches at her closeness, and my body burns with desire, a primal need I've been fighting for months.

Four fucking months without touching Aurora, and it's eating me alive.

But I can't bring myself to go there, not with her still healing.

The thought of hurting her again claws at my insides, making me sick.

I come home after a job.

No more bringing that shit back here—now I keep it in the warehouse. This place is just for us, away from the violence and blood. I need it to be safe for her. I walk through the door, tired but wound tight, muscles aching for release .

“Hey,” she says softly, looking up from the book she’s reading. Her dark eyes meet mine, and my heart clenches. She’s so fucking beautiful, it hurts.

“Hey.” I grunt, forcing a smile. “How was your day?”

“Good. Wrote a few chapters,” she replies, setting her book aside. I’m so proud of her. She’s always pushing, even when it’s hard. I nod, impressed.

“Nice work, babe.” My voice is low and rough, trying to suppress the yearning that howls within. I strip off my clothes, feeling her eyes on me—heavy like an invisible touch. Her gaze sets my skin on fire and makes me want things I can’t have yet.

“Come to bed,” she whispers, her voice soft and inviting.

It’s a siren’s call, dragging me closer.

I crawl into bed beside her, the sheets cool against my overheated skin.

I wrap my arms around her, careful not to put too much pressure on her still-healing body.

She sighs, leaning into me, and I breathe in her scent.

“Missed you,” she murmurs, her breath tickling my chest. My heart swells, threatening to burst from my ribcage.

“Missed you, too, darling,” I choke out, fighting the urge to pull her closer and claim her in every way possible. But I can’t, not yet. Not until she’s ready. Not until I know I won’t hurt her again. So, I gently hold her like she’s the most precious thing in the world.

Aurora's eyes flash with determination, her long, black hair fanned out like a dark halo around her head. She rolls us, straddling me, and I stiffen beneath her. Dammit, it's impossible not to react to her touch.

"Tell me," she demands, her hands gliding down my chest, tracing the contours of my muscles. "Why don't you touch me anymore?"

"Darling, I can't bear the thought of hurting you," I admit, clenching my jaw. My fucking heart aches just thinking about it.

"Love can be painful, Felix," she says softly, her dark eyes searching mine. "But I trust you. Don't you trust yourself?"

I swallow hard, my throat tight. Trust? Hell, there is no trust when it comes to this shit. Not for me, anyway.

"Look at me," she urges, one hand drifting up to cup her breast, her thumb brushing against her nipple. "I need you."

My dick twitches, straining against my boxers. Fuck, she's tempting me, making it harder to resist. But the thought of causing her more pain after everything she's been through is too much.

"Dammit, Aurora, I can't!" I growl out, trying to look away. But she grabs my chin, forcing me to meet her gaze.

"Then let me show you," she insists, a fire in her eyes that won't be extinguished. "Let me prove to you that we can find pleasure together."

I watch as Aurora's hands continue their exploration, the sight making my heart race. She slides her fingers lower, teasing her clit with slow circles before finally reaching

her core. My breath hitches at the sight.

“Look at me, Felix,” she murmurs, her voice seductive and begging. “I need you. I’m ready for you to touch me again.”

My resolve crumbles, and I can’t resist anymore. In one swift movement, I grab her hips and flip her onto her back, but the sudden motion makes her wince in pain. Shit! I jump off her, standing next to the bed, anger boiling inside me.

“See? This is why I can’t fucking touch you!” I snap, my fists clenched tightly.

“Please, Felix,” she pleads, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. “I want this. I want you. Don’t let fear control us.”

My chest heaves, conflicted. The thought of causing her any more pain fucking hurts. But seeing her like this, vulnerable yet determined, does something to me. It stirs that primal need to claim, possess, and protect.

“Dammit, Aurora,” I growl, closing my eyes and trying to calm the inner storm that rages within me. “You’re making this so goddamn hard.”

“I like it, Felix,” she says, reaching out to me. Our fingers brush, sending a jolt of electricity up my arm.

“Fuck, Aurora,” I snarl, my fists clenching at my sides. “You can’t seriously be saying this right now.”

“Look at me, Felix,” she demands, her eyes burning with intensity. “I’m not lying. It’s not bad pain, and I get off on a little pain with my pleasure, you should know. You showed me it.”

“Jesus Christ,” I mutter under my breath, unable to tear my gaze away from her battered body. The patches of missing tattoos laced across her skin are like some kind of sick fucking mosaic.

“Please,” she whispers, desperation pouring through her words. “Touch me. Make me feel alive again.”

“Darling, I—” My voice cracks, and the dam breaks, tears streaming down my face. I never fucking cry. This woman has ripped me open in ways I never expected.

“Can’t you see?” I choke out, gesturing at her injuries. “I can’t hurt you again, Aurora. I can’t be the one to cause you pain... not now, not ever.”

“Then don’t,” she replies resolutely, sitting up, wincing only slightly as she moves closer. “But don’t deny us this connection, Felix. Don’t let fear control us.”

“God-fucking-dammit.” I hiss, my heart pounding like it will burst from my chest. “This isn’t right.”

“Maybe it’s not,” she concedes, her hand reaching out to gently graze my cheek, wiping away the wetness there. “But neither is pretending we don’t need each other.”

“Darling,” I whisper, struggling to contain the raw emotion surging through me. “I just... I don’t wanna break you.”

“Then don’t,” she repeats, her voice steady and unwavering. “But trust me when I say I need this. I need you.”

“Fuck.” I growl, my resolve crumbling beneath the weight of her words. “Aurora, you’re gonna be the fucking death of me.”

“Maybe.” She smirks with a wicked gleam in her eyes despite the pain she’s in. “But it’ll be one hell of a way to go.”

Chapter Forty-Nine

Aurora Henry

My heart is racing as I stare into Felix's dark eyes, a storm brewing behind them. He's standing there with tears in his eyes and danger on his face, just begging for a taste. And goddamn, I want him to.

My hands shake as they find their way to his face. His skin is rough under my fingertips, but fuck if it isn't the most intoxicating thing. "I need this."

I press my lips against his with a hunger I can't deny. He tastes like home and danger, and it's everything I've been craving.

"Fuck you," I whisper between kisses, pushing him back towards the bed. His legs hit the mattress, and he stumbles, falling on his ass with a thud that sends a thrill through me. I know he could stop me, and I love him even more for allowing me to push him around.

"Playing rough now, are we?" He smirks, leaning back with a devilish glint in his eyes.

"Damn right," I shoot back, refusing to let him get the upper hand. At that moment, I know what I must do—I need to prove to him that I'm strong enough for us. Violence, aggression, passion—I'll take it all and come back begging for more.

A wild hunger surges through me as I climb onto Felix's lap, my thighs gripping his

hips.

His dark eyes lock onto mine, but I don't allow him to say anything.

My hands press against his chest, and I shove him down flat on the bed, pinning him beneath me.

My lips crash against his, our mouths clashing in a dance of teeth and tongue.

"Fuck, Aurora." He groans into the kiss, but I don't let up. I need this. I need to feel alive and prove I'm not some broken toy.

My hand snakes between us, grasping his hard dick firmly. It's hot, pulsing with the same urgency that thrums through my veins. My heart races, and I can't help the wicked grin that spreads across my face.

"Think you can handle me, Felix?" I taunt, my breath hot against his lips. He smirks, but it's clear he's caught off-guard by my sudden aggression.

"Try me," he challenges, his voice low and rough. I waste no time sliding down on him, taking him deep inside me while our lips remain locked together. I refuse to let him deny me this connection—this raw and primal need we share.

"Shit, darling," he hisses, the strain evident in his voice. I swallow his words with another hungry kiss, our tongues tangling together.

"Tell me, Felix. Tell me I'm not fragile," I demand, my voice a heated growl as I rise and fall on his dick, each thrust harder and faster than the last. My nails dig into his chest, leaving crescent-shaped marks behind.

"Fuck, Aurora... you're anything but," he grunts out, his hands gripping my hips,

holding me steady as I ride him like a goddamn storm. Our breaths and moans fill the room, the scent of sex and sweat heavy in the air.

“Harder,” I urge, needing to feel the full force of his desire. “Show me how much you want me.” My gaze locks onto his dark eyes, daring him to push me further.

“Darling, don’t tempt me,” he warns, but I see the lust in his eyes, the way they darken with need. Felix’s tongue darts out, wetting his lips before he bites down on them, a low growl rumbling in his chest.

I feel alive, powerful, and unbreakable at this moment. I need him to know I won’t shatter under his touch and can take whatever he throws at me.

“Aurora,” he snarls, his fingers digging into my flesh as he matches my tempo with fierce, punishing thrusts. Our bodies collide, the sounds of our passion echoing off the walls. My heart races, my body aching for release, but I refuse to let go without proving my strength.

“Fuck, Aurora,” Felix growls out as his hand reaches up and grabs my breast, pinching my nipple between his fingers. The pain, mixed with pleasure, shoots through me like lightning, and I can’t hold back any longer.

“Y-yes!” I cry out as my orgasm crashes over me, waves of ecstasy washing through my body. My cunt clenches around his cock, pulsing and spasming as I come all over him.

That’s when I feel it—the last shred of restraint Felix has been holding onto finally snaps. His grip on my hips tightens, fingers digging into my flesh as he starts to fuck me with an intensity that should scare me, but instead, it feels so fucking good.

“Damn, baby... you’re so fucking tight,” he pants, slamming into me with force, our

bodies slapping together in a rhythm that leaves me breathless.

“More, Felix! Don’t you dare stop!” I scream, my voice a mix of desperation and ecstasy. It’s like I’m riding the edge of a knife, teetering between pain and pleasure, but I wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Take it, darling. Take every fucking inch!” he snarls out, pumping into me with wild abandon. Our eyes lock, dark and feral, and I see just how much he needs this too. It’s about proving my strength and showing him I can still be his equal.

“Shit, I’m gonna...” Felix cuts himself off with a guttural moan, his hot cum filling my convulsing cunt as I tighten around him even more. The sensation pushes me over the edge again, and another orgasm rips through me, leaving me trembling and gasping for air.

As our breathing slows, I lean down, press my lips to his, and taste the sweat and desire that lingers between us. “I love you,” I whisper against his mouth, my voice shaking with vulnerability. “We’re going to be okay.”

“Fuck, Aurora,” he murmurs, his voice rough with emotion. “I love you, too... more than you’ll ever know.”

And even though our lives have been a storm of chaos and violence, at this moment, tangled together on this bed, I believe him.

Six Years Later

The late afternoon sun is casting long shadows across my office as the phone rings, shattering the silence. I snatch it up and press it to my ear, my heart pounding in anticipation.

“Hey, Aurora,” comes the familiar voice. “Just wanted to let you know your latest book made it into the Top 100 list for Australia.”

“Fucking hell, really?” I can’t keep the excitement from my voice. This one is different from the rest. It’s about a young fourteen-year-old girl who gets caught in a web spun by a fellow schoolmate, dragging her down into his world of abuse and drugs. It’s dark, but it’s real.

“Yep,” my publicist continues. “You’ve done it again. But you know the drill by now. No signings or public appearances. As always, we’ll handle everything under your pseudonym. ”

“Fine by me.” I shrug, my gaze wandering to the new tattoos snaking across my arms courtesy of Matteo. I stopped using my real name years ago, choosing instead to hide in the shadows with a fake identity. A fucking necessity when your past is a minefield of pain and betrayal.

“You did well,” my publicist congratulates me before hanging up.

The office door swings open, and there’s Felix. His dark eyes lock onto mine the moment I hang up from my publicist.

“Whatcha doing, darling?” he asks, his voice low and dangerous.

“Made it into the Top 100 for Australia,” I say with a grin. The fucking pride surges through me like a drug.

“Fuck yeah,” he growls out, stepping closer and pulling me into a deep, possessive kiss. His hands find their way to my hips, gripping tightly. “Wish I could bend you over this desk right now.”

“Shame you can’t,” I tease, biting my lip as I glance at the clock. “You’ve got that job, remember?”

“Fucking hell, I do.” He lets out an exasperated sigh, his frustration palpable. But I know better than to push him. Felix is a goddamn time bomb, and I’ve learned how to defuse him just right. “Wish you could come along today, Aurora.”

“Me too.” I can’t help but feel a little thrill at the thought of joining him on another one of his bloody escapades.

It took two fucking years for him to let me tag along and one more before I could join in.

Now, we’re a twisted pair, feeding off each other’s madness. “But I guess I’ll pass this time.”

“Good,” he says, his lips quirking into a wicked smile. “Angel and Hannah are coming over later. She needs help with her literature essay, something about Wuthering Heights.”

“Fine by me.” I can’t help but smirk. I do love that girl, even if she’s not my own flesh and blood. She’s been through hell, just like me. We’re survivors.

“Alright then.” Felix leans in for another quick, bruising kiss before pulling away. “Gotta go. You know the drill... stay safe.”

“Always do,” I promise as he walks out of my office with a predatory grace that sends shivers down my spine. Hannah and Angel will be here soon, so I need to get cleaned up. With a sigh, I shove myself away from the desk and walk to the bathroom.

The hot water pelting my skin feels like fucking heaven.

I lather up, washing away the day’s grime and sweat, scrubbing hard enough to erase the lingering memories of past sins.

As I rinse off, I can’t help but think about Hannah—the sweet, innocent girl we saved years ago.

Tied up and scared shitless, she was just a kid.

Matteo and Eleanor took her in for a while, but eventually, Angel became her guardian.

He’d been the one to carry her out of that hellhole, after all.

Stepping out of the shower, I wrap a towel around me, cursing as steam fills the room. I need to move fast—they’ll be here any minute. Drying off quickly, I throw on some clothes, not caring if they match. This isn’t a goddamn fashion show .

Felix’s attachment to Hannah is something fierce.

It’s like he sees her as his own. Hell, we all do.

Angel even bought a house just a few doors down so she could crash at ours when he's called away for work.

And then there's Niko, that poor fucker.

He trails after her like a lovesick puppy, completely smitten.

If Eleanor has her way, they'll be hitched the moment Hannah turns eighteen.

They'd be perfect together, no doubt about it.

"Fuck, where's my brush?" I mutter, rummaging through the bathroom drawers. Just as I find it and start tugging it through my damp hair, the front door opens.

"Hey, Aurora!" Angel's voice booms through the hallway. "We're here!"

"Be right out!" I call back, giving my hair one last yank before hurrying to the living room. There they are—Angel and Hannah, two of the most important people in our fucked-up family.

"Hey, kiddo," I greet Hannah, ruffling her hair as she grins at me. She's blossomed into a beautiful teenager because of Angel's hard work and dedication.

"Ready to tackle that essay?" I ask, the words feeling strange in my mouth. But this is what we do now, this broken family of ours. We help each other survive, no matter how twisted or fucked up our lives might be.

"Definitely!" Hannah replies eagerly, and together, we sit down to start working on her Wuthering Heights assignment. As I look around at the people who've become my family, I know one thing for certain—I wouldn't trade them for anything in this goddamn world .

The End

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I lean against the banister and tilt my head back, bellowing up the staircase with a playful urgency. "Hannah and Niko will be here in five minutes!" My voice reverberates through the hall, bouncing off the walls like an impatient echo waiting to be acknowledged.

"Thank you!" comes the melodious reply from above, her voice a silken thread drifting down to wrap around me. Aurora's gratitude is as smooth as it is swift—a stark contrast to the meticulous care she invests in her appearance.