



Ruthless Billionaire Daddy (Dark Billionaire Brothers of Sin #2)

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Category: Urban

Description: My possessive billionaire boss stalks me until I give in to him.

He was my brother's best friend and taunted me, making me a socially awkward, plus-size woman.

Now he's a billionaire and blackmails me into becoming his fake wife.

How much longer until he takes my virginity...and knocks me up?

I didn't want him as my boss, but I have no choice. And it's as bad as I thought.

He's an intense control freak with unreasonable demands.

He berates me constantly and puts me down in front of others.

But what aggravates me most is that he's obsessed and possessive.

He monitors my behavior and stalks me.

When my secrets come back to haunt me, I find myself driven into his cold arms.

He'll keep my secrets if I agree to become his wife.

He won't tell anyone if I agree to be his, unconditionally.

What will my ruthless billionaire boss say when he's about to become a daddy?

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

As I flipped through the legal documents for the new branch of Club Lunaire, a series of frantic knocks echoed through my office. Tonight, I was working at the office of Club Lunaire, the first club I opened, my baby, the one that helped me make my mark in the industry.

“Come in,” I called out.

Kevin, the club manager, nervously stepped inside. At twenty-eight, he had been a great employee, detail-oriented and great with patrons, until he got promoted a few weeks ago.

Triple-booking the VIP lounge and understaffing shifts were just a couple of the nuisances I’d dealt with since his promotion; with the number of times he knocked on my door or called me during his shift if I wasn’t around, I wondered why I hadn’t fired him yet. From the wide-eyed expression on his face, it was clear that he had fucked up, again.

His voice shook as he spoke. “Mr. Quantum. There was a fire in the storage room.”

Warning signals went off in my head. My jaw clenched as I leaned back in my chair, my green eyes locking with Kevin’s terrified brown ones.

“Was? So that means the fire is out?” My voice came out eerily calm.

Freaking out now, since the fire appeared to be under control, wasn’t going to help anyone.

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you know how it started?”

“No, sir. I went to get something from the stock for the bar and saw the fire. I acted quickly and used the fire extinguisher before the fire got out of hand.”

At least Kevin was able to do one thing right! But something nagged at the crevices of my brain. The storage room was a floor below the club and could only be accessed by staff.

“Do the patrons know what happened?”

“No, sir. But we’ve never had a fire before, and I was unsure how to handle it. Should we close the club?” The words tumbled out of Kevin’s mouth as he shifted from one foot to the next.

I lifted an eyebrow. “Was it an electrical fire?”

“No, sir. It started in the corner of the room, away from anything electrical.”

“Good. Then the club stays open. No staff member is allowed to leave until I give the ok. Any staff member who disobeys will be held for attempted arson. I’ll be down soon.”

Kevin nodded slightly and turned to leave.

“And Kevin...”

Kevin turned back to look at me, and my gaze darkened.

“If word of this gets out to the public, every member of staff in this club will be fired. Do you understand?”

Kevin nodded again before he hurried away.

I tugged my burgundy blazer off the back of my chair and slipped it over my short-sleeved black linen shirt, covering the tattoos that ran along my arms. I hated suits, usually wearing a short-sleeved shirt and keeping a blazer on hand in case of important meetings.

At thirty-six, as the CEO of Quantum Enterprises, the umbrella company for my nine soon-to-be ten Club Lunaire locations and eight Moonlit Bar and Lounges across the state, I was proud of my success, and business had been thriving perfectly, up until about a year ago.

Business had been rough. It started with minor issues like an increase in employee resignations, suppliers missing deadlines, and terminated contracts with vendors. It was stressful, yes, but manageable. But now, with Eso’s boys breathing down my neck for their protection fee and this fire, things were definitely escalating. And I didn’t like it.

I picked up my phone off my desk and dialed Tony, my head bouncer and the head of my security team, who answered immediately.

“Boss.”

“Tony, meet me with two men in the storage room. Now.” I cut the call and exited the office.

I strode briskly down the stairs, my braided, long blonde hair brushing my back as I entered the dance floor. It was a Saturday night, and the club was packed. The

flashing lights of the club bounced off the walls as patrons danced, synced with the lively music. I weaved through the crowd, and it wasn't long before I stood in front of a door that read "Employees Only."

After pushing it open, I descended the stairs two at a time. Once at the bottom, I made my way to the only door in the short hallway. I removed my key card from my blazer pocket, inserted it into the door and stepped into the room, with Tony and two of his men entering shortly after. A hint of smoke and chemicals lingered in the air.

Immediately, my eyes landed on the corner of the room, where the once cream-colored walls were now a dark ash grey. As we approached, my eyes lingered on the scorch marks on the shelves and crates that held the alcohol for the bar. Some bottles were cracked, and trickles of alcohol trailed outside of the bottles. But something caught my eye in one of the charred boxes on the floor that was delivered today.

I nudged the metal object with the tip of my boot. After removing a handkerchief from my pants pocket, I picked up the object with it. Short wires dangled from it.

"It looks like some sort of timer," I muttered to no one in particular.

Tony came up behind me. "Looks like a small explosive device made by an amateur. I'm guessing they were hoping for a bigger explosion, based on the fact that this room is filled with flammable liquid, but it probably malfunctioned."

"Lucky us," I said dryly.

But unlucky for the people who thought they'd get away with this.

The fact that it seemed to have been snuck in through a delivery package put me on high alert. Yet, I was relieved that none of the staff had maliciously planted the device. I made a mental note that all packages entering all branches must be checked

from now on.

Tonight could've ended up in disaster, lives lost, and millions of dollars gone up in flames. The last thing I needed was for the tabloids to get wind of this just as I was about to open a new branch.

Two months ago while hanging out at Dominic's place, the oldest of us six Quantum boys, Tony called to say that some of Eso's boys had shown up demanding a protection fee to ensure nothing happened to my chain of clubs, bars and lounges across the state.

Eso and I went way back. He was a part of the gang I joined after my parents died when I was fifteen. Now, he was the gang leader.

My security team had been searching for Eso for weeks, but he was nowhere to be found. Checks had been made, and we knew he was still in the country, but that was all the intel I had so far. After tonight, I planned on personally going to our old hideout to ruffle a few feathers to find Eso myself. Just because I dressed differently now didn't mean the old Sebastien couldn't be resurrected.

"Tony, I need you and your men to check the rest of the boxes delivered today to ensure there are no other explosive devices. Then, check this building thoroughly. Call the other establishments and have your men check there, too. No one outside of the security team is to know about this. Keep it discreet."

"Yes, boss."

As I turned and walked out of the room, I heard Tony barking orders on his phone as his men opened the rest of the delivery boxes.

Just as I returned to my office to grab my car keys, my cell phone rang. It was Vega,

my most trusted hacker. If it had been uploaded or stored on any device connected to the internet, he'd find it. When Dominic's wife, Emily, and his seven-year-old daughter, Lucy, were kidnapped, Vega had been the one who tracked Lucy's necklace.

Vega was just one of my connections on the street, a reminder of the life I used to live. I may have stepped away from the streets, but I didn't let the streets step away from me.

"Sir, Eso was found at the bottom of Silvermill Lake a few hours ago. The report estimates that he's been dead for approximately eight weeks. He was so badly decomposed that they had to use his dental records to identify him."

FUCK!

This timeline meant Eso had already been dead when I received the first set of threats from his boys. If Eso didn't give the order, then who the hell did?

"Find out who took over from Eso, and who killed him or had him killed. You have videos from when his boys visited the club. Gather all of them for questioning."

"Got it, boss."

The line went dead.

I pocketed my phone and poured myself a drink. My fingers were tight around the glass as I thought about Eso. He had been the guy who took me under his wing when I entered the gang all those years ago. He taught me everything I needed to know to survive. And when I told him I wanted out, he understood and helped me get out. We may not have been as close as we once were, but I felt as though someone had stabbed me in the heart and was twisting the knife. I couldn't help but feel restless.

Not only did someone take him out, but now they were targeting me and my business. What was the connection?

I gulped down the brown liquid, feeling the burn slide down my throat before I replaced the glass on the tray and returned to my seat. Between the fire and learning about Eso's death, I wanted to break something. But, over the years, I've learned to keep my cool under pressure.

For a moment, I considered calling Dominic, but after everything he had been through in the past year and a half, burdening him with something I could handle didn't sit right with me. He needed a break to enjoy his family and their newest addition, five-month-old Lillian.

I needed to focus on something I could control to keep myself in check. I picked up the pile of applications that Caite, my secretary, had faxed me earlier that afternoon. With the new club set to open in a month, I had yet to find an event planner with a portfolio that met my expectations.

While scanning the applications, my eyes fell upon a familiar name with a picture attached: Delilah Malone.

"When did Delilah become an event planner?" I murmured to myself as I read through her application.

Delilah Malone was the younger sister of Dean Malone, who has been my best friend since childhood. The last thing I remember Dean mentioning about Delilah was that she was working for some hotshot magazine.

Delilah had been that super annoying, pigtail-wagging, braces-wearing little sister who always wanted to hang around her brother. What made it worse was that their mom insisted we take Delilah with us, every time. As a result, we often pulled pranks

on Delilah, and what made it even funnier was how easily she fell for them.

After Dean and I got into college, I only really saw her at Dean's birthday or Christmas when I'd go with Dean to visit his parents. The last time I saw her was through a blurry picture that Dean showed me of her college graduation, but Dean kept me updated on how she was doing when we hung out over the years.

Before I knew what I was doing, my fingers clicked away on my keyboard, pulling up her social media profiles. She didn't post many pictures unrelated to her event-planning business, which she started about three months ago. If she did, it was either selfies with Dean or alone. She shared the books she read and which dishes she loved in a few restaurant reviews. Her timeline wasn't exciting; no dating history, no clubbing with friends, and no dumb pics or videos for likes. Her life was totally boring, making her the perfect candidate. With everything going on, I didn't need any unnecessary drama. And the fact that I knew her would make her working for me so much easier.

I picked up my desk phone and dialed Caite. And even though it was eleven p.m. on a Saturday, she picked up on the second ring.

"Hello, Mr. Quantum. How can I be of assistance?"

"Set up an interview with Delilah Malone at the new club tomorrow. Time: ten a.m. Inform her that an interested client requires her services. Refrain from mentioning my name."

"Will there be anything else, sir?"

"That will be all for now."

I hung up and leaned back in my chair, the picture of Delilah still on my computer

screen. Her brown hair fell in waves around her face and a thin line of freckles scattered across her nose. The twinkle in her blue-grey eyes and something about her smile, which was now braces-free, formed a knot in my chest I couldn't explain.

I pushed thoughts of her aside, locked my computer and exited my office. Tonight I'd be on guard to protect what I had built. If anything else played out tonight, not only would I be ready, but the culprits would regret the day they were born.

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At six a.m. I received a call back for an event planning interview at ten a.m. Even though it was a last-minute interview, and on a Sunday, I couldn't help but feel excited and relieved. Over the past three months, I'd tirelessly applied to so many jobs I could barely remember the names of the companies I sent my resumes to. So far, I've received only four callbacks and worked on just two events.

The lady, who introduced herself as Caite, was apologetic about the early call. After providing the directions to the building, she hung up. She didn't give the name of the person who'd be interviewing me, which I found weird, but I brushed it off; her brain might still be just as foggy as mine at this hour.

I crawled out of bed and began to get ready for the interview. After having a much-needed cup of coffee to calm my nerves and a hot shower, I chose a steel-gray tailored blouse with a slight shimmer, pairing it with sleek black pants. The silver necklace Dean gifted me for my twenty-first birthday adorned my neck, paired with matching earrings and a pair of black pumps. I pulled my hair into a low bun and styled a few loose curls at the front. After applying subtle makeup, I was geared up and ready to bag the interview. First impressions lasted, and God knows I needed to make this one count.

After giving myself one last satisfied look in the mirror, I grabbed the keys to my beat-up Honda Civic, my handbag and my portfolio before heading out the door at eight forty-five. It would take me at least an hour to get to the interview, but what I didn't account for was an accident occurring on my route and the traffic that brought my car to a complete stop.

Thirty minutes later, my car still hadn't moved an inch. I removed a candy bar from

my handbag and nibbled on it. Something I had always done when I was a kid and anxious. Food always made everything seem better.

Yup, everything except those fifteen inches that refuse to remove themselves from your waistline.

Money had been tight since I accumulated Dean's debts after he was admitted to rehab. I had missed the last three payments and needed every job I could get.

When the traffic finally started to move, I had eaten three candy bars, was thirty minutes away and the time was already nine forty-five.

"It's not your fault, Delilah. Just explain there was an accident, and they'll understand," I murmured, trying to soothe myself.

Thirty-five minutes later, I pulled into the parking lot. I hated being late. I inhaled deeply, grabbed my belongings from the passenger seat and stepped out of the car. I clicked the key fob to lock it as I walked toward the building, before slipping it into my handbag. There were a few cars scattered across the parking lot, including a black Porsche and a work van. The three-story building was painted indigo with white trimmings. Close to the entrance, workmen were dismantling scaffolding.

"Good morning," I greeted politely as I approached the men. Not a single man returned the greeting. They just continued with their chatter among themselves.

It was fine, I told myself as the automatic door slid open and I stepped inside the air-conditioned building. Inside was a hallway leading to the washroom area, a flight of stairs and an elevator. I opted to use the stairs since I hated elevators.

As I climbed the stairs, I couldn't help but think about how girls like me just faded into the background. Yeah, I was a five-foot-seven thickie, my breasts being my best

asset, but I hated the pouch around my tummy. I tried a few diets but never stuck with any of them long enough to see results.

I had been chunky ever since I could remember, and high school? The worst period of my life. I wore my insecurities on my sleeve, and the kids used that to their advantage. With every fat joke, my self-esteem took a fatal blow.

But I wasn't that teen anymore.

After graduation, I made a life-changing decision. There was no way I was going to allow what happened in high school to repeat itself. I put on a mask, hid my insecurities, wore a bright smile, had snarky comments ready when needed, and kept the bullies at bay.

I shoved my memories aside as I reached the top of the staircase and walked through the glass doors, my eyes scanning the open space. The walls were painted midnight blue with silver accents. To the side, a flight of stairs led to a balcony area with black-leathered booths and tables. To the right stood an impressive bar. Its counter was crafted from oak, matching its back wall. The countertop was a polished black granite with silver accents running along the edges. The bar stools that lined the counter were upholstered in fine brown leather, and I could still faintly smell its faint newness from where I stood. Whoever owned this space spared no expense in creating it.

I had been so engrossed in checking out the space that I didn't notice the six-foot-one, lean yet muscular man stepping out of the door marked "Management Only" on the farthest side of the room. His green eyes were narrowed, his tone sharp as he spoke.

"Ms. Malone. You're twenty minutes late."

My breath caught in my throat. I'd recognize that voice anywhere. Spinning around, I

came face to face with Sebastien Quantum.

Good God! What is he doing here?

I cleared my throat, but my voice still cracked a bit as I spoke. “S-Sebastien, what are you doing here?”

Sebastien crossed the room, his hands casually tucked into his pants pockets, his eyes never leaving mine. “Here, I’m known as Mr. Quantum, and you will address me as such.” His tone was clipped. “To answer your question.” He raised his hand and gestured around the room before returning it to his pocket. “This is my club. And you’re late for the interview.”

My initial shock at seeing Sebastien quickly shifted to another emotion: rage. Of all the people that my applications could’ve gone to, it was this self-absorbed prick standing in front of me. He hadn’t changed one bit. A thousand years could pass. and it still wouldn’t be enough to erase the things he’d done and said to me, all in the name of teasing his best friend’s little sister. His now-cocky attitude made me feel like the shy, insecure girl he bullied all those years ago. But I refused to let him see the effect he had on me.

Mask on, baby girl.

I smiled and put on my best customer service voice.

“ Mr. Quantum. I deeply apologize for being late. There was an accident on the highway, and traffic was backed up for miles.”

Surely, you have a television or a radio in this very sophisticated establishment that keeps you updated on the news?

I bit back the last line, not wanting to jeopardize the interview. Because as much as I hated to be in the same room as him, I needed him to hire me.

Sebastian gave a slight nod, his expression unreadable.

“Follow me to my office.”

He turned, heading to the door marked “Management Only.” I followed, releasing a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding. He motioned for me to go ahead of him. As I climbed the stairs, I felt self-conscious as I sensed his eyes boring into me from behind.

Girl, chill, it’s not like he’s watching your ass.

But, still, I hoped I wouldn’t do anything dorky like slip and fall back into him. I can see the front of the newspapers now: Overweight Woman Crushes Interviewer at His Own Establishment.

I sighed with relief as we made it to the top of the stairs without any fatal accidents. Once there, he took the lead. Down the hallway, we passed a few doors before he opened the last one. He stepped inside and waited for me to enter before closing the door behind us.

The walls of the room were painted a soft cream, and at the center of the room stood a luxurious light gay three-piece sofa set consisting of a plush three-seater, a cozy loveseat, and an armchair.

“Have a seat, Ms. Malone.”

I took a seat on the three-seater, placing my handbag and portfolio beside me. I expected him to sit in one of the other chairs, but instead, Sebastien sat next to me.

He positioned himself so close that when we turned to face each other, our knees almost touched. As his rich, musky cologne settled between us, I noticed the compass tattoo on his left hand. I couldn't help but wonder if he had any other tattoos hidden under his shirt, which tightened at the biceps when he moved.

Girl! He's a pig. A bully. Stop checking him out!

Sebastien cleared his throat, and my eyes snapped to his intense green ones. "Ms. Malone. I hope your tardiness today doesn't reflect the quality of work you provide to high-class clients like myself."

My jaw tightened and my lips contorted into what I hoped was one of my professional smiles. If Sebastien noticed the flash of anger in my eyes, he didn't show it.

"I can assure you, Mr. Quantum, that I am very efficient at my job, having successfully completed projects for clients of higher rank than a club owner." I paused for a bit to let my words sink in. His brow lifted slightly, and I smirked inwardly. Had I ever had any high-end clients? Yes. Did it have anything to do with my event planning business? No. But he didn't have to know that.

He leaned forward, his eyes pinning me into place.

"Let me make this very clear, I don't need your services. I chose you out of the numerous qualified applications that were on my desk. If you can't give me the results that I want, you will be fired on the spot, no questions asked."

The way he said "chose" made goosebumps appear along my arms. Did Sebastien purposefully choose me to continue with the torture that had stopped when he and Dean left for college? I'd never mentioned to Dean how cruel Sebastien had been when we were kids because I didn't know if he'd take me seriously, and ruining their

friendship wasn't something I wanted to be responsible for. But Sebastien wouldn't be that petty, would he?

Petty or not, you need this job.

I forced my voice to remain steady despite the emotional turmoil that rose in my chest. "And what results are you looking for Mr. Quantum?"

Sebastien inched closer, and this time our knees brushed. An unexpected rush of heat shot through me, one I tried, unsuccessfully, to suppress.

Are you reacting to him like this because a man as handsome as Sebastien Quantum has never spoken more than two words to you?

I fought to stay composed and professional as Sebastien spoke.

"This will be my tenth branch of Club Lunaire. The grand opening will be in a month, with members of the general public invited as well as exclusive elite guests. The total number of persons allowed in the building without it being a fire hazard is two hundred. Caite, my secretary, has already emailed you the logistics. My job today is to make it clear that the success of this event is non-negotiable. Do you think this is a job you can handle, Ms. Malone?"

The job wasn't the problem. The person offering it was.

"Mr. Quantum, I can assure you that you chose the right person for the job. Executing events flawlessly is what I'm known for. However, the budget for an elaborate event such as this makes a world of difference. Do you have a budget in mind?"

Sebastien's lips curled into a slow smile and a rich, sexy chuckle escaped his lips, making my heart skip a beat.

“Ms. Malone, there is no strict budget. Quality is the priority. Your salary for this event will be thirty thousand dollars, with a bonus of ten thousand if the event gets rave reviews. Meet all my expectations and there will be a permanent position for you within my company as our planner, with a salary of fifty thousand per month, perks notwithstanding.”

This is just the type of job I’ve been waiting for. But why does it have to be handed to me on a silver platter that Sebastien’s holding?

I smiled, adding as much enthusiasm in my voice as I could muster. “When do you want me to start?”

“Tomorrow. Quantum Enterprises Head Office at eight a.m. sharp. Caite will send the information. You’ll sign the contract and begin immediately.”

A look of confusion crossed my face. Quantum Enterprises?

Sebastien must have seen it. “Ms. Malone, is something the matter?”

If the name of Sebastien’s company is Quantum Enterprises, there was no way I would’ve sent my resume. Or maybe I did, out of desperation. Either way, I got the job. Yay me?

“No. Mr. Quantum. I’ll be there at eight a.m.”

“If you’re one minute late, Ms. Malone, don’t bother showing up.”

I nodded and rose to my feet. “Thank you for the opportunity. I’ll see you tomorrow at 8 a.m. Mr. Quantum.”

As I made my way out of his office, I hoped against all hopes that I’d be able to

survive the upcoming month with Sebastien Quantum.

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The next day at seven forty-five a.m., my desk phone rang, and I answered.

“Mr. Quantum, Ms. Malone is here,” Caite’s voice came over the phone.

“Send her in.”

A few seconds later, there was a light knock on my office door. Caite ushered Delilah into the office before closing the door behind her.

“Good morning, Mr. Quantum.”

Delilah wore a fitted pencil skirt that hugged her round hips and fell just below her knees with a deep red V-neck blouse that accentuated the curves of her breasts. Her hair was pulled into a ponytail.

Gone was the girl I knew; before me was the confident, beautiful woman she’d grown into.

“Ms. Malone. Have a seat.”

As Delilah sat opposite me, the scent of peaches from her lotion or perfume filled the office. I slid a file across to her. She opened it and glanced at the pages.

“This is the contract outlining your responsibilities and compensation package. After reviewing, sign it. It’s straightforward.”

“Sure thing.”

I watched as Delilah read silently, her lips moving slightly as she did so. When she was finished, she removed a pen from her handbag and signed the documents. She then slid the file toward me. I handed her a copy of the agreement. Within the agreement was a clause restricting her from working on other contracts and mandating that she'd also have to work from the head office.

I stood up. "Let me show you to your office."

I escorted her to the office next to mine, the plush dark grey carpet silencing our footsteps as we entered.

"This will be your office for the next month."

It was a basic office.

On the desk sat a phone and computer, while a chair for Delilah was positioned behind it, with two visitor chairs on the other side. Two colorful abstract pieces of art decorated the cream-colored walls, and in the corner, a small coffee station stood beside a small fridge. The door closest to her desk led to the bathroom. Just like my office, this one had a stunning skyline view.

Delilah placed her belongings on the desk and then turned her attention to me.

"I'd like to start working on the themes. Do you have anything in mind?" she asked.

"Nothing in mind at the moment. Work on a variety of themes and then we'll..."

Just then, there was a knock on the door, cutting me off.

"Come in," I called out.

Caite stepped into the room. “Mr. Quantum, Ida is on line two. It’s urgent.”

The worried look on Caite’s face was noticeable, raising the hairs on the back of my neck. After Saturday night’s close call, I wasn’t looking forward to the conversation with Ida. She was an employee from one of my lounge branches, responsible for handing over the money received at the club over the weekend to an armored truck every Monday morning.

“I’ll be with her shortly,” I said, my voice firm.

Caite nodded and hurried out of the office.

I turned my attention back to Delilah. “I’ll check in on your progress in a few hours.”

I walked briskly out of the office without waiting for a reply. Once in my office, I sat behind my desk and pressed line two. I heard Ida sniffing, and an uneasy feeling washed over me.

“Ida, Mr. Quantum here.”

The sound of my voice drove Ida over the edge, and she sobbed uncontrollably. I pinched the bridge of my nose, trying to keep my composure. Whatever the situation was, I needed answers. Ida’s crying wasn’t helping matters.

“Ida, pull yourself together. Tell me what happened,” I said firmly.

“M-Mr. Quantum. I think we were robbed.”

I stopped breathing.

“What do you mean you think we were robbed?”

Between sobs, she explained, “I went out this morning to the delivery loading dock to hand the bag of cash over to the truck like I do every Monday and collect the receipt. But this morning, when I got to the back of the truck, the doors burst open, and someone wearing a mask grabbed the money, and they sped off. Sir, I’m certain I saw two unconscious men at the back of the truck.”

The muscles in my jaw twitched as my grip tightened on the phone.

“Ida, have you contacted Mr. Jaxson about the incident?”

Mr. Jaxson was the owner of the private security company I had been using since I opened my first Lunaire Club ten years ago.

“No, sir, I wanted to inform you about the incident first.”

“Ida, how much money was stolen?”

“A little over two hundred thousand, sir. I have the exact amount written on the record.”

I slammed my fist on my desk and swore under my breath.

“Ida, hang up and call Mr. Jaxson and let him know the situation. I will also call him to follow up.”

“Yes, sir.”

As soon as Ida hung up, I received four similar calls with reports of the same type of incident. Not only from my clubs, but my bars and lounges as well. Close to a million dollars was stolen in the space of one hour.

The last call was from Freda.

“Sir, the man in the mask told me to tell you something.”

“What did he say, Freda?”

I held my breath as Freda’s voice shook. “He said...y-you should’ve paid the protection fee.”

After Freda’s call, I instructed Caite to call each person in charge of handing over the money to the trucks. No cash was to be released to anyone. I would personally retrieve it, accompanied by my security team. I also told her to warn them that the incident must not be leaked.

While Caite was doing that, I called Tony and ordered him to meet me at head office with ten of his best men, heavily armed, and to increase the security at every branch that currently had weekend cash on them.

Today was going to be a long ass day.

After six grueling hours of running from venue to venue and then to the bank, Vega had called about an update with Eso’s boys, the ones who came to my club demanding the protection fee.

Every single one of them was dead.

Slaughtered like animals.

Their bodies were found in an old warehouse piled inside a room. Vegas sent me a picture of the symbol found on the wall over the bodies, a seven-petal black lotus flower with an eye in the middle. One which I recognized, thanks to Dominic.

It belonged to the Black Lotus Syndicate.

This wasn't random. This was a message. One I had to keep to myself. For now.

After getting off the phone with Vega, I called Mr. Jaxson. He confirmed that three of his trucks had been stolen. He assured me that any money stolen would be reimbursed through insurance. I informed him that I needed this to be discreet and he promised to settle everything quietly and off the books. He knew that if word got out that three of his trucks weren't only stolen but were used to rob businesses, his own business would take a drastic hit. Keeping the incident between the two of us was the best way to move forward.

The last thing I needed was for Nathaniel, my brother, to get wind of this and report it to the others. He was two years older than me and three years younger than Dominic. He ran his own financial company and was the head accountant for all the family businesses.

By the time Tony finally dropped me back at head office it was just after three p.m.

Frustrated and exhausted, I walked through the lobby, and saw Delilah, clipboard in hand, laughing at something Daniel, one of my IT staff, had said.

I paused as my fists clenched involuntarily. I breathed deeply, straightened my posture, forced my hands to relax, and headed straight for them. The smile on Daniel's face vanished and he stiffened when he saw me.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Quantum," Daniel said, his voice strained, but I ignored him and focused on Delilah.

"Ms. Malone." My voice was sharp. "I didn't hire you to come into my company and flirt with my staff." I watched as her face turned red. "Is this the efficiency you

promised me yesterday? If the themes for the event are not on my desk in five minutes, you will be fired. ”

I strode to the elevators.

Bro, what the fuck was that about? I admonished myself as I stepped into the elevator, Delilah still frozen in place. As the elevator moved, my words echoed in my mind. Why the hell did I feel like this? Why the hell did I care if she was laughing at some dumb thing that Daniel said?

I stepped out of the elevator and went straight for my office. Two minutes later, there was a knock on my door.

“Come in.”

Delilah walked into the room with her clipboard pressed close to her chest.

“Mr. Quantum,” she said stiffly as she removed a few sheets of paper from the clipboard and handed them to me. They smelled like peaches...like her. “These are the décor themes I came up with.”

My eyes scanned the designs as she continued to speak. “I also went to the site and took a few pictures to get an idea of the layout. As you can see, some of the concepts have pictures with the backdrop of the club itself.”

Admittedly, her ideas were quite impressive. But her flirting with Daniel was unacceptable to me.

“I don’t like any of these. Start over and give me a new set by eight a.m.”

She opened her mouth to protest as I tossed the papers across the desk to her, but my

cell phone rang. I put my finger up to silence her. It was Lucy. For her birthday, Dominic and Emily had decided to get her a cell phone, which was heavily monitored. Even though she'd call at the most random times, I always made sure to answer just in case it was an emergency.

I leaned back in my chair, my gaze on Delilah.

"Hey, princess, how are you?"

"I'm just calling to ask if you'll be at dinner tonight," Lucy said.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"Can you please bring me some chocolates?" she begged. "My friends loved the last set you bought, and they asked if they could get some more."

"Of course, I could get you chocolates, anything for you." I smiled warmly.

Delilah twitched uncomfortably under my gaze.

"Thanks!" Lucy squealed excitedly. "See you tonight. Bye. I love you."

"I love you too, Lucy, bye."

I tucked the phone back in my pocket, Delilah's expression unreadable.

"Like I said. Get me new designs by eight a.m."

She nodded and exited the office.

Later that night, I was sitting in Dominic's living room, sipping on bourbon with my

brothers after dinner, trying to take the edge of today off. Mrs. Kensington, Dominic's housekeeper, had already left for the night and Dominic and Emily were upstairs getting the girls ready for bed.

"Seb, how's the planning coming along for the club's opening? Found an event planner yet?" Nathaniel asked as he sipped his drink, looking over his black framed glasses.

"Yup, Delilah." I glanced around the room at my brother. "You guys remember her, right? Dean's younger sister?"

My brothers shared a look.

"Chubby girl with pigtails that followed the both of you wherever you went? We remember," Leonardo chuckled, humor in his blue eyes.

The armchair he sat in looked almost too small for his hulk-like frame. At thirty-four, he held an impressive track record in criminal defense cases and also ran a successful law firm.

"We figured by now, that both of you would've been married with at least half a dozen children. There was no way she was following you guys because she loved her brother so much," Vincent grinned mischievously.

Vincent was the face of Quantum Edge Technologies, the company founded by Dominic, which paved the way for the rest of us to thrive. With his dark, thick wavy hair, deep blue eyes, long lashes, slightly chiseled jawline and athletic build, Vincent was the playboy in the family, and the most handsome of the Quantum men. If we ever admitted that to his face, he'd never let us live it down. Despite his playboy personality, like Dominic, he often donated to orphanages and children's hospitals.

“Remember that one time she followed them to Sarah Wittle’s thirteenth birthday party and caught him kissing Sarah in the basement?” Nathaniel said amused, interrupting my thoughts.

I shook my head at the embarrassing memory. “Yeah, the party was over before my lips dried. And I got grounded for a month with a warning from Dad to stay the hell away from Sarah.”

Sarah was the first of many females to come and go in my life, each scratching a desired itch. None of them left a mark deep enough to steer me towards commitment.

“But on a serious note, please, don’t treat Delilah like your last event planner. I’m sure after dealing with your controlling ways she had to get therapy,” Axel, the baby genius of the family, snickered. His company specializes in smart buildings with top-of-the-line automation and energy efficiency.

“Who hangs paper wedding bells and streamers at the grand opening of a lounge? She was tacky.” I lifted an eyebrow at Axel. “And weren’t you the one who recommended her?”

Axel smirked and shrugged.

“Yeah, after he fucked out the brains of her sister. I wouldn’t doubt it if he had promised to get her the gig mid-stroke.” Vincent put Axel in a playful headlock and tousled his hair before letting him go.

“Even though the girls and my wife are asleep doesn’t mean you can use those words in my house,” Dominic drawled as he entered the room. He poured himself a drink and sat next to Vincent.

“My bad bro.” Vincent smiled. “Seb was just telling us about the rekindling of his

long-lost love.”

“Delilah’s back in town?” Dominic asked, lifting his brow in my direction.

The others hollered, and Leonardo grinned, “The fact that we didn’t need to mention a name says a lot, Seb.”

As they continued to tease me, my thoughts had already drifted from their conversation about the ponytailed girl they remembered to the captivating woman I’d see tomorrow in my office, and the hours couldn’t go by fast enough.

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Working for Sebastien wasn't as bad as I thought. It was worse!

On the first day, I was having a great conversation with Daniel when he appeared out of nowhere and embarrassed me! I couldn't bear to face Daniel after what Sebastien did, and I've been ducking him ever since.

And what made things totally unbearable was that he gave me an office right next to his, no doubt to barge in and micromanage every single thing I did because that's what he had been doing for the past five days! He was driving me crazy! I contemplated quitting at least a hundred times a day.

At first, I thought he had obsession compulsive disorder, but after having to redo those damn décor themes a thousand times, I knew his behavior had nothing to do with OCD. Sebastien was just a control freak! And based on how his employees acted around him, nobody probably had told this man no a day in his adult life.

Every suggestion I made, he overrode, forcing me to go back to the drawing board again and again. After a while, I stopped fighting it. Whatever he said, I went right along with it. I'd be out of here in three weeks and forty thousand dollars richer. After this event was over, I decided I'd cut ties with Sebastien. As much as I needed the money, there was no way in hell I'd sacrifice my sanity and continue working for a man like him.

By closing time on Friday afternoon, I was mentally exhausted and looking forward to the two days I didn't have to see or hear Sebastien. All I wanted to do was curl up in front of a good book and eat some rocky road ice cream straight out of the tub.

Are you sure you could go two days without seeing the man who makes your heart flutter every time he walks into the room?

Like, what was that about? It's not like I'd never seen a good-looking man before, but every time Sebastien got close to me, my mouth went dry and I had to think twice as hard so I wouldn't fumble over my words and sound like a bumbling idiot.

Sighing heavily, I grabbed a few files for the weekend and slung my handbag over my shoulder. As I opened my office door, there he stood, the devil himself, looking like a freaking demigod, his tattoos snaking along his arms until they hid under the short sleeves of his shirt. Who on earth looked this good after an exhausting day at the office?

"Ms. Malone, there are a few things we still need to work on before you leave today," he said in a matter-of-fact tone as he stepped past me and entered the office.

I stood there with the doorknob in my hand, stunned. Did this man just barge into my office asking me to work after hours on a Friday?

Oh hell no!

Spinning on my heel, I turned to face Sebastien, who was leaning casually on my desk. I couldn't hide the storm that was brewing in my eyes, nor did I want to.

"Mr. Quantum. It is five p.m. That's when I leave for the day," I reminded him.

"Ms. Malone, if I'm not mistaken, I hired you to do a job for me, one which must be perfect. And one week has already gone by, and you seem to be behind schedule."

Yeah, because you keep breathing down my neck.

My voice came out flat as I spoke. “Mr. Quantum, this is not my first rodeo, I know what I’m doing. After all, you did hire me, the event planner, right? If you had the skills to do it yourself, you would’ve.”

For Christ's sake, let me do my damn job.

His lips pressed into a thin line. “Be that as it may, there are still a few things I’d like to discuss.”

“And they can’t wait till Monday?” I lifted an eyebrow.

“No. If they can be done today, we should do them.”

Knowing that there was no way I was getting out of this, I stalked to my desk and dropped my things. My voice was controlled, barely. “Fine. What are these things that can’t wait till Monday?”

Did this man ever think about anyone else besides himself?

I’m sure there’s at least one person on that list: Lucy.

After he mentioned her name in his office that day, I couldn’t help but google Sebastien online. Of course, once you googled one Quantum brother, they all appeared. The Quantum men were as handsome as they came, and the women on their arms in the tabloids had long legs, slim waists and flawless skin. I scanned the names of the women to see if I ran across anyone named Lucy, but nothing popped up.

“We need to discuss the timeline of events...”

I realized Sebastien was talking and I had missed a chunk of what he said. Shit.

“...to ensure that the most important things occur when the exclusive guests are there...”

Sebastien went on to talk about seating arrangements, the menu, the wines to be served and the type of entertainment he expected. As the evening wore on, I realized Sebastien was as to oil as I was water.

We. Did. Not. Mix.

Pissed that I had to stay back and give up my rocky road Ice cream, I had to refrain from telling him to go to hell more times than I dared to admit. After four excruciating hours, we had compiled notes and agreed to finalize them on Monday morning.

Happy to finally get rid of Sebastien for the weekend, I grabbed my handbag and slung it over my shoulder, leaving the files that I wanted to take home earlier. After working an extra four hours tonight, I had zero desire to see another file until Monday morning.

“Have a good weekend, Mr. Quantum,” I said through clenched teeth.

“I’ll drop you off. You can’t drive by this time of the night.”

Was that a suggestion or a command?

“If I had left at five p.m., as planned, I wouldn’t have to drive at this time, would I?” I snapped.

I was so sick and tired of this man.

Sebastien glared at me impatiently, ignoring what I just said. “I’ll drop you home so

I'll know you got home safe."

"Mr. Quantum. I'm an adult. I can get myself home. And when I do get home, I can send you a text to let you know I arrived safely."

Annoyed by his demands, I exited the office, praying he wouldn't follow me down the steps to try to convince me to let him take me home. He didn't, and a part of me felt disappointed as I made my way to my car.

Fumbling through my handbag, searching for my key, I watched as Sebastien stepped out of the building. He spoke with Tony before he headed for his black Porsche. I was hoping that he'd drive away first, but he didn't.

When I found my key, I hopped into the car, ready to get my weekend started. I strapped on my seatbelt and pushed the key in the ignition. Nothing.

"Come on baby, start."

I kept trying, but the car refused to start. I placed my head on the steering wheel. First Sebastien, now this. Could things get any worse?

A tap on the window startled me.

Yes, it definitely could.

Sebastien was standing outside my car motioning for me to roll down my windows, which I reluctantly did.

He propped one hand on the top of her car and leaned over to speak to me.

"Is something wrong with your car?"

No shit, Sherlock.

I bit my lower lip just in time to keep the words from falling out of my mouth, then looked up at him.

“I’ll be fine.”

That was a lie from the deepest pits of hell. I had no money at my disposal to fix my car. I was not fine.

His voice was gentle and his eyes flashed concern as he continued to speak, not like the self-absorbed man that I had spent the last four hours butting heads with. “Ms. Malone, if your car is having problems, I can have my mechanic come check it out for you in the morning.”

He’s asking nicely. Give the man a break.

No.

“For him to change every single thing that’s wrong with my car so by the time I get the bill I would’ve been able to afford a brand-new car? No, thank you.”

I watched as Sebastien closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. When he opened his eyes, any gentleness I had seen earlier had vanished, and bossy Sebastien was back.

“Your car will be safe here. Call your mechanic tomorrow. Get your things. I’m dropping you home.”

Girl, you and I both know that you don’t have cab fare, let this man drop you home.

“Fine.”

I grabbed my handbag and unbuckled my seatbelt. Sebastien opened the door for me and I stepped out.

After securing my car, Sebastien placed his hand on my lower back, and I tried not to trip over my own two feet as my legs suddenly felt like goo. We made our way to his car, and he opened the passenger door for me, dropping his hand from my back as I slid in.

As I buckled my seatbelt, I still felt the warmth from where his hand had been. It wasn't long before I wondered how his hand would feel on other parts of my body and a blush spread across my cheeks. The closing of his car door brought me back to reality.

A man like Sebastien will never date a woman like you.

He started the engine, and we drove out of the parking lot. I looked out the window. Just hold out for one more hour and you won't have to see him till Monday.

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For the third time, I glanced over at Delilah, who sat so closely against the door that if someone had opened it, she'd have fallen right out. She was looking out the window, totally ignoring me.

What do you expect after keeping her back hours after closing time?

The truth was that even though I had spent most of the week with her, I couldn't resist stealing just a bit more after everyone had left. I knew she was angry, and those eyes of hers looked like storm clouds during our 'discussions.' I knew that I had given her hell that week, but something about seeing her fired me up and turned me on.

Delilah didn't even say anything when I turned onto the street that led to her neighborhood. I didn't have to ask where she lived because I had followed her home each night to ensure she got home safely.

I focused on my surroundings and looked in the rearview mirror; Tony was right behind me. I detested the area. Paint was peeling off the buildings, and some of them even had cracks running along the walls. It looked like a neighborhood where crack addicts were rampant and shootings occurred every night. I pulled up in front of Delilah's apartment building.

The streetlight at the front was broken, and a couple was arguing loudly in the building about who was supposed to do the dishes. The building looked like it was on the verge of being condemned. Two guys and a lady stumbled into the apartment building, laughing loudly, talking about what would happen once they got behind closed doors.

Delilah unbuckled her seatbelt and clutched her handbag tightly but didn't look in my direction when she spoke.

"Thank you for the ride. Mr. Quantum."

She stepped out of the car, and I was on her heels. I saw from the corner of my eye that Tony had also gotten out. I grabbed Delilah's arm more roughly than I'd meant to and brought her to a stop. She stumbled and I pulled her against me just in time, her breasts pressed to my chest. Her breathing increased for a fraction of a second before she pulled away from me and steadied herself.

"Delilah, why are you living here?"

Before, I couldn't ask her these questions, because she'd wonder how I knew where she lived. But now that I'd dropped her home, I needed answers. "Dean could pay for a luxurious apartment anywhere," I added, my brow lifted.

I knew how protective Dean was of Delilah, especially after their parents died. He'd never let Delilah live in a dump like this.

"Wait, does he know you're living here?"

She glared at me, and something stirred within me.

"Where I live is none of your business, nor is it Dean's. You insisted on dropping me home and you did. Leave."

There was no way I was going to leave without getting the answers I wanted, not when I had the opportunity to do so. I followed her up the stairs to her apartment. The concrete stairs were chipped, and a part of the railing was missing.

A horrible stench filled my nostrils, but either Delilah didn't smell it, or she was accustomed to it, and the fact that she could be bothered me.

"Delilah, living in a place like this is not safe, especially for a woman. Places like these have way too many petty crimes and violence against women."

My fists clenched at my side at the thought of someone placing their hands on her. We stopped at her door, and she pulled out her key and looked at me.

"Mr. Quantum, what I do after hours, and again, where I live, is none of your business," she huffed.

"You are my business."

She lifted her eyebrow and I continued, "Not only are you my employee, but my best friend's sister, and that extends outside of work hours."

Delilah laughed bitterly, "When was the last time you even spoke to Dean? And when have you ever looked out for me? Because I don't have any memories of that happening, so don't try to start now. I can take care of myself."

"Delilah." I placed my hand on her arm but she yanked away.

Without thinking, I pushed her against the wall, my two hands flat against the door behind her. She gazed up at me, her eyes wide.

"You are not my boss right now. All you are is an annoying, controlling co-worker who can't take a hint when to get lost." She tried to sound intimidating, but her words came out like a whimper instead.

As I looked down at her, I noticed her breaths came in short gasps and her chest

bobbed up and down. Her nipples pressed firmly against the soft material of her blouse.

I wanted to tell her that no matter where we were, I was her boss. I wanted to show her exactly how much I could control her, if I chose, as thoughts of seducing her right here, right now, infiltrated my mind. I'd fuck her brains out in the shadows outside her apartment. and there was nothing she would be able to do about it.

But, reluctantly, I took a step back.

Never had I had the desire to just fuck a woman anywhere. Discretion was important to me. Yet still, here I was having these intense thoughts about Delilah outside her apartment.

"Good night, Ms. Malone," I bit out.

Delilah unlocked her apartment door and entered without a word. I didn't hear anything on the other side for a while. After a few moments, I heard Delilah walk away from the door, and I made my way down the stairs. Tony was standing at the bottom of the staircase, waiting. I exited the building, and he followed.

Outside, two security officers were waiting, one by my car and the other by their SUV. I hopped into my car and sped away, the only thing on my mind contacting Dean.

It had been two damn hours since I'd reached home and had been trying to reach Dean. Every number I had for him, his cellphone and his car dealership lines, didn't work. Since he'd moved his business to another state, we hadn't been able to keep in touch like we used to. But the fact that none of his lines worked meant something was

wrong. Very wrong.

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Frustrated, I tossed my phone on the sofa, slumped back and closed my eyes. Now, I didn't just have Delilah to be worried about, but Dean was now added to the list.

I wondered if Delilah knew where Dean was. But if she did, would she tell me? Her question about when I last spoke to Dean hinted that she knew we hadn't spoken in the last year or so. And if she didn't know exactly where he was, was she in contact with him?

Then a thought crossed my mind. Did Dean ghost me? If he did, what reason did he have?

I dialed Vega's number, gave him Dean's information and told him I wanted an update in the next few days.

With Dean out of the picture, Delilah was mine to take care of, and that was exactly what I planned to do.

That weekend, I paid the mechanic a hefty sum to look at Delilah's car, making sure every issue was addressed. By Sunday evening, the car was fixed and Rex, one of the security officers, delivered it to her. I vowed that once Delilah accepted the permanent position I offered, I'd include a company car and a luxury apartment close to the office. I wasn't sure if she'd take it, but at least she'd have the option.

When I walked into the office on Monday at seven a.m. Delilah was already in her office. I popped in to let her know I expected her in my office at eight sharp to finalize our notes from Friday.

Over the next few weeks, I had two security officers parked outside her apartment building once she was home. And I didn't only follow Delilah home, I followed her once she left the office.

The only place she went besides work was the supermarket, staying cooped up in her shabby apartment. Did she not have any friends? Maybe she spoke to them over FaceTime or Zoom.

And I still had no idea where the hell Dean was. Vega told me the last time Dean's phone was in service was six months ago, right after his business folded. But after that, he just seemed to disappear. No credit cards to trail, no debit card purchases. The last image Vega picked up of him was him getting into a cab on Main, and then nothing.

I wasn't sure if it was my worry about not being able to locate Dean or why Delilah was forced to stay in that crappy apartment, but I couldn't get her off my mind.

When I wasn't stalking her at the supermarket learning her favorite foods, I was scrolling through her media page to find out what she was allergic to, and the reason she loved that peach-scented lotion, which, turns out, was her mother's favorite scent, and places on her bucket list that she'd love to visit.

Thinking about her affected my work at the office. Every time she glared at me during a disagreement over planning the grand opening or shot a sarcastic comment my way with a complementary eye roll, I wanted to silence her with a kiss, caress her curves and make her eyes roll for all the right reasons.

Delilah affected me differently than any other woman I'd met. A whiff of her lotion or the sound of her giggles turned on an insatiable desire. I prided myself on having self-control, especially in the bedroom. I knew every touch, every trick to make women lose themselves.

But Delilah had become an aphrodisiac, constantly tugging the strings of my libido, unravelling my self-control. And, if I wasn't careful and didn't keep myself in check, those very strings would be the end of me.

I'd be damned if Delilah Malone would be the first woman to make me lose myself.

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FINALLY! Saturday!

The grand opening of the club had arrived!

Mere hours before, the club had been bustling with last-minute preparations. At seven p.m. sharp, Sebastien cut the ribbon, and his exclusive guests filtered into the V.I.P. section.

As an event planner, this was my first high-profile event. As much as I slammed Sebastien at the interview for being just a club owner, his guest list was pretty impressive. Besides his brothers, who were billionaires, each with their own successful business, there were other powerful attendees, the creme de la creme, so to speak—from high-profile investors and politicians to A-list celebrities, the elite of society.

After making my rounds, satisfied that everything was running smoothly, I sat at the bar and ordered sparkling water. As I sipped from the champagne flute the bartender insisted on giving to me, my eyes scanned the crowd and fell on Sebastien. Tonight, he looked like a whole meal in his black tailored tuxedo, and unconsciously, I licked my lips.

Men like Sebastien didn't give their time and energy to women like me, but they did give it to women like famous actress Stephanie Voss. Her black minidress stretched over her slender frame, and her long legs caught the attention of men when she stepped into a room. She leaned against Sebastien as she twirled her black, curly, hair around her fingers of one hand while the other trailed Sebastien's chest.

She looked desperate, immature and cheap standing there, hanging on to his every word. Nothing Sebastien was talking about could be interesting enough for her to act like that! And why couldn't she keep her stupid hands to herself?

Delilah, why are you bothered by who is touching or not touching Sebastien Quantum? Do you want to be the one touching him?

I gulped down my water and ordered another one.

"Someone told me that the beautiful lady at the bar was the person who helped plan this amazing event," a deep voice rumbled behind me, and I spun on my bar stool to face it.

The man standing there was very easy on the eyes. His black suit fitted his tall, solid build perfectly. His dark wavy hair fell onto his forehead, almost into his blue eyes, and a charming smile was plastered on his face. His hand was extended.

"The name's Matt Hunter, CEO of ...

"Hunter's Distillery, home of the finest whiskey in the country," I finished his sentence and smiled. Dean loved his whiskey, so by association, I knew who he was.

I placed my hand in his and he lifted it to his lips, his eyes locked with mine. His lips lingered on my hand before he released it and sat next to me.

"I didn't catch your name, beautiful."

His eyes roamed over me, but not in a perverted way, more in a "likes what he's seeing" type of way, and I tried not to look uncomfortable under his gaze. My emerald cocktail dress hung loosely around my curves as its delicate thin straps framed my shoulders. His eyes lingered on my cleavage, which was framed by the V-

shaped neckline of my dress, before his eyes made their way to my face. My makeup was professionally done for the event, as well as the elegant updo my hair was styled into with soft curls hanging from it. A pair of nude strappy heels completed my look.

“My name’s Delilah Malone. It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Hunter.”

His eyes met mine once again and he smiled. “Please, call me Matt. I must say, I’m impressed by what I’ve seen so far at this event. Trust me, I’ve been to my share of grand openings, but none as elegant as this.”

My cheeks flushed. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. So tell me, beautiful, what epiphany did you have that made you decide that event planning was your calling?”

Before I could respond, I felt someone standing behind me. His familiar scent hit me, and I stiffened. Sebastien.

“ Ms. Malone .” His voice was low, tense and dripping with venom. “Instead of fraternizing with the guests and scouting for a potential man to warm your bed tonight, maybe you should get back to work and figure out why the caterer hasn’t arrived yet.”

What the actual fuck!

I squeezed my eyes shut, keeping my tears at bay, praying that this was just a bad dream, that the bartender had slipped me vodka instead of sparkling water. Anything was better than the embarrassment Sebastien had just dealt me. I heard the stool next to me shift and I knew Matt had left.

Enough was enough!

It was time for me to leave. Fuck Sebastien and his grand opening.

Without a word, I weaved through the crowd to the management door that Rex was standing in front of. I needed to get my clutch from Sebastien's office where he'd insisted that I stash it when I arrived. As I began to climb the stairs, Sebastien grabbed my arm and spun me to face him. If it wasn't for his firm grip on my arm, I would've lost my balance and hit my back on the stairs. His eyes were dark and intense.

"Ms. Malone. Where are you going?"

Everything in me wanted to tear him to shreds, but I bit back my anger.

"Hmmm, let me see. Since you're hell-bent on embarrassing me every chance you get, I'm leaving! I'm not a child, Mr. Quantum, and I've had enough of your constant insults."

Sebastien's grip on my arm tightened slightly as he straightened and towered over me.

"You're still on the clock, Ms. Malone, or have you forgotten that you're in the middle of an event? If you leave now, you'd better believe you won't get paid."

Sebastien glared at me, and I glared back. There was no way I was going to let him see how much I needed that money, so I stayed silent.

"You leave when I leave. So get back to work."

As he turned to walk away, I couldn't help myself. "As for the caterer, maybe if you weren't so busy entertaining the women that threw themselves at you like cheap whores, you'd know that the caterer is already here and is prepping her team as we

“speak.”

Shit! I went too far with the whore line, didn't I?

Sebastien paused for a brief moment, and I held my breath. But he didn't turn around. He exited the door without a word. I sighed and made my way to his office, the only office already furnished, for a much-needed break, knowing he'd be too busy to go upstairs for the rest of the night.

As I opened the office door and froze. Sitting behind the desk was a brown-haired girl dressed in a yellow, frilled dress. She had taken the bobblehead collection from the shelf and lined them up neatly in front of her. She gently tapped their heads and giggled as the heads bobbed up and down.

I closed the door behind me and the girl looked up at me.

“Hi, my name's Delilah Malone, and I'm the person who planned the event,” I said gently as I stood rooted in place. I didn't want to scare the child, especially since I didn't know who she was and how she gained access to Sebastien's office with Rex standing guard downstairs.

Her eyes brightened. “You're Uncle Seb's friend?”

I didn't want to tell the girl that Uncle Seb and I weren't really friends, so I nodded. “Yes, you could say that.”

“My name's Lucy.” She smiled broadly. “Dominic Quantum is my daddy. He and my uncles talk about you a lot at home.”

My chest tightened. Why was I a topic of discussion among the Quantum men?

Curious, I took a seat on the sofa and asked, “What do they say about me?”

“That you used to follow Uncle Seb and his friend, Dean, around when you were kids.”

I laughed. “Well, Uncle Seb is my brother’s best friend, so that’s true.”

I was still a bit worried about what else they said, but I tried not to focus on it. Instead, I focused on Lucy and what she was saying.

“I’m sure Uncle Seb is a great best friend, because he’s an amazing uncle. He takes me out, and said that when I turned eighteen that he’d take me to get my first tattoo...” The man Lucy was describing could never be the same grumpy, control freak that I knew. “And he buys chocolate for me and my friends...”

Chocolate. The word triggered the memory from Sebastien’s office a few weeks ago when I overheard him on the phone. This was the Lucy. An embarrassed flush brushed over my cheeks.

Gosh, I felt like such an idiot.

“... do you have any sisters?” Lucy’s question jolted me back to reality. “I have a baby sister, her name is Lillian.”

“No, but I’ve always wanted a sister.”

Honestly, I really did. Having a protective brother was cool and all, but I never had someone I could share my secrets with, stay up all night talking about boys or do girly things with.

Then she tilted her head thoughtfully before she hopped off the chair behind the desk

and sat next to me.

“If you marry Uncle Seb, that’ll make you and Dad’s wife sisters, right?”

I choked on my saliva and began to cough uncontrollably.

Did she just say marry Sebastien?

I scrambled to my feet, retrieved a bottle of water from the small fridge in the corner of the office and gulped it down.

“Are you okay?” Lucy asked, her big brown eyes filled with concern.

“I’m okay,” I croaked, tossing the empty bottle into the waste bin.

I returned to the sofa and forced a smile. I cleared my throat. “And to answer your question, it would kinda make us sisters.”

Lucy grinned, “Cool!”

I needed to steer the girl’s thoughts in another direction. “So, how are you enjoying the event?”

“I begged Dad to bring me, thinking it would be fun, but this event is boring me to death,” Lucy groaned as she fell back onto the side of the sofa dramatically. I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“I have an idea of something fun we can do, if you’re interested.” I wiggled my eyebrows teasingly at her.

“I’m interested! I’m interested!” Lucy jumped off the sofa excitedly.

“Okay, come with me to the next room and we’ll get the supplies.”

I led Lucy to supply room, where I gathered a huge roll of paper, scissors, extra flowers, sequins, markers and glue. Then we made our way back to Sebastien’s office.

“Okay, Lucy, we’re going to make life-sized dolls out of paper. My mom and I used to do this when I was younger. Here’s what we’re gonna do. We’ll each lie on the paper and the other will trace the outline. After that, I’ll cut them out and we’ll decorate them with all these pretty things we have here. Sounds good?”

“Yes!”

We sat on the floor and got to work, and it wasn’t long before we were both laughing and decorating our dolls. My doll had flowers for hair, while Lucy chose colorful sequins.

As we decorated the body, the door suddenly opened, and Sebastien walked in. He looked at the mess on the floor and then at me, and felt myself shrink under his gaze.

“Uncle Seb!” Lucy jumped up and grabbed Sebastien’s hand, pulling him into the room. “Look at the amazing dolls Aunty Delilah and I are making.”

Seb stooped to Lucy’s level and held her hands. “I see them, princess. Your dad sent me to get you, Emily is ready to leave.”

“Oh man,” Lucy pouted. “Can I take my doll with me?”

“Sure.”

“Yay! Let me help Aunty Delilah clean up before I leave,” she insisted.

As she began to pack away the things in the box, I rose to my feet and dusted the sequins from my dress.

“It’s okay, Lucy. I’ll take care of it. Go show your parents the amazing doll you made.” I smiled at her.

Lucy ran up to me and wrapped her hands around me.

“Thanks for the fun time. See you soon!” Her eyes twinkled.

“You’re welcome. Bye, Lucy.”

Lucy pulled away from me, picked up her doll, and Sebastien scooped her into his arms before he turned to me. I expected to see anger, but instead, there was something else I couldn’t quite place.

“When you’re finished cleaning up, you’re needed downstairs.” His voice was husky, and it sent a flutter straight to my core.

With that, Sebastien turned and left as Lucy chatted excitedly about her doll. It left me wondering, if Sebastien was as nice as Lucy said and as caring as he acted towards her, why was he treating me this way?

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

I headed upstairs to my office, exhausted but satisfied with the flawless execution of the club's grand opening. My brothers had disappeared, but I knew they'd resurface soon enough since they'd never leave without letting me know. Emily and Lucy, however, had left a few hours ago with Alec, Dominic's driver. The rest of the staff had gone home, leaving the cleanup crew downstairs under Delilah's supervision.

The month of planning, the late nights, and the intense arguments with Delilah had paid off, big time. She didn't quit or walk away during the process, when things got tough; she'd stuck it out until the job was done.

Tonight, though, was the only time she threatened to leave, and I knew it was my fault. A blind man could see that the guy was flirting with her, and instead of letting it slide, I overreacted like I did with Daniel. Delilah may not have been mine to claim yet, but I'd be damned if another man would flirt with her under my nose and get away with it. I knew the opening would've turned out differently if it wasn't for her, as much as I hated to admit it.

But the highlight of my night was walking into my office earlier and seeing Lucy and Delilah on the floor making those paper dolls together. Delilah didn't hesitate to kick off her shoes and have sequins and glue stuck to her beautiful dress while entertaining Lucy. No woman I had ever been with would've sat on the floor in their designer dresses and manicured nails to entertain Lucy—not that I'd have trusted any of them with her, anyway.

When I stepped into my office, my brothers were scattered around the room, on chairs, pressed against the table or leaning against the wall. They rose to their feet, smiles on their faces and glasses in their hands. The office felt too small for us six-

foot-tall men, but no one seemed to care. Dominic held two glasses in his hand, walked over to me, handed me one and patted me on the back.

“To the man of the hour! I can’t speak for the others—” Dominic began.

Axel raised an eyebrow and interrupted, “Since when?”

Everyone chuckled.

“Fine,” Dominic smiled broadly. “I’ll say it. On behalf of all of us, this may not be your first grand opening, and knowing you, it won’t be your last, but we’re proud of you and this milestone that you’ve overcome. Cheers to more success. To Seb!”

The others cheered in unison. “To Seb!”

The glasses clinked, and then my brothers took turns shaking my hand. When the congratulations subsided, I turned to face them.

“You guys could’ve been anywhere else tonight, but you chose to be here, to support me. Thank you, I appreciate every one of you.”

“And we appreciate you too, for bringing those fine babes tonight,” Axel smirked, raising his glass again.

“Do you think of anything else besides your next lay?” Leo asked amused.

“Of course, I do, but tonight wasn’t about business for me. It was about pleasure, or at least it will be, once I leave here.” A wide grin spread across Axel’s face, and I shook my head.

“How many numbers did you get tonight?” I asked, curious.

“Fifteen,” Axel stated proudly.

Vincent scoffed, “Only?”

“Wait,” Axel, clearly shocked by Vincent’s response, demanded, “You were collecting numbers too?”

“Do ducks have feathers?” Vincent smirked.

Axel’s tone was dead serious. “Listen, we’ve got to make sure that we don’t have the same numbers for the same girls. Remember what happened last time.”

Nate looked between Axel and Vincent. “What happened last time?”

“Nothing,” Vincent and Axel stated in unison.

They huddled in a corner of the office and pulled napkins filled with numbers out of their pockets to compare them. The rest of us shook our heads and chuckled.

“Seb, you know, a few months ago when you told us about the protection fee and the threats to trash your clubs if you didn’t pay, I thought you’d delay the opening of this club. Being a business owner is risky, especially for someone as successful as you. But you didn’t give in to their demands, you stood your ground and kept your eye on the prize. I’m proud of the man you’ve become.”

Dominic’s approval had always mattered to me, and now was no different. But it also made me realize how important it was to handle the club’s issues alone. He was right; being a business owner came with risks, like having a target on your back, but that didn’t mean you should fold your business and give in.

Which made me wonder what made Dean give in.

Change is the only constant in life. You adapt, you learn, and you grow. Over the past few months, I revisited the drawing board more than once to protect what I'd built, and I'd continue to do so until the threat is eradicated.

"Seb, have you received any more threats since then?" Nate asked, a brief wave of concern flashing across his face.

"Nothing I can't handle. Being a club owner isn't for the weak, and as a Quantum man, the word weak isn't in my vocabulary."

"But I hope the word precaution is." Leo folded his arms across his broad chest and locked eyes with me. "Seb, a colleague of mine from the police force informed me that Eso was murdered. I've done my calculations, and based on the time frame, Eso couldn't be the one who sent you the threats as you originally thought," Leo grimaced.

I took a sip of my whiskey but said nothing.

Dominic's eyes narrowed as he glanced at me. "Based on the look on your face, you already knew that."

"I did. I'm looking into Eso's murder as we speak. I figure I owe him that much."

My brothers nodded, neither of them bothering to try to persuade me to back off from investigating it.

"If you need us, you know where to find us," Vincent stated as he and Axel rejoined the group.

"I do," I replied with a nod of agreement.

“And on that note,” Dominic added with a smile, “I’ll leave you bachelors to enjoy the rest of your night. I’ve got a family to get home to.”

He patted each of us on the back and exited the office, his footsteps fading down the hallway.

Leonardo, Nathaniel, Axel, Vincent and I hung out for a bit, then one by one, they said their goodbyes.

Just as I settled into the chair behind my desk and closed my eyes, a knock echoed on the door before it opened.

“Mr. Quantum.” Delilah stood in the doorway. She looked as tired as I felt. “The cleaning crew is finished, and I’ve locked up. I just wanted to let you know I’m leaving.”

I glanced at my watch. “It’s midnight. I’ll take you home.”

“You don’t need to. I’ll—”

“I insist.” I cut her off, my tone firm.

Delilah closed her eyes for a moment and inhaled deeply before her tired gaze met mine. She stepped into the office and grabbed her clutch from the shelf. Her lips pressed into a thin line. “I’ll wait for you downstairs.”

She turned and walked outside before I could say anything else. The fact that she was exhausted and still felt the need to be stubborn stirred something in me.

A smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I stood up, ensuring I had my phone and my keys. I locked my office behind me, and after double checking that all the offices

upstairs were locked, I made my way downstairs.

As I stepped out of the elevator, I saw Delilah leaning against the wall at the entrance. Her shoulder was against it, her arms crossed in front of her, one hand holding the opposite wrist. Her clutch hung loosely in her hand as her head leaned against the wall.

When I got closer, I realized her eyes were closed, her breathing slow and even. If I didn't know any better, I'd say Delilah was sleeping on her feet.

It took everything in me not to walk up to her, nuzzle her neck, and inhale that perfume that had been driving me crazy all night. My cock stirred at the fleeting thought of pressing her against the wall where she stood and pressing my lips against hers. I couldn't help but wonder if her lips tasted like peaches.

I inhaled deeply and gently placed my hand on her arm. What I didn't expect was for her eyes to snap open as panic etched on her face. Or for her clutch to swing toward me. My arm shot up just in time to grab her wrist, preventing the bag from slamming into the side of my head.

Who the fuck did she think I was?

"Ms. Malone, it's just me." My voice was gentle, yet firm.

This couldn't be a reflexive reaction based on where she lived. The way she reacted told me there was something more.

Her breathing was short and ragged as she tried to register where she was. Slowly, I lowered her wrist but didn't let go, closing the gap between us as I cupped the side of her face.

“You’re safe, Delilah. I’d never let anything happen to you.”

My eyes never left hers. I didn't know why, but I felt the need to reassure her. As my words sank in, she leaned into my hand.

I didn’t rush her. I waited until her breathing had steadied.

“Are you ready to leave?”

When she nodded, I placed my hand on the small of her back and guided her across the parking lot to my car.

The only other car in the parking lot was Tony’s. Once Delilah was safely inside, I made my way to the driver’s seat. Tony and the other security guard climbed into the black SUV and pulled out of the parking lot after I did.

“So, if I allowed you to drive home, would you’ve fallen asleep behind the wheel like you did against the wall?” I asked flatly.

From the corner of my eye, I saw Delilah stiffen. “I’ve never fallen asleep behind the wheel of my car, and don’t plan on starting now.”

“To prevent any future accidents, I’ve decided to include a car and an apartment nearby as part of the company perks for when you start to work for me permanently on Monday.”

Delilah scoffed, shaking her head. “I never gave you an answer on that offer, did I? And now that your grand opening is over, you are no longer my boss, which means I can call you by your first name. So, Sebastien , as much as I need the money, I’ll never work for someone as arrogant and self-centered as you. It’s not worth it.”

Delilah looked out the window as I focused on the road ahead. I didn't let her words bother me, because they were true. I didn't build my empire by being a polite pushover, and I wouldn't apologize for it, either.

But now that the grand opening was over, I needed to keep Delilah close, especially after her reaction tonight. I had to figure out a way to get her to accept the job.

As we pulled up to her apartment complex, I switched off the engine and turned to her.

"Ms. Malone." I didn't continue until her eyes met mine. "With Dean out of the picture, I can't just see you living like this and sit back and do nothing. If anything happens to you, and I had a chance to help you and I didn't, I'd never forgive myself."

Delilah looked at me strangely and then unbuckled her seatbelt. "Thanks for the ride, Sebastien."

She stepped out of the car and hustled towards the building, and I followed close on her heels.

"You know it's a good deal. Why are you being so stubborn?" Impatience seeped into my voice as I tried to keep my composure.

She paused at her door, her key already in her hand, but she didn't unlock it. Instead, she turned and looked up at me. I could see the turmoil in her eyes.

Her voice softened as she spoke. "Because I don't need your help in the form of handouts. Handouts come at a price, usually at a price I can't afford."

There was something about what she just said and the way she said it that struck a

nerve. I couldn't help but feel she was talking about something completely different.

"Delilah," I placed my hands on her shoulder and felt her breath falter. "You did a great job tonight. This isn't a handout. This is about you recognizing what you bring to the table and getting rewarded for it. Take the job."

She sighed. "Good night, Sebastien."

She looked up at me, her eyes pleading with mine to let her go. Reluctantly, I stepped back and allowed her to enter her apartment. There was no way Delilah was going to refuse my help. Not if I had anything to say about it.

I made my way downstairs and spotted Tony standing near the entrance.

"Tony," I lowered my voice. "I want extra eyes on Delilah at all times. Got me?"

Tony nodded. "Yes, boss."

There was more to Delilah's story than she was willing to share, but with the grand opening out of the way, figuring out what Delilah Malone had gotten herself into made it to the top of my list.

By the time I arrived home, it was a little after three in the morning. Restless, I settled into bed and called Delilah, needing to hear her voice once more before I called it a night. It took a few tries, before she finally answered.

"Sebastien, it's three a.m. You'd better be on fire to be calling me at this time."

Her voice was sexy and raspy, sending my imagination into overdrive. Did she sleep in long pajamas or boy shorts? An image flashed through my mind of Delilah's leg straddled over mine as a hint of her butt cheek hung from her shorts, snuggling in

next to me, her knee brushing against my cock, and sent a dangerous longing through me.

“I just wanted to let you know that I got home safe. After dropping you off, that is.”

“Good for you, anything else?” Her annoyance came through as clear as day. Now that she was officially off the clock, she wasn’t holding anything back.

“Have you thought about the job offer?”

“My answer is still no. I’ll clean toilets before coming back to work for you.”

As Delilah snapped at me, I pictured that defiant spark in her eyes and how her lips would press in a thin line, daring me to challenge her. It maddened me but also made her totally irresistible.

My hand instinctively moved to my cock that strained against the fabric confining it and rubbed. I considered returning to Delilah’s place and turning her sharp words into moans as I made her mine.

Mine.

My cock jumped in my hand, and I stifled a growl in my throat.

“Ms. Malone.”

“Mr. Quantum”

Silence.

“I’m going back to bed. Good night,” Delilah stated.

The phone went silent.

I closed my eyes, trying to shake Delilah from my thoughts, but I couldn't.

I removed my cock from its restraints and wrapped my fingers around my shaft. I rubbed the precum that was already on the head of my cock and stroked myself. I imagined Delilah's lips wrapped around the head and moaned.

Come on Sebastien, what the hell does this woman have that gets you so riled up that you can't control yourself? Stop letting Delilah get to you!

But the more I tried to get myself under control the more I pictured Delilah's hands on me and the warmth of her mouth. My hand moved relentlessly over my shaft, and it wasn't long before my body shuddered, and I groaned as I reached my climax. But the tension lingered, leaving me more frustrated than when I started.

I lay there for a few moments before heading to the bathroom. After a quick shower, I made my way back to bed. This weekend I had to come up with a plan that ensured Delilah would walk into my office on Monday morning and accept the job offer.

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

The Sunday after the grand opening of the club, I received an email from Quantum Enterprises. I groaned and my finger lingered over the delete button. Like the email, I wanted to delete Sebastien from my life, permanently.

He was an infuriating, overbearing control freak! But, damn , he also smelled amazing, looked annoyingly hot, and made my knees feel weak when he gazed at me with those intense green eyes of his.

And the moment after the opening, when I felt a hand on my arm and I thought I was being attacked, lashing out, he wasn't angry. He was patient, gentle, and made me feel safe for the first time in a long time.

I sighed and pushed my thoughts of Sebastien to the side. I looked at the email sitting in front of me. I knew that if I didn't read it, it would haunt me forever. Reluctantly, I clicked on it, and my jaw dropped as I read its contents.

Not only had Sebastien doubled the original offer to one hundred thousand dollars a month, but he also added meal stipends, a fully furnished luxury apartment with a company car, a twenty thousand dollar sign-on bonus, four weeks of paid vacation with travel allowances each year, medical and dental Insurance, opportunities to attend workshops and conferences to improve my skills, flexible working hours, and the option to work remotely when needed.

Sebastien sure did know how to lay it on thick. The email was my dream job wrapped in gift paper with a complimentary bow at the top.

But...there was a catch. It was Sebastien, so I expected nothing less. I had to reply to

the email today, or I'd lose the offer.

I curled my knees to my chest, wrapped my arms around them, rested my head on my knees and breathed deeply.

Taking the job meant going back under Sebastien's tyranny.

Not taking the job meant sending numerous resumes hoping someone would hire me.

Taking the job meant being able to pay off my debt quickly.

Not taking the job meant more missed payments and worse.

Tears escaped my eyes before I could blink them back.

"Dean, I miss you. I wish you were here with me," I whispered.

I had no choice. I had to suck it up.

After wiping my tears, I adjusted myself in my chair and replied to the email, thanking Sebastien for the offer and accepting everything minus the car and the apartment. Almost immediately, I received a reply instructing me to arrive at head office the next day at nine a.m.

That had been almost a week ago. Now, here I was, pacing my office, steam coming out of my ears, because once again, Sebastien had acted like a raving lunatic just because I was chatting with a male co-worker I'd met in the parking lot coming back from lunch.

And that wasn't the worst part! Besides being possessive, he was exhibiting stalker-like behavior. There were times when we ended up in the same restaurant for lunch, or I bumped into him at the supermarket. Also, I noticed his security guards would follow me home and still be there the next morning when I came out to go to work. This version of Sebastien made dealing with the previous Sebastien seem like child's play. And I had no idea what to do about it. My contract was for a year, and if broken, I'd have to pay a hefty fine.

I sank into my chair and willed myself not to cry. Maybe I should just disappear.

But then what happens to Dean?

This wasn't the life I had envisioned, and honestly, I wasn't sure how much more I could take. I had four more hours to get through before I could go home and cry my eyes out in the privacy of my crappy apartment.

The hours crawled by, and at five p.m. I was mentally drained. I was packing up my things when Sebastien stepped into my office.

"I'll need you to work late tonight."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Quantum, but I have plans." I didn't even look up at him as I slung my handbag over my shoulder.

"Cancel them," he ordered.

I glared at him. "No."

I saw him flinch, and before he could open his mouth to respond, I retorted, "I'm not working late tonight, and if you don't like it, you can fire me. This is not the last job on the planet."

Sebastien's eyes darkened as he glared at me. Just then, he received a phone call and stalked out of my office. That was my cue to leave before he came back. I walked out of the office, barely waving at my co-workers. I just needed to put as much distance between Sebastien and myself as possible.

An hour and a half later, I pulled up in front of my apartment building. All I wanted was a hot shower, then to curl up and watch a good movie. After grabbing my handbag, I locked my car, made my way into the building and dragged myself up the stairs.

But when I got to my apartment, my heart skipped a beat. The door was slightly ajar. I knew that couldn't be a good sign. Bile gathered at the back of my throat.

Cautiously, I pushed the door open, and my blood ran cold as I looked around my apartment. It was completely trashed. My sofa was overturned, and the pillows were shredded. My coffee tables lay splintered on the ground, and shards of glass were scattered around the apartment from broken vases that once held my flowers. My breath caught in my throat when I saw the writing scrawled on the wall in red paint. 'See you soon, bitch.'

That was all it took.

I spun on my heel and bolted down the stairs as if the hounds from hell were on my tail. My heel caught on the third step, and I tumbled down to the bottom of the staircase, breaking one of my heels off in the process. I hardly noticed the sharp pain in my shoulder and head as adrenaline pumped through my veins. I scrambled to my feet, snatched my handbag from where it had fallen and rushed to my car. Once outside, my eyes darted around frantically, praying that whoever trashed my apartment hadn't stuck around to see what time I'd be home.

From the corner of my eye, I saw Rex hop out of the SUV. As he jogged towards me,

I jabbed the key into the door and slid into the car just as he reached my door. I ignored the tapping on my glass and sped away from my apartment building, not looking back.

“Shit! Shit! Shit!” I screamed as I slammed my hands on the steering wheel.

Tears streamed down my face as my head spun. They found me. I knew it was only a matter of time but...I just wished...

The blare of a truck horn jolted me out of my thoughts.

Shit! I was in the wrong lane.

My heart pounded as I swerved dangerously in front of a cab. The cab driver flipped me off, but I had bigger problems to deal with than worrying about an angry cab driver. I needed a place to stay. A safe place. But where?

I had no friends or family to seek refuge with. My chest tightened and I could barely breathe, making me feel lightheaded, as I zoomed past cars. Drivers honked angrily as I cut in front of them without signaling.

Before I knew what I had done, I was pulling back into the parking lot of Quantum Enterprises Head Office. I slammed the car into park at the entrance of the building, grabbed my handbag and hopped out of the car, not caring that the engine had been left running. I dug into my handbag, desperately searching for my access keycard to the building as I headed for the entrance. With shaky hands, I finally found it. I swiped it at the entrance and stumbled into the building. I just needed to get to my office and hide, at least for tonight.

But, just as I turned the last corner to get there, I slammed into someone, the impact making me wince and see stars. I reached out to grab the wall and steady myself. I

looked up and my stomach twisted in knots when I realized the person I had slammed into was none other than Sebastien.

Shit!

“I-I forgot something in my office. I just need to get it, then I’ll leave,” I blurted out, my voice cracking on the last few words.

Sebastien took a step back and slowly scanned me from head to toe. I shifted uncomfortably under his unnerving gaze. I needed to get away from him. There was no way I could stay here anymore. Maybe I could find a cheap motel to spend the night.

I turned quickly and began to walk in the direction I had just come from. I had only taken a few steps before Sebastien suddenly grabbed my wrist. I jerked to a stop and instinctively turned to face him. A blinding pain shot through my injured shoulder, and I gasped as my other hand shot up to it, my vision blurring with tears.

Sebastien swore under his breath and dropped his hand as though I had burned him. Without warning, he scooped me into his arms like I weighed nothing more than a rag doll. My skin grew hot and my pulse quickened as he briskly made his way to his office. The moment he placed me on the sofa, I missed the security of his arms. I watched as he walked back to the door and locked it. Shit .

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My words stuck in my throat as I looked down at Delilah. Her eyes were red and puffy, her shoulder was obviously injured, she had a red mark on her forehead, and her fucking heel was broken. She was looking down at her lap, and I could see her shaking from here. What the hell happened to her when she left here?

My jaw tightened as I felt anger building up inside me. Rex had called and said she ran out of the apartment building and sped off. They had followed her back here but had no idea what happened inside the apartment.

If someone had put their filthy hands on her, I'd make sure they'd disappear without a trace. I wanted nothing more than to hold her in my arms, but I needed to know what happened. I stalked over to my desk, leaned against it, and folded my arms. My eyes never left Delilah, who sat quietly on the sofa.

When I spoke, it almost came out like a growl. "Ms. Malone, what happened? Did someone hurt you at your apartment?"

She closed her eyes and shook her head. Her silence was beginning to frustrate me.

"Ms. Malone, look at me," I demanded.

She opened her eyes, and her head snapped in my direction.

My eyes narrowed. "Tell me what happened."

"I'm fine," she whispered.

“Dammit, Delilah!” I roared.

She flinched, her eyes widened with fear. I immediately regretted startling her more than she already was shaken and forced myself to calm down.

I softened my voice as I continued, “Stop being so stubborn. Tell me what happened. I know you’re not fine.”

“I-I fell down the stairs at my apartment. It was an accident.”

She bit her lower lip nervously and refused to look at me. I knew she was holding back something; her tell was unmistakable. Whether we were arguing or a client snapped at her and she wanted to say something, she’d bite her lip in an attempt to stop the words from spilling over.

I needed to get Delilah to a doctor to check her shoulder and head. I didn’t have time for her to wait until she was good and ready to tell me what the fuck happened. I knew I had to pull the truth from her by any means necessary.

I took Delilah’s handbag and the elbow of her good arm, steered her towards the door and unlocked it. Once she was outside my office, I handed back her belongings. She looked confused and terrified, but I had to remind myself that this was for her own good.

“Since you’re fine and your tumble down the stairs was an accident, I suggest you go to the ER and get your shoulder checked so you can report to work on Monday morning. I have a lot of work to get done. See yourself out, and rest assured if I see you on my premises, I’ll have one of the guards escort you out. Good night, Ms. Malone.”

“No! You can’t throw me out! I have nowhere else to go! They’ll find me and drag

me back! Please, don't let them drag me back," she shrieked, her eyes darting around wildly in a full-blown panic attack as she grabbed the front of my shirt.

They? Them?

Warning signals went off in my head.

God! I hated myself for doing this to her, but it needed to be done.

"Tell me everything that happened," I bit out.

Slowly, she removed her hands from the front of my shirt as she attempted to straighten up. But her response never came. Her eyes rolled back, and her body went limp.

Shit!

"Delilah!"

I caught her just in time and cradled her against me before she hit the ground.

I quickly tapped her cheeks as my chest tightened.

"Delilah! Delilah!" I shouted, but her eyes remained closed.

With my heart hammering in my chest, I carried her back to the sofa and placed a pillow under her head for support.

You went too far, Seb. Fuck!

I pulled a chair close, sat beside her and held her hand.

The next fifteen minutes passed in agonizing silence as I stared at her. Then, finally, her eyelids fluttered open, and I sighed with relief.

“Delilah, how do you feel?” I asked, my voice laced with worry.

“W-what happened?” she asked weakly as she struggled to sit up.

“Delilah, don’t sit up. You just fainted. You need to relax.”

“Please, I need to sit up,” she pleaded.

Not wanting to argue with her, I helped her into a sitting position and sat next to her.

“Better?”

She nodded slowly.

“Delilah,” I said softly, “Please tell me what happened at your apartment.”

She swallowed hard.

“Someone trashed my apartment.” Her voice shook as she spoke. “I didn’t know if they were still around, so I ran. And when I was running down the stairs to get to my car, the heel of my shoe broke. I tumbled down the stairs, hitting my head and my shoulder.”

Frustration and anger seeped through my voice as I spoke. “Do you know who could have done this?”

She nodded.

“Dean owes someone money,” she croaked out, her eyes filling with tears.

My breath hitched and my pulse quickened as I waited for her to explain.

“About ten months ago, Dean had a customer named Elliot, who was looking for rare luxury vehicles. Dean thought he hit the jackpot when another car dealership owner approached him, promising to help him acquire the cars. Dean took half of the payment from Elliot upfront, and together with some of his money, he paid the other guy for the cars.

“But when the cars arrived and Dean had them checked, he found out they had stolen parts and forged documents.” She paused, as a new wave of tears rolled down her cheeks. “Dean had no choice but to refund Elliot, but he still owed him five million dollars. And he needed money fast.”

“Do you know who the other car dealership guy is? Or the lawyer who checked his documents?” My jaw tightened.

Delilah shook her head and sobbed while trying to get the words out. “But Elliot suggested that Dean work for him to pay off the debt by smuggling drugs inside his cars that he would be importing for his business.”

“And he did it, didn’t he?” I asked, not liking the direction the story was headed.

Delilah nodded.

Fuck!

“At first, Dean refused, but after about a month and no closer to getting Elliot his money, he decided to do it. From there, he evolved from smuggling to selling, and eventually, he began using it.”

“Where is Dean now?” I asked through gritted teeth.

“Six months ago, I used all my savings and had him admitted to a high-end facility rehab to get the help he needs. He’s supposed to get out in three months.” Delilah closed her eyes and leaned her head back on the sofa.

That’s why Vega couldn’t trace him. He was locked away, and the facility most likely didn’t have computers or cameras inside or around it to protect their clients.

Finally, her gaze met mine. The fiery woman that I had grown accustomed to was nowhere to be found. Sitting in front of me now was a woman who looked defeated.

“Do you know anything about Elliot?”

She shrugged. “I know what he looks like, but his last name or which area he’s from? I have no idea.”

“So with Dean locked away in rehab, Elliot sent his boys after you to get his money.” Disgust was evident in my voice.

She nodded.

“Does Dean know they’re after you?”

The sadness in her eyes were unmistakable. “No, and if he knew what I did to help him, he’d never talk to me again.”

I stiffened. I was going to beat Dean’s ass as soon as he stepped out of that rehab. What kind of man left his younger sister in harm's way while he hid from the problems he created? He had to have known that if they couldn’t find him they’d go after her. And why the hell didn’t he reach out to anyone for help? Why didn’t he

reach out to me? The thought of it all made me feel sick.

“What did you do to help him?” I asked quietly.

She was crying again, and this time I pulled her into my arms. Her body trembled against mine as she clung to me.

When her sobbing subsided, she spoke. “When I had Dean admitted to rehab, I was working at a fashion magazine, and I loved it. Then about a week after, a guy came into my office stating that Dean owed his boss, Elliot, a lot of money, and since they couldn’t find him, I’d have to pay him off.”

She paused as if she were gathering her thoughts. I didn’t rush her. I let the silence draw out until she spoke again.

“He said my petty little job wasn’t going to pay them back fast enough.

“For a week, he and one of his friends lingered outside the office of the magazine, harassing the other employees and me. They told me they could help me raise the money faster if I came to work for them. If I didn’t, they’d spread lies about Dean all over social media claiming he was deep into drugs and human trafficking, and nobody would ever want me or Dean to work for them again.”

She sniffled. “I resigned from my job...a-and went to work for them.”

The more Delilah told me, the angrier I became. Dean fucked up big time.

“What did you do for them?” My voice was barely audible.

Her voice was strained as she spoke. “They gave me an account to put the money in every week. They told me that they had rich clients.”

She stopped and fiddled with her hands. I placed my hands over hers.

“What did you do for them?” I repeated.

I had to strain my ears to hear her next words.

“Clients who would pay me big money if I...” Delilah’s voice broke.

“If you what?”

She was crying again. “If I gave them hand jobs, plus stripped and danced for them and their VIP Clients.”

FUCK!

Delilah was shaking beneath me again, and I gently rubbed her arms. The thought of another man’s hands on Delilah made me sick to my stomach.

“Did they rape you?” I asked through clenched teeth.

“No.”

I sighed with relief.

“We wore laced panties and bras, but the touching was never really sensual. Maybe a slap on the ass or a quick feel of my breasts, but it didn’t go any further than that. The men who wanted hand jobs were taken to a private room. Men who demanded more or tried to force us to do other things were thrown out immediately.”

That information didn’t stop me from being pissed.

“Do you still work for them?”

I knew the answer was no, because I had been following her, but I needed her to tell me herself.

“No. Three months ago, I escaped,” she sighed heavily, “They wanted me to lure other women into it. But I couldn’t do it. The other girls and I were stashed in a hotel, but one night the police raided the place, and I was able to escape. And I’ve been hiding ever since because I couldn’t afford to make the loan payments.”

“Delilah, even after you paid that debt, they weren’t going to let you free. Things may have actually gotten worse if you stayed.”

She sniffled, her shoulders slumped. “I know. But now they’ve found me, and I have nowhere to go.”

As the tears began to fall, I pulled Delilah against me. Dean didn’t only fuck up his life; he also fucked up Delilah’s.

“I think you should tell Dean that they’re after you.”

She shook her head. “I can’t. He’ll try to leave rehab, and I want him to finish the program. I’m afraid if he doesn’t, he’ll relapse. He’s the only family I have. I don’t want to lose him.”

The words were coming out of my mouth before I realized it. “I’ll pay the debt. Whatever it is, I’ll pay it.”

Her eyes widened. “I can’t let you do that.”

“I can and I will. These thugs will keep coming after you, especially if the other girls

know you escaped. They'd think they had a chance, too, and it wouldn't go down well with the men keeping them captive. So I'll pay the debt, protect you, and keep your secret, if you marry me."

I heard her gasp, and her eyes widened.

"Marry you?"

"Yes, and you'll never have to worry about them again. So what will it be, Ms. Malone?"

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

I pulled myself out of Sebastien's arms and searched his face for a glimpse of a smile to let me know that he was joking.

Girl, have you heard Sebastien Quantum crack a joke since you've been working for him?

"Let me get this straight. You want to pay off my debt, protect me and keep my secret, but you can't do it because you're just a good person at heart, so the price I'll have to pay is marrying you?" Bitterness was laced in my tone. "How are you any different from the men who promised me a better paying job and lured me into prostitution?"

Did Sebastien think that because I was poor I could be bought? Him paying the debt equaled paying a bride prize in my books. What made him think I'd allow him, him of all people, to claim me as his wife? And why the fuck had I babbled everything to him? I should've just let him throw me back out on the street. But no, now he knew my secret, and if I don't go along with this stupid plan of his, he'd probably tell the whole world about what I did or hold it over my head for the rest of my life.

"Ms. Malone, what other options do you have, at the moment?" His voice was calm, but his eyes darkened slightly.

I glared at him. He didn't have to be so smug about it.

When I didn't answer, he continued, "I'm pissed that Dean thought he couldn't come to me for help, and I'm even more pissed that you were dragged into this. But the reality is, paying off Dean's debt isn't going to stop those men from coming after

you.”

As much as I hated to admit it, Sebastien had a point.

“However, once they realize you’re taken by a powerful man, like myself, and they know you’re protected, they’ll back off. And besides, this situation is a win-win for both of us.”

“Pray tell, oh powerful man. How is this a win-win for both of us?” I crossed my arms over my chest and lifted an eyebrow.

Sebastien’s eyes glinted with amusement. “As a married man, it’ll mean that I’ve now settled down. Investors love to throw money behind married men...something about stability makes them give in. Plus, we’ll both be invited to exclusive events reserved for married couples, and me, other events just for married men. It’ll bring in more business for both of us. I’ll get new clientele, and you’ll get to show off your amazing event planning skills. Of course, this will just be temporary.”

My heart lurched.

“Temporary?”

He nodded. “Once we’re sure you’re one hundred percent safe, and we’ve accomplished whatever goals we have for the company as a couple, we can quietly divorce and go our separate ways. You can even launch your own event planning company, bigger and better this time.”

I leaned back and thought about everything Sebastien said. I had to admit it, I did need help. But from Sebastien?

“Why should I trust you? You were mean to me when we were kids, and now that

I'm working for you, you've only gotten worse. Why would I enter a marriage, even temporarily, to suffer under your hands? It's not like you're suddenly going to be nice to me. Either way, it appears I'm screwed."

I caught the confused look on his face when I glanced over at him.

"What do you mean, I was mean to you as kids? All Dean and I ever did was pull a few pranks on you. That's what kids do."

A hollow laugh escaped my mouth. "When you and Dean pulled pranks, it was done in the privacy of our home. But when it was just you alone"—my voice grew louder, sharper—"you took things to another level. Like when you hooked a fake snake to my skirt, and when I fell, my skirt flipped up. Or how about the time you gave me some of your soda and it was mixed with chili pepper? Or my personal favorite," I continued icily, "when you made me believe that David Fletcher had a crush on me and had sent the note asking me to the dance. You bastard!"

Then I closed my eyes, squeezing them tight to stop the avalanche of tears from falling. My voice cracked. "The only friend I had was Dean, and when you became his friend, I thought...maybe...we'd be friends too."

Sebastien placed his hand on mine. His voice was soft as he spoke.

"Delilah, I never realized how much my pranks affected you. I only saw them as a way to get a few laughs. I never meant to hurt you. You always laughed at them, so I thought they were okay. I'm sorry. I was wrong. I was an asshole. Please, forgive me."

I looked at Sebastien. He was right, though; I always did laugh at his pranks, but not because I liked them. It was because I was too embarrassed to react any other way. But I saw the sincerity of the apology in his eyes.

I squeezed his hand and opened my eyes. “I forgive you, but the verdict's still out on you being an asshole.” I inhaled. “I know I’m not in any position to be making demands...”

“But you’re going to make one anyway,” Sebastien stated.

I nodded. “If I’m going to do this marriage thing, you’re going to stop talking down on me and treating me like trash. And I’ll still work for you and pay you back every penny of Dean’s debt so that when we do get divorced, I’ll leave with a clean slate. Deal?”

“Those were four demands.” The corners of Sebastien’s mouth tugged into a small smile.

I rolled my eyes, removed my hand from his and extended it. “Do we have a deal?”

“Deal.”

He shook my hand and then fished into his pocket for his phone.

“Now that we have that settled, let me call the doctor to check your shoulder and head.”

I rolled my injured shoulder backwards slowly. “I don’t think my shoulder is that bad. And my head has stopped spinning, it just hurts. Nothing two painkillers can’t fix.”

“You’re probably right,” he said, putting the phone to his ear, “but to be on the safe side, I’m calling anyway.”

Forty-five minutes later, Dr. Gina St. Claire had examined my shoulder and head and was writing me a prescription for heavy painkillers.

“Ice your shoulder twice a day for a week, and you don’t have a concussion, so you’ll be fine. Use these meds only if you have pain. And if you feel as though the pain has gotten worse, come see me immediately.”

I nodded and she stood, handing the prescription to Sebastien, who was leaning against the desk.

He tucked the prescription in his shirt pocket and extended his hand to the doctor, who shook firmly. “Thank you, doc. Let me walk you to your car.”

“It’s okay. My husband is in the lobby waiting for me. Good night.”

“Good night,” I said as the doctor exited the office.

I turned to Sebastien and smirked, “See, painkillers. Just as I predicted.”

But his face remained serious. “It’s better to be safe than sorry.” He helped me to my feet, my handbag hanging loosely over my shoulder. “Now, let’s go get your things from your apartment.”

I froze. I didn’t want to go back there, especially not this late.

“Can’t we do that tomorrow?” I tried not to let the fear show in my voice, but I knew I was doing a horrible job at it.

Sebastien squeezed my hand gently. “Nothing is going to happen to you. Do you trust me?”

“No,” I whispered.

He lifted an eyebrow and a smirk tugged at his lips. “Then, I have to change that now,

don't I? Let's go."

When we entered the parking lot, my car had been moved and two SUVs sat there, four security guards leaning against the cars casually. I knew two of them, Tony and Rex, but I'd never seen the other two before.

They greeted us, and Tony opened the door of one of the SUVs, Sebastien helping me inside. Sitting on the seat were my car keys. I slipped them into my handbag as Sebastien closed the door. He circled the vehicle and slid in beside me. Rex and Tony took their seat in front, with Tony at the wheel.

"We're heading back to Ms. Malone's apartment. It was trashed earlier today. Get your men there to scope it out to make sure there's no one there, still lurking in the shadows."

"Yes, boss," the two men said in unison.

I closed my eyes and leaned back as Rex spoke into his phone. Even though Sebastien didn't touch me his presence was very much felt. A presence I needed. A calming presence that kept my jitterbugs in check.

Honestly, I was happy that he not only offered to help me and Dean but that he didn't judge me for what I'd done to protect my brother. But, that didn't mean I trusted him. Having worked with Sebastien the past few weeks, I knew he didn't make decisions on a whim. He made calculated decisions, determining the best outcome for him and his business. I knew that this arrangement would be no different.

The only problem with being married to Sebastien was that I'd be in close proximity to him, especially after work.

It was already impossible to keep him out of my thoughts. But, how on earth was I

going to cope with being under the same roof as a man who drove me totally insane but also made my heart skip a few beats?

It's only a temporary marriage, Delilah, remember?

The SUV stopped and I heard car doors opening. I opened my eyes and realized Sebastien was no longer next to me. My car door opened. I left my handbag on the seat, as Sebastien helped me out.

I expected him to let me go once I had gotten out, but he didn't. It was as though he knew I needed the extra support. Together we walked to my apartment.

After pausing for a moment at the door, I stepped into the apartment with Sebastien. It was exactly how I left it. My breath hitched as Sebastien stared at the words scrawled on the wall. He didn't say anything about it, though.

"Where do you keep your documents?" he asked.

"In the bedroom."

He nodded, and I led him to the small bedroom. It was even worse than the living room. I didn't care about the furniture, but when I saw the shredded picture of my parents, my eyes misted.

"Delilah," Sebastien's voice was soothing, his hand gently rubbing the small of my back as I clutched the shredded picture of my parents in my hand. "I know how much that picture meant to you, but we can print another picture of your parents. Let's get the documents and you can pack anything you want to take. Once we leave here, you're not coming back."

I nodded and swallowed hard.

A knock on the door startled me.

“Mr. Quantum, a word please,” Tony said by the doorway.

Sebastien squeezed my arm. “I’ll be right outside,” he said and walked away with Tony.

I busied myself with getting my documents; my passport, birth certificate and other important papers I had hidden under a loose floorboard in the closet. Then, I packed my clothes and placed them in the suitcases that were thankfully still intact. By the time I was finished, I had two suitcases waiting.

“Ms. Malone, are you ready?” Rex asked, appearing in the doorway.

I spun around to face him and nodded.

Without another word, he picked up the suitcases and headed out. Just then, Sebastien returned.

“Which hotel will I be spending the night in?” I asked. “Or are you putting me in the apartment you offered me with the job?”

“You’ll be staying at my house,” he replied firmly.

My jaw dropped. At his house?

“W-why?”

“Because I’ll be able to protect you better under my roof.”

The only thing that escaped my mouth was, “Oh.”

“Let’s go.”

I hoped he’d take my hand again, and when he didn’t, I was disappointed.

As we drove away from my apartment, I stared out the window, trying to ignore the growing desire for Sebastien, and prayed that I wasn’t about to make the worst mistake of my life.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

I glanced over at Delilah, who had drifted off to sleep, a soft curl falling against her face. On our way home, I instructed Tony to stop at a drive-through pharmacy to fill Delilah's prescription. Tonight had taken an unexpected turn in my favor, and I hadn't let the opportunity slip by.

For weeks, Delilah had been living rent-free in my head, consuming my thoughts and pushing my sexual urges into uncharted waters. But now that she'll be living under my roof and soon enough tied to me legally, I'll be able to get her out of my system.

Could I have helped her without the proposal of marriage? Yes. But what would I have gained? Nothing.

Delilah is one hell of a woman, and I would be a fool to let her slip out of my fingers. Her loyalty to her brother was unmatched. Dean didn't deserve a sister like her. She sacrificed her dignity to protect his name. And if she could do that for her brother, how much more would she do as a loyal wife?

As much as Delilah was ashamed of what she'd done, having been to numerous strip clubs and private parties where strippers and dancers were present, I knew her actions rated a two on a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest. But, for a modest woman like Delilah, being exposed like that would've messed with her.

Even now, I was still trying to wrap my mind around the story she shared with me earlier. One thing was certain, those bastards would never lay a finger on her again, and I would protect her secret with every fiber of my being.

My mind ran back to what happened at the apartment when Tony called me. One of

his men had gotten information on the last person who saw Eso right before he was murdered. Vega had told me the coroner's report stated that Eso had died from a single bullet to the head. When Tony showed me the picture on his phone, my face hardened.

Obsidian.

His real name was Harry Montague. While sitting as a state judge in his prime, he became a part of the Black Lotus Syndicate, a secret society that Dominic had gotten involved with when he was younger. A while back, Dominic suspected that this organization was trying to blackmail him and expose his ties to them. Since Obsidian was a key player in allowing Dominic to cut ties from the organization, we confronted him, since he was the only member who had been in town at the time, threatening to take down the organization. Obsidian didn't take it lightly.

At that point, I decided to call Vega. I instructed him to look into Dean's business and who he associated with right before it went bankrupt. I needed to understand who these men or women were and how deep their connections ran. Once I could put faces to the threat hanging over Delilah's head, I'd be able to eliminate it.

The crunching of the gravel beneath the tires as Tony pulled into my long driveway jolted me from my thoughts. I gently rubbed Delilah's arm to wake her up.

"Delilah, we're here."

Her eyes fluttered open as she straightened, and a soft moan escaped her lips as she stretched. The sound went straight to my cock.

"Stay there, I'll open the door for you."

I quickly hopped out of the SUV and rounded the vehicle to open the door for

Delilah. Rex was already at the trunk, removing Delilah's luggage. I offered my hand to her as she stepped out of the car.

She looked at the house, her eyes wide, before turning to look at me.

"You live here?" she asked, disbelief in her voice.

"Yes."

"Alone?" she lifted an eyebrow.

I struggled to keep a straight face. "Yes."

She shook her head in awe, breathless as she spoke. "This house...is gorgeous. Looks like something from one of those rich people magazines."

"I did pretty well for a mere club owner, don't you think?" I smiled.

She blushed. "Yes, you did."

The two-story house was white and elegant. Upstairs, a wide balcony overlooked the manicured lawn and hedges. The warm glow of the lights inside made the house welcoming.

Despite the serenity that the house may offer, armed and dangerous men were hidden strategically around the property, prepared to take out any unwanted guests. Whether they were seeking Delilah or those who had been threatening my business.

As we stepped inside, Delilah drank it all in. The entrance hall opened up into a grand space. To the left, there was a doorway that led to the kitchen, my office and three guest bedrooms. But what made Delilah's jaw drop was the intricate double staircase

that curved gracefully toward the master bedroom and three additional guest rooms.

On the ground floor, behind the staircase was an open area that led to the dining room, which had another entrance through the kitchen. The chandeliers glowed on the tiled floors and the walls were adorned with family pictures.

I led Delilah up the stairs to one of the guest rooms, my hand lingering on the small of her back. I wanted nothing more than to have her sleep in my bed tonight. But, after everything she'd been through—finding her place trashed, tumbling down the stairs, revealing her secret and accepting my help with demands of her own—paired with my guilty conscience for how I treated her when we were kids, I didn't want her to panic and back out. Even though she was under my roof, I knew there was still a possibility of her backing out of the arrangement, so I had to play my cards right.

“This will be your room.” I pointed to the door on the right. “That's the bathroom, and that's the walk-in closet.” I pointed to the door on the left. “When you leave this room, my room is the first door on your right. If you need anything, just let me know.”

At the center of the room was a king-sized bed, draped in a champagne duvet. The headboard was upholstered in cream leather, framed by dark wood. The walls were painted pearl grey and two floor-to-ceiling windows on either side of the bed were covered by blinds. There was a rug on the tiled floors and matching nightstands on either side of the bed with lamps. Next to the bed was a brown armchair, while in the corner of the room was a brown sofa and a marble coffee table. Mounted on the wall in front of the bed was a large TV and an electric fireplace.

“Don't worry about your things, I'll bring them up to you in the morning. There are robes in the bathroom. And anything you may need to get ready for bed tonight.”

“Thank you.” She placed a hand on my chest and my heart raced at her touch. I

covered her hand with mine. “I know the deal is weird and all, but honestly, if this had happened when I hadn’t met you, I don’t know what I would’ve done.”

Her gaze dropped and I lifted her chin so she could look into my eyes.

“I’m sorry that this has happened to you. I promise you that you’re not going to go through this alone. I’m glad that I can be here for you.”

I pulled her into my arms, and held her tight, loving the warmth of her skin pressed into me. After a few minutes, I reached into my shirt pocket, pulled out her bottle of medication, and handed it to her.

“Get some rest. Tomorrow, don’t go to the office. We’ll sort out a few things okay?”

She nodded and I kissed her forehead.

“Good night, Delilah.”

“Good night.”

By seven a.m. the next morning, Vega had sent me information on all the people who were involved in Dean’s business before it went under. The file included pictures and detailed information about each person. Some of them were high-profile individuals, while some were ordinary citizens. Not wanting to overlook anything, I printed the pictures, including one of Obsidian.

At seven-thirty a.m. I stepped into the kitchen, where Deliah was already sitting. She held a cup of coffee in both hands and the table was littered with candy wrappers. There were dark circles under her eyes. It was clear she hadn’t slept well the night before.

“Get any sleep?” I asked as I sat next to her, pictures in hand.

Startled, she spilled some of the coffee on her robe and the table.

“Shit!” She jumped up and tried to clean it with the candy wrappers.

I went to the counter, gathered some paper towels and handed her a few to wipe her robe while I dealt with the mess on the table.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to have your table looking like a garbage dump. I eat candy bars when I’m nervous,” she blurted out.

“Delilah, it’s fine. It’s not like you got a permanent marker and scribbled all over the table.”

I collected the used tissues from her, tossed them in the bin and sat next to her.

“So, did you get any sleep last night?” I repeated.

“Hardly,” she sighed.

“I’ll get you some sleep medication to help. I’m sorry I have to do this now, but I need to get this out of the way.”

I spread the pictures on the table in front of Delilah.

“Do you recognize any of these men?”

She stared at the pictures for a while and pointed out Elliot Hawthorne, Founder of Hawthorne Global Holdings, who specialized in luxury real estate worldwide. He also had diplomatic ties, as his hotels around the world aided in humanitarian efforts

of accommodating displaced women and children. He also funded refugee programs.

She also pointed out Neil Delaware and Henry Pike; both men had criminal records, and in the past five years, they'd been arrested but released due to lack of evidence.

I pushed the other pictures out of the way and placed the three Delilah pointed to in front of her.

“And you’re sure these are the men?”

“I’m sure.” She pointed at Hawthorne. “This is Elliot. He’s the one who told me everything about Dean and how he owed him the money. The other two are like his henchmen. He”—she pointed at Neil—“came to my office when I was working at the magazine.”

“And there are no other men you recognize?”

She shook her head.

“Okay.” I stacked the pictures into a pile, flipping them face down.

Placing my elbows on the table, I clasped my hands in front of me and leaned forward. “Now, you need to tell me how much money Dean owes so I can send it to the account.”

“He owes twelve million dollars,” Delilah responded flatly.

“Twelve million dollars?” I repeated, my voice raised in disbelief. “I thought you said it was five?”

“It was, until Dean stole drugs from Elliot, used them, and tried to sell them without

Elliot knowing,” she stated flatly.

“Delilah, how the hell were you planning on paying that back without help? I’m sure the salary I’m paying you is more than what you received at the magazine. And I’m not even going to ask what those bastards paid in an attempt to claim you.”

Delilah went rigid, and I exhaled sharply, forcing myself to calm down. I placed my hand on hers and softened my tone. “Even if you used your entire salary each month, it’d take you ten years to pay off these guys. And by then, they’d have added so much interest, you’d be trapped forever in their debt.”

Delilah sighed. “I know.”

I hated seeing Delilah like this, a shell of the feisty woman I grew to adore. I was seriously going to whoop Dean’s ass for putting her through this.

“Send me the account details, ASAP, got it?”

Her blue-gray eyes swirled with a storm of emotions, searching mine for understanding. “I was serious about paying you back the money.”

“Delilah, you don’t have to.”

“I have to. I need to. Please let me do this,” she pleaded.

Whether I agreed to it or not, Delilah would find a way to repay me. Hell, she might ask Caite for the company’s bank account information and deposit the money herself every month. She was just as stubborn as I was. And despite the frustration I felt with her insisting that she needed to repay me, somehow, I couldn’t help but feel a sense of pride.

“It’ll take you ten years.”

She shrugged, the edges of her mouth curving slightly. “Hopefully, my boss will give me a raise and it’ll be less.”

“Maybe he will.” I squeezed her hand gently and I checked my watch.

“I’ve gotta go get ready for work. Your only job today is to rest. I’ll get Rex to bring you some sleeping pills. Don’t open the door for anyone but him or Tony. Got it?”

Delilah saluted. “Yes, sir.”

I chuckled and walked out of the kitchen, heading to my room to get ready for the day. The good thing was that Delilah didn’t recognize Obsidian. The bad thing was that Hawthorne housed women and children in his hotels. I’d bet a million dollars that the women and children Hawthorne claimed to be helping are victims just like Delilah.

But this time Hawthorne had messed with the wrong woman, and he was going to pay dearly for it.

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

Yesterday, I sent the account details to Sebastien, and was shocked when he sent me a receipt showing he had paid twenty million dollars, just in case they claimed interest. Between going back to my apartment and having a civilized conversation with him at the kitchen table, Sebastien almost seemed human, not like the Mr. Cranky I had gotten used to. He was concerned, supportive and always found subtle ways to touch me.

But, do you mind him touching you, though?

I sighed.

Then, I spent most of my day sleeping, thanks to the sleep medication Rex had brought me. When I finally went down to the kitchen, I found boxes of Chinese takeout from my favorite restaurant on the counter with a family-sized bag of candy bars. After dinner, I packed the leftovers in the fridge, washed up my dishes, grabbed the candy bars, scribbled a quick thank you note to Sebastien on a writing pad stuck on the fridge, and went back to bed.

Today, I woke up with my shoulder still sore, but manageable, and my headache was gone. I was more than ready to get back to work to keep my mind busy.

My phone rang and Sebastien's name lit up the screen.

"Hi."

"Hi, Delilah."

God, why was this man's voice so sexy over the phone?

"I'll be there at nine to pick you up."

I sat up and leaned against the headboard and checked the time on my phone. It was half-six.

"Why are you calling? Couldn't you just come knock on my door?"

"Would you have preferred if I did?" His voice dropped to a low, husky tone that sent an electric shock straight to my core. For a moment, I forgot how to breathe.

I cleared my throat, trying not to sound affected by the sudden change in his voice. "I'm just saying, if we're in the same house, it'd be more convenient. That's all."

"I'm already at the office." His voice was back to normal. "And I wanted to let you know you're not coming in today. We have a few errands to run."

My jaw twitched. "Mr. Quantum, I have a debt to repay. I can't afford to be missing work."

"Don't worry, I know the boss," he said coyly. "I'll put in a good word for you to ensure you get paid for the days you've been home."

Wait, was Sebastien trying to be playful? I smiled despite myself.

"Fine. I'll be ready by nine. Are we going to get the marriage license?"

"No. I'm taking you shopping for some dresses."

"Dresses? Why?"

How in the world could Sebastien be thinking about shopping when the main reason I came to this house was to get married to him?

“A party will be thrown to announce our engagement.” His tone darkened. “It will be used to send a message so your enemies will know to back off. No one is going to take you away from me. I’ll be there at nine.”

Sebastien cut the call, and I exhaled the breath I didn’t realize I was holding. The unmistakable possessiveness I heard in his voice made me uneasy. But was it because I knew without a shadow of a doubt that he’d never let anyone hurt me, or was it because if I read too much into it, I’d end up hurting myself?

My brain knew that none of this was real. That Sebastien was really just doing this for Dean's sake. When all this was over, Sebastien would find a perfect, thin supermodel to marry and have beautiful babies with. But, my heart...it wanted...more.

I tried to convince myself that Sebastien was an evil son of a bitch, but my body constantly betrayed me. I just couldn’t understand it. But one thing my body, heart and mind agreed with was if I got too close to Sebastien Quantum, he could leave me shattered in ways I’d never be able to pick up the pieces from.

I sighed, got off the bed and headed to the bathroom to get ready for the day ahead.

A few hours later, Sebastien and I stepped into a high-end fashion store. The salesgirls wore black uniforms with gold name tags and greeted us with plastic smiles.

Classical music played softly in the background as several women rustled through the clothes racks. They wore designer dresses paired with stilettos, their hair in elaborate updos and their makeup was flawless. I couldn’t help but notice the lust in their eyes

and how their smiles broadened when Sebastien passed by.

Then they looked at me.

Their smiles faded and they shot me judgmental sneers before leaning towards each other and whispering. Straightening my shoulders, I tried not to let it bother me. After all, judgmental looks and whispers were what I'd been used to since I was a child. And now, with a man like Sebastien by my side, I guessed it came with the territory.

We stopped by a section filled with breathtaking gowns. Naturally, I did what I always do, scanned the price tags. My stomach twisted in knots. Each one cost more than a year's worth of my salary.

I leaned toward Sebastien and whispered, "Do I really need to buy a dress from here? These prices are insane. I know a cute boutique along—"

Sebastien cut me off. "You will get a gown from here. My fiancé must wear the best."

"But I..."

My voice trailed off when one of the sales girls approached us.

"Good day, my name is Renee. How can I assist you today?"

With an air of authority, Sebastien spoke. "Get me your most exquisite gowns. Sexy and show-stopping. Money is no problem."

Renee quickly scanned me from head to toe before hurrying off.

"Sexy? Really? Me? How do you make a whale look sexy?" I tried to laugh it off, but

Sebastien's gaze darkened. I bit my lower lip and turned away from him, pretending to look at the dresses on the rack.

"Is that how you really see yourself?" he whispered behind me, his hot breath grazing my ear and sending a shiver down my spine.

"That's how everyone sees me," I croaked. "I don't mind, though," I lied. "I've gotten used to it by now."

He didn't say anything.

"Ma'am, if you'd follow me this way." Renee's voice cut through the tension between Sebastien and me. I turned to face Renee, whose arms were full of gowns.

Sebastien stepped back, allowing me to follow her into one of the changing rooms. It was stunning, like a small private suite. It held a small sofa and a mini fridge. There was a stall separated by a curtain, which was currently pulled back, revealing walls lined with mirrors, offering a view from every angle.

Renee hung up the dresses and smiled. "You can try these on, and I'll get you a few more."

"Thank you," I said, and she stepped out.

For the next thirty minutes, I stepped in and out of the stall, modelling the dresses for Sebastien. But none of the dresses seemed to fit right. It was either that the arms were too tight, or it squeezed my waist so much I could barely breathe. Or some just couldn't zip up. By the time I had tried on the tenth dress, I was exhausted, frustrated and ready to throw in the towel and go home.

Sebastien pulled back the curtain, holding a red gown in his hand. "Try this." He

handed it to me and closed the curtain again. Groveling, I tried on the damn thing.

The gown was simple, made of shimmering fabric, with a string that tied at the back of the neck. The front had a cowl design, and the back dipped so low I was sure if I sat down, you'd see the crack of my ass. I wore it without a bra felt as though my boobs were about to pop out on either side. And of course, there was my gut, glaring at me disapprovingly. There was no way Sebastien thought I could pull this off.

“What’s taking you so long?” Sebastien asked impatiently as he pushed the curtain away and stepped into the stall, shifting the curtain back in place.

His eyes roamed my body, his expression unreadable. I spoke before he could insult me about the way I looked.

“This dress doesn’t suit my body type. The top doesn’t provide proper support, and it’s way too tight...”

Sebastien took a step towards me, and my words faltered. His eyes were intense and predatorial.

“You look gorgeous in this dress, Delilah.” He took another step towards me. My pulse quickened and I took a step back.

I laughed nervously. Did Sebastien just call me gorgeous?

“Gorgeous?” I shook my head. “I don’t know what you’re seeing, but all I’m seeing is fat and a big-ass gut.”

“Look in the mirror.”

I rolled my eyes. “Really?”

His jaw clenched. “Yes, really.”

“Fine.”

Hesitantly, I turned to the mirror, avoiding eye contact with myself. Sebastien came up behind me, though he didn’t touch me.

His voice was tight and strained as he spoke. “You’re a gorgeous woman, Delilah. You have curves in all the right places. Curves that a real man would worship in the bedroom.”

Butterflies swarmed my stomach and desire pooled between my thighs.

He placed his hands on my shoulders, startling me, and my eyes shot to his in the reflection.

“Delilah, you can’t be spooked when I touch you in public. What will people think when you react that way to your fiancée?”

“I don’t care what people think.” I struggled to keep my voice steady as I tried to keep my breathing under control.

He tucked a strand of loose hair behind my ear. “Well, I do care. When people see us in public, I want them to see a couple in love, a powerhouse.”

“We can pretend to be in love without you touching me,” I stated.

“So, you think the public wouldn’t get suspicious if we never held hands or kissed in public?”

I swallowed hard. “We can say we’re not fans of public affection.”

“I think we should do a practice kiss.” He trailed his finger down my arm, leaving a trail of electric shocks.

“Are you crazy?” This time I spun around to face him. His statement caught me off guard.

“Delilah, if we want to make this thing between us believable, to stop these men from coming after you, there will be times we’ll have to be intimate in public.”

I was all for pretending, but having to kiss Sebastien and be intimate in public wasn’t a part of the deal.

“There has to be another way.”

He shook his head. “There isn’t.”

I sighed realizing that this was a battle I wasn’t going to win. “Do you really think it’ll make a difference?”

I held my breath.

“I do.”

“Okay,” I whispered.

Sebastien tilted my chin up, his eyes locking with mine, and leaned in. I held my breath as his lips brushed against mine. The kiss was soft and teasing. I leaned into him, grabbing a handful of his shirt in my fingers to steady myself. One of his hands slid to the back of my neck and the other snaked around my waist, pulling me closer. I moaned when I felt it, his hardened cock pressed against my stomach.

It was at that moment I realized I was in big trouble.

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The kiss started innocently until a moan slipped from Delilah's mouth. I backed her up against the mirror, deepening the kiss. Our tongues clashed with passion and desire. I wanted more of her, needed more of her.

My hands moved to caress beneath her breasts, and she gasped, pressing herself into me, her breathing ragged. My thumbs slipped below the soft material of the dress and found her stiff nipples waiting for me. I rubbed my thumbs over them, and she moaned, moving slowly against them, her fingernails digging into my biceps.

My cock jerked yearning for her touch. I removed one of her hands from my biceps and placed it over my cock. I kept my hand over hers, her fingers trembling below mine, and bit back a growl that threatened to escape my chest.

"Touch me," I whispered into her mouth.

Delilah squeezed my cock gently and I moaned into her mouth.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I got another dress for you to try..." Renee's voice trailed off.

Delilah froze under me, and I lifted my head and glared at Renee in the mirror.

"Leave, now," I barked.

Eyes wide, Renee scurried off.

Fuck! What was I about to do? Fuck Delilah in the damn dressing stall?

Abruptly, I moved away from Delilah. Her face was flushed, her pupils were dilated, her breathing heavy and her lips were swollen. Just then my phone rang, and without another word, I stepped out of the stall and into the changing room, my cock still rock-hard.

It was Dominic.

“Obsidian’s in town,” he stated as soon as I answered.

“I know.”

I heard movement in the stall.

“When did you find out?” Dominic’s voice was clipped. “And why didn’t you mention it?”

“About two days ago. He was also involved in Eso’s death, and I’m positive the deaths of Eso’s boys who came to demand the protection fee, too. Vega said they were found slaughtered.” I kept my voice low.

“Do you know why?”

“No, idea. But my boys are on it.”

“And why didn’t you mention he was in town?”

“Because I didn’t think it mattered. I have my boys looking into him and the reason he’s here. I didn’t see the need in worrying everyone unnecessarily.”

“Seb,” Dominic warned, “as soon as you found out, you should’ve told me. You should’ve told us that he was in town. After what happened between us and Obsidian,

we all have to watch our backs. He may not be here for us, but still be cautious.” Dominic continued, “And, let me know what your guys find out about Eso’s death.”

“Will do.”

“Good.”

The line went dead.

Delilah had stepped out of the dressing room, the pile of dresses clutched in her hands, looking at me nervously.

“We’ll only be taking the red dress you just had on.”

She nodded, her fingers trembling as she removed it from the pile. I opened the door of the changing room and allowed Deliah to exit first. As we made our way to the register, I noticed Renee was nowhere in sight.

Smart girl.

After paying, we made our way outside and I helped her into the vehicle.

“I won’t be driving back with you. Something came up.”

I didn’t miss the look of disappointment that flashed across her face as I shut the door and hopped into the SUV parked next to it.

“Follow them and make sure they get home safe, then take me to Lunaire,” I ordered the driver.

An hour later, I was on a video conference call with my brothers. Dominic thought it

wise to let everyone else know that Obsidian was in town.

“Do you think Obsidian knew that you and Eso had a history together?” Axel asked.

“I’m sure Obsidian did his homework and knows about the past that Eso and I shared,” I stated in a matter-of-fact tone. Obsidian may be many things, but stupid was not one of them.

This time, it was Leonardo who spoke. “The bigger question is, was Eso’s death related in any way to Sebastien, or was it based on the lifestyle that Eso lived?”

“That’s still to be determined. Vega and his crew are digging up information as we speak,” I informed my brothers.

“But,” Nate interrupted, “A man like Obsidian, who is a part of the Syndicate wouldn’t leave clues around for you to find. If you found that picture of him, it’s because he wanted you to. He wants us to know he’s around. Seb, he wants you to know that he’s involved in Eso’s death.”

The others nodded in agreement.

Vincent added, “Seb, are you sure he’s a behind Eso’s death? Remember what happened last time when we thought the Syndicate were the ones sending the threats to Dom, and it wasn’t them? You don’t want to go seeking vengeance on an ‘innocent’ man, and have the Syndicate rain fire and brimstone on you,” Vincent stressed the word innocent. “We all know how much Eso meant to you.”

“I’m not going to jump out with my guns ah-blazing,” I insisted. “But I am just as curious to find out why he’s in town, and more than that, why Eso is now dead.”

“Seb, if you do find out that Obsidian was the one who pulled the trigger on Eso, are

you going to go after him?” Nate asked. “I know you’re not a hothead anymore, but Eso was like a brother to you.”

Dominic spoke up before I did, his voice hard. “If Seb confirms that Obsidian is the one who pulled the trigger, he will let us know, and together we will figure out a way to take Obsidian down. He won’t go rogue and put himself, or the rest of us, in danger. Isn’t that right, Sebastien?”

As much as I’d want to skin Obsidian alive if I found out, without a doubt, that he had killed Eso, I knew that Dominic and Vincent were right. Retaliating against Obsidian could escalate, and it wouldn’t just be about me putting myself and my brothers in danger; I had to think about Emily, Lucy, Lillian, and now Delilah. Obsidian struck me as a man who had a motive for every decision he made. And with his ties to the Syndicate, we couldn’t be caught off guard.

“I won’t,” I stated.

“Good. And guys, be careful. Anything out of the ordinary, we let each other know. Got it?”

That wasn’t a suggestion from Dominic, it was an order.

“Now that we’re done with that matter, I’ll be throwing a charity fundraiser in two weeks at The Grand Seraphine,” I announced casually.

The Grand Seraphine was the most luxurious hotel in the area.

“Who will the proceeds go to?” Nate asked.

“Thompson’s Children’s Hospital. They’ve been trying to finish building their new cancer wing, but there’s been a setback with government funds,” I stated. “And

Vince, I'm going to need you to do your thing. I want everyone to know about this fundraiser, including the media. Do you think you could handle that, playboy?"

"You've come to the right person for the job, my little grasshopper," Vince chided playfully. "Anyone who's anyone and then some will know about this. I'm assuming Delilah will be the one planning and coordinating the event?"

I nodded. "I haven't sent her the details yet, but you can liaise with her to get more information in about two days."

"Sounds good."

After the fundraiser, I'd announce my engagement to Delilah, letting Elliot Hawthorne know that she was mine and not to be touched.

After wrapping up the call with my brother, I dialed Caite. I informed her about the fundraiser, giving her all the details, then instructed her to email all the information to Delilah's work account so she'd get it first thing in the morning.

Over the next two weeks, I avoided Delilah entirely. I left home at dawn and returned well past midnight just to ensure we never bumped into each other at home. And I temporarily relocated to Lunaire's office, avoiding the head office altogether.

Memories of the kiss, her moans, her stiff nipples under my thumbs, everything lingered like a relentless headache, refusing to go away without a remedy. The only problem was that the remedy was Delilah. And as much as I wanted to feel my cock inside her tight warmth, I knew I had to bide my time so she couldn't change her mind and run off.

But, on the night of the fundraiser, avoiding Delilah was no longer an option. I made sure the dress I'd bought for her was laid out on her bed paired with shoes and

accessories with instructions for her to wear it and to be ready by six. I hired a makeup artist and a hairstylist to come to the house to help her get ready.

At six p.m. sharp, dressed in a black tuxedo, I stood at the bottom of the stairs when I heard a door close and the sound of heels clicking on the tiles. I glanced up and watched as Delilah elegantly glided down the stairs, using the railing to support herself.

Somehow, she looked better in the dress this time around. Her hair was in tight curls framing her face and her makeup was flawless. Thin diamond earrings dangled elegantly from her ears, matching with the necklace that rested at the base of her neck. The open-toed silver heels that graced her feet peeked out from under the dress as she walked.

“Delilah,” I extended my hand to her to help her down the last step, “You look stunning.”

She blushed. “Thank you. You don’t clean up too bad yourself.”

“There’s one more thing before we go.”

I pulled out a velvet jewelry box from my jacket pocket. When I opened it, Delilah gasped. Sitting in the box was an engagement ring, a one-point-five carat, D-color Asscher-cut diamond. The center stone was embedded in a platinum band with a row of natural pink Argyle diamonds.

“I want you to wear this tonight,” I said, taking her left hand in mine.

“Sebastien, this is gorgeous,” she said breathlessly.

I felt her hand tremble as I placed the ring on her engagement finger. It was a perfect

fit.

“Tonight, after the fundraiser, I’m going to announce our engagement, and I didn’t want it to come as a shock to you.”

“Okay.” Her gaze was still on the ring.

“Shall we?” I asked.

She nodded. I placed my hand on the small of her back where her soft skin was exposed, and I could feel myself growing hard. Tonight would test my self-control more than I ever imagined.

At seven p.m. when Delilah and I stepped into the ballroom of the Grand Seraphine, I paused. The ballroom was nothing less than exquisite. Serving staff, dressed in black and white, weaved through the guests as they trickled into the grand space, offering drinks and hors d’oeuvres. Tall tables elegantly draped in white clothes with crystal swan centerpieces dotted the space. To the side, a spacious dance floor awaited as the soft music of a string quartet graced the stage. A banner on the far wall read, "Supporting Thompson’s Children’s Hospital Cancer Wing."

I leaned into Delilah.

“Thank you.”

“For what?” she asked, confused.

“For doing an amazing job at pulling this together.” I kissed her hand.

“My job isn’t finished yet. I’m still on the clock.” Then she added shyly, “See you later?”

“Definitely,” I smiled.

She smiled back and hurried off to talk to the serving staff while I mingled with the guests.

The fundraiser had been a hit, raising ten million dollars. My brothers and I each decided to match that donation, bringing the total to seventy million dollars. During the applause, I motioned for Delilah to come to my side.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to introduce to you Ms. Delilah Malone, our senior event planner. Without her, this event wouldn’t have been as successful as it was tonight.”

The crowd applauded, and when the applause died down, I continued, “As we celebrate your generosity tonight, there is something else I’d like you to celebrate with me.”

The ballroom of the Grand Seraphine was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

“There comes a time in a man’s life when a woman walks into it, changes everything, and he knows she’s the one.” I wrapped one arm around Delilah’s waist and pulled her close. Her hands were planted on my chest, and I spoke like she was the only one in the room. “She’s the one who has captured his heart, the one he’ll protect till his dying breath, from anything and anyone who’d try to hurt her, the one who completes him.” I paused and turned back to the crowd. “Ladies and gentlemen, I have found that woman in Delilah, and tonight, I’d like to officially announce our engagement.”

The room erupted into loud cheers and thunderous applause as flashes from cameras blinded us. I leaned in and pressed my lips lightly on Delilah’s before pulling away,

smiling for the crowd.

“Enjoy the rest of the evening!”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my brothers making a beeline in our direction. I leaned closer to Delilah, so only she would hear my next words. “My brothers are coming over. I don’t plan on telling them the real reason for our engagement. If you stay here, they’ll grill you.”

I kissed her once again, this time slower, before pulling away. “Go mingle, you’re off the clock,” I whispered. Delilah hurried off to a group of co-workers just as my brothers appeared.

“Is it just me, or does anyone else here think Sebastien doesn’t want Delilah hanging around us tonight?” Leo teased, chuckling as he patted me on the back. His broad palm covered my entire shoulder.

I decided to play along and rolled my eyes. “I know you guys, and you can be ruthless. Let her enjoy our engagement party before you guys start dredging up embarrassing childhood memories.”

The others laughed.

“So this was an engagement party on the sly?” Vincent’s arms folded across his chest, and he lifted an eyebrow. “I should’ve guessed that something was up when you asked for all that media exposure.”

“Another Quantum bites the dust,” Axel shook his head dramatically before lifting it up and grinning, “More babes for me!”

“Not if I get to them first,” Vincent winked.

Dominic stepped forward. “So Delilah Malone is the woman to make an honest man out of you, huh,” he teased. “After the way you chased off that guy who was talking to her at the grand opening, we knew that something was up. I’m happy for you, Seb.”

Dominic shook my hand firmly.

“Thanks, bro. It means a lot.”

“Seems like your fiancée can’t keep her eyes off you,” Nate teased, a smirk plastered on his lips.

All six eyes turned in unison to Delilah, who froze like a deer caught in headlights. She turned to the table in front of her, pretending to adjust the perfectly placed tablecloth.

My brothers chuckled.

“I guess I’m needed,” I said, straightening my jacket. “I’ll see you guys later.”

“Don’t let this one get away, Seb,” Leo called after me.

Not in this lifetime.

I waltzed up to Delilah, spun her around and kissed her passionately. She was stunned at first, but then she melted into the kiss and wrapped her arms around my neck.

“Delilah Malone,” a voice drawled behind us. “I guess congratulations are in order.”

Delilah stiffened in my grasp, her eyes widened, and she stopped breathing. I pressed my forehead to hers and cupped her face.

“Sweetheart, breathe. I’m not going to let anyone hurt you, okay?” I whispered to her.

I kept my gaze on her, and when she nodded and was breathing again, I turned to the man of the voice. Elliot Hawthorne. Delilah stood behind me, her hand under my jacket, gripping my shirt at the back.

“Mr. Hawthorne, thank you for accepting my invitation,” I said, my voice firm as I shot daggers at him.

Hawthorne ignored me and spoke to Delilah. “Delilah, you look beautiful in that dress. The way it hugs your curves...” Hawthorne paused and smiled at me. “You look simply delicious.”

Delilah gripped my shirt tighter. I knew Hawthorne wanted to get a reaction from me, but I wouldn’t allow him the privilege.

My voice dripped with venom as I spoke, just low enough for Hawthorne to hear me. “As you heard tonight in my speech, I will protect Delilah from anything and anyone who’d try to hurt her.”

Hawthorne laughed, but there was no humor in it. “As yes, the speech. But you also stated till your dying breath. What happens when you’re no more, Mr. Quantum? You may have paid off her financial debt, but Delilah here owes a debt that money can’t buy.”

“If I were you, I’d take the money while I’m ahead. Make no mistake, Mr. Hawthorne, just because I’m wearing a suit doesn’t mean I’m soft. Let me make this clear: Delilah is mine, and I’m not letting her go. No one will ever touch her as long as I’m around.”

“And let me make myself very clear, Mr. Quantum: I always get what I want.”

Abruptly, Hawthorne turned and stalked out of the ballroom.

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“Delilah, are you okay?” Sebastien’s voice was soft and his gaze filled with concern.

My head was spinning, and I felt as though someone had sucked all the air out of the room. Sebastien’s arms wrapped around my waist, holding me close to him.

“I don’t understand how Elliot got in here. I gave strict instructions that no one gets in without an invitation,” I whispered shakily.

“His name full name is Elliot Hawthorn, and he got in because I sent him an invitation.”

My eyes widened and I stepped back. Sebastien’s arms loosened around me, still gently resting on my hips. “You did what?” I hissed.

How could he have invited him here?

Sebastien whispered, “Listen, we can’t talk about this here. Let’s enjoy our engagement party, and we’ll talk about it home.”

I knew Sebastien was right. But boy, was I going to give it to him as soon as we got home.

For the rest of the night, people I didn’t know kept coming up to me to congratulate me on my engagement. My team, who were here tonight, seemed genuinely happy for me. And the other Quantum men offered their congratulations under the watchful supervision of Sebastien.

But despite the happy faces, the upbeat music and the dancing taking place, my nerves were a mess, thanks to the stunt Sebastien had pulled by inviting Elliot. My eyes were constantly glued to the door, expecting him to bust in with a group of men, throw me over his shoulder and toss me back into that damn hotel. To calm my nerves, I kept my champagne glass topped up.

Throughout the night, Sebastien kept returning to my side, to take pictures, steal a quick kiss or just stand there and place his hand on the small of my back. The more champagne I drank, the more receptive I became to his touch.

After a while I was loose enough to enjoy the attention of almost being Mrs. Sebastien Quantum, and enjoyed the party till the very end.

Three and a half hours later, as soon as Sebastien closed the front door behind us I turned to face him, champagne flowing freely through my veins, loosening the words on my lips.

“Now that we’re here, what were you thinking, inviting Elliot without telling me?” I snapped.

“If I had told you, you would’ve made up an excuse not to attend, and I couldn’t have that,” he stated.

“But did you even consider how seeing him there would affect me? I was scared shitless! And I kept thinking that he’d return and grab me, and I’ll never see you or Dean again!”

Sebastien stepped towards me, but I moved out of his grasp.

“I’m sorry that having him there affected you negatively, that wasn’t my intention. And there was no way Hawthorne would’ve gotten to you. I needed to see him face to face to let him know that you’re under my protection.” Sebastien’s gaze was dark.

“But you could’ve seen him anywhere!” I screamed. “Why did you have to see him when I was around? I don’t like what you did! That was a risky move, Sebastien. Elliot could’ve escalated things, exposed me and make good on his threat of claiming that Dean was deep into the drug trade and human trafficking!” My eyes glistened.

“Men like Hawthorne aren’t street thugs. He wouldn’t have escalated anything knowing that his reputation was on the line,” he said gently.

“But he—”

Sebastien shook his head and interrupted me, “No buts, Delilah. The deed is already done. You were safe the entire time. Did you really think that I, or my brothers, for that matter, would let anything happen to you? Think about it.”

I bit my lower lip. I knew in my heart that Sebastien would protect me, but that hadn’t stopped me from being nervous. I folded my arms across my chest, still glaring at him.

“That still didn’t take away the fear I felt at the time.”

Sebastien stepped towards me, but this time I didn’t step back.

“Why are you still this angry? What are you really annoyed about?”

“You put me in danger and I didn’t like it,” I pouted. I knew it was childish, but I didn’t care.

“You were never in danger,” Sebastien reminded me.

“You weren’t in my shoes, and you don’t know how I felt!”

Elliot’s snide tone and his crude compliments echoed in my mind, making my skin crawl.

“You know what I think?” Sebastien’s tone had a hint of amusement in it.

“I’m sure you can’t wait to tell me.” I rolled my eyes.

“I think you’re angry because he interrupted our kiss. Do you still want me?” Sebastien smiled smugly.

I swallowed hard as images of the kiss we shared before Elliot interrupted us flashed through my mind. My nipples began to swell and pressed against the thin fabric of my dress.

It took everything in me to keep my voice steady as I spoke. “And that’s my cue to call it a night. I’m tired and I’m heading to bed.”

I practically ran up the stairs. Sebastien wasn’t half wrong, though. The way he had kissed me reminded me of the day in the dressing stall.

As soon as I got to my room and was about to close the door, Sebastien stopped me as he pushed against the door.

“W-what are you doing here?” I asked, backing away from the door as he stepped into the room.

“You didn’t answer my question.” Sebastien kept his eyes on me, and he used his

foot to shut the door.

“W-what question?”

As Sebastien walked towards me, I stepped back until my knees hit the bed.

“Do you still want me?” He trailed a finger along my arm and goosebumps appeared as my nipples pressed harder against the fabric of my dress.

“N-no, I don’t.”

Sebastien looked down at me and then smiled. “It seems that your nipples have a different opinion, Delilah.”

Sebastien used his thumbs and rolled them over my nipples through the fabric of the dress. He pinched them gently, and I folded my lips in to stop myself from moaning. I took everything in me to keep standing at that point.

“Delilah, I’m going to ask you this one more time. If you say no, I’m walking out the door. Do you want me?” Sebastien asked in a husky tone.

He applied more pressure to my nipples and I closed my eyes and moaned, already feeling moist between my thighs.

“Open your eyes and say it,” he growled.

When I looked into Sebastien's eyes I saw hunger.

“I want you,” I whispered breathlessly.

A deep growl escaped his chest and he gently pressed my back against the bed as his

mouth devoured mine. I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled him closer. I could feel his hard cock on my stomach, and I felt a pool of desire swirl between my thighs.

He moved one of his hands and undid the knot at the top of my dress. Bracing himself on one hand, he pushed the fabric below my breasts with the other, without breaking our kiss. A wave of panic rushed through me and I tried to cover myself. With one swift move, he grabbed both my wrists and pinned them above my head with one hand, and I squirmed beneath him, panting.

The intensity with which he looked at me made me turn away. My arms were flabby, my thighs had cellulite, and my shape was far from perfect. I'm sure Sebastien has had his fill of perfect women. What if he didn't like what he saw when he removed my clothes?

Don't you think it's a little too late to think about that?

His voice cut through my thoughts sharply, "Delilah, look at me."

My eyes snapped to his. What caught me off guard was the softness behind his eyes.

"Delilah Jennifer Malone, you are a beautiful woman. Don't ever cover yourself from me, understand?"

I nodded hesitantly.

"I need an answer, Delilah. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I whispered, my voice trembling.

A look of satisfaction washed over his face. "Good."

Sebastien lowered his head, his mouth hovering over my nipples, blowing gently on them, sending shivers through me. His tongue flickered and teased my nipples, shooting sparks of desire between my now-wet folds. Releasing my wrist, his hands moved to cup my breasts, molding them, and caressing them with care. A moan escaped my slightly parted lips as I arched my back, pushing my breasts deeper into his hands. By the time his mouth covered one breast and then the other, my breathing was coming in short gasps.

I wanted Sebastien.

No.

I needed Sebastien.

I wrapped my legs around him pulling him closer to me and rolled my hips against his in a desperate motion, my panties soaked.

“Sebastien, I want you, please,” I pleaded breathlessly.

Sebastien pulled back. “Delilah, are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure.”

Sebastien got up off of me. “Take everything off, now,” he said hoarsely.

He shrugged off his jacket, unbuttoning the first two buttons of his shirt and the cuffs at his wrists before pulling it over his head. Meanwhile, I pushed my dress and my panties down my legs and kicked them off, sending them onto a pile of accumulating clothes by the base of the bed. As I shifted further up the bed, I should’ve felt insecure laying there completely naked, but I was too absorbed in soaking in every inch of Sebastien’s body.

There was no doubt that Quantum men were fine as hell, but Sebastien was the one who did it for me. He was a perfect mixture of muscular and lean. His arms were a canvas of tattoos, but the one that caught my eye was the lifelike tattoo that covered the left side of his chest.

It was hauntingly beautiful. There was no other way to describe it. Etched on Sebastien's skin was a skull with crossbones, each bone bearing numbers resembling dates. Surrounding the skull were delicate hearts that floated around it like fragile bubbles, ready to pop at the slightest touch. A thick black serpent emerged from the back of the skull, slithering through a hollow socket, and slipping into a nostril before the snake's head exited from the mouth, poised and ready to strike.

My eyes drifted from his chest to his waist as Sebastien unbuckled his pants. He slid both his pants and boxers down revealing his thick, large cock. My breath hitched as he kicked the clothing away. I barely had time to ogle the best part of his body before he was on top of me. The moment our naked bodies touched, my body shivered under him, hungry and eager to take whatever he had to offer.

He kissed my neck and nibbled gently on my ear as his fingers trailed up and down my inner thighs. I opened my thighs, giving him the room he needed. I wiggled under him impatiently and whimpered every time his fingers moved away from where I wanted them to be. When his fingers finally slid between my wetness that was hidden beneath dark curls, I moaned, "Sebastien."

A sound escaped Sebastien's lips that sounded more animalistic than human.

"Sweetheart, you're so fucking wet."

He placed his head on my shoulder, his fingers stroking my wetness, his breathing erratic.

“I can’t wait. I need you.”

Before I could register his words, I felt his cock at my entrance. Without warning, he pushed himself inside and I gasped in pain, my eyes squeezing shut.

And I felt Sebastien freeze.

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Wait.

I looked down at Delilah as a few tears trickled down the side of her eyes and she wiped them away quickly.

“Delilah, are you a virgin?”

She went full red.

Shit! I knew I should’ve gone slow. God, now I felt guilty.

“If I say yes, are you going to stop?” her voice cracked.

I sighed and looked down at where we were still attached.

“I’m not going to stop, but you should’ve told me.”

“How was I going to tell you? Hey, Sebastien! At thirty, I’m still a virgin, I’d love it if you’d pop my cherry.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle. I was happy that Delilah was able to find humor in the situation. There was no way I was pulling out now; I needed to feel her wrapped around me.

“Are you okay now? And be honest.”

“It hurts a little, but please don’t stop.” She held my biceps gently.

I sighed. “I won’t, sweetheart. We’ll go slow, okay?”

Slowly, I reached over and grabbed a pillow.

“Lift your ass.”

She shook her head. “What If I get blood on the pillow?”

“My cock is inside of you, and you’re embarrassed about a little blood?”

“Yes,” she said, stubbornly.

“Well, don’t be. Lift.”

Reluctantly, she lifted herself and I wedged the pillow under her carefully.

I opened her legs a little wider and got up on my knees, watching her pussy lips glistening.

“I’m going to inch into you, okay?”

Delilah nodded, but I felt her entire body tense. I used my thumb and rubbed her clit. The more I rubbed the less tense she was and the more she wiggled herself onto my cock at her own timing. When I was fully inside of her, I closed my eyes, counted to ten and held her tight so she couldn’t wiggle against me.

Fuck!

She was so tight I knew that if I moved then I would’ve gone over the edge. I felt her trace her fingers along my biceps.

“Sebastien, are you okay?” she asked concerned.

I leaned over and kissed her lightly on the mouth. "I should be asking you that. Are you okay? Are you in any pain?"

“I’m not in any pain.”

“Good. I’m sorry, but I can’t hold back anymore. I’m going to go hard and fast. If you feel any pain, just let me know.”

“Okay.”

That was the only answer I needed. I grabbed Delilah by her thighs and pulled her body as close to me as I could possibly get before I started pounding into her. Her breasts jiggled and she grabbed fistfuls of the sheets as she screamed my name over and over. It wasn’t long before I growled as I exploded inside of her. I closed my eyes as the last of my cum emptied into her. When I was finished, I collapsed on top of her, my cock still inside of her.

“Fuck!” I moaned

“Fuck, indeed.” She stroked my hair.

We stayed like that for a few minutes before I inched out of her.

I kissed her on her forehead. “I’ll be right back.”

I went into her bathroom and got a rag and washed it under warm water. When I got back to the room, Delilah hadn’t moved, but the cover was partly draped over her.

I went to her legs and opened them.

“W-what are you doing?” she asked, propping herself on her elbows.

“Cleaning you up.”

“Oh. I can do that.” She reached out her hand for the rag.

“Not happening. Lie back,” I insisted.

She lay back on the bed and played with her fingers nervously.

I passed the warm rag gently to her and she winced, but I didn’t say anything. I finished cleaning her up before I went into the bathroom and cleaned myself. By the time I got back to the room, Delilah was already drifting off to sleep.

I kissed her and she opened her eyes groggily.

“Come lie up here with me.”

She groaned, but she shifted her position, and I covered us. My arm was around her as her head rested on my shoulder, her hand on my chest. One leg was bent over my thigh. It seemed that I preferred a naked Delilah sleeping next to me to one wearing boy shorts.

It wasn’t long before Delilah’s breathing had evened out, her body completely relaxed in my arms. Though she looked peaceful, my mind was anything but.

As I held her, I recalled every moment we’d shared, from the time she walked into that interview about two months ago till now.

Delilah had carried a burden that would’ve crushed most women a long time ago. Yet, she came to work, did what was required of her, worked overtime, smiled and

laughed with colleagues, endured my bullshit and remained silent. She didn't seek help, didn't ask anyone to listen to her problems, she just endured.

It infuriated me. Until me, she had no one to rely on, no one in her corner to fight her battles for her, now that Dean was hiding in rehab, although that son of a bitch was the cause of her problems in the first place.

I should've known something was wrong when I saw where she lived. And when I hadn't gotten onto Dean, I should've dug deeper. But, with everything going on at the club, I had pushed that on the back burner, ignoring my gut instinct. I'd never let a feeling like that about Delilah slide again. Ever!

I tightened my grip on her and she snuggled closer in my arms. She needed me to protect her. Earlier, when she heard the sound of Hawthorne's voice, I saw the fear in her eyes, and how she hid behind me and gripped my shirt made something inside me snap, awakening my beast.

My beast had lain dormant for over fifteen years. He first emerged when I was fifteen after my parents passed away. Without them, I felt lost and angry. I started drinking, smoking and skipping school, pushing my brothers away in the process because I didn't think they understood me.

But Eso and his boys showed up, bridged the gap, and they became my family. Eventually, I dropped out of school, became reckless, irrational and impulsive. Eso and I painted the town red wherever we went. But my brothers never gave up on me, no matter how hard I fought them. They banded together and reeled me away from the edge of the cliff I was standing on. But thanks to Hawthorne, The Beast had resurfaced and was sniffing for blood.

What if I hadn't had my boys looking out for Delilah when Hawthorne's goons trashed her apartment? When Rex told me what happened over the phone, I ordered

them not to lose her. When I heard she had pulled into the parking lot at work, I was relieved. But would she have just slept at the office that night and disappeared the next day? Or would she have slept there and then just gotten a motel room and pretended that everything was okay?

Delilah was mine to protect now.

Unbeknownst to her, assigned plainclothes security detail were always following her. If Hawthorne thought he had any chance of getting her back, he was in for a rude awakening.

I drifted off to sleep knowing that tonight, I claimed Delilah's virginity, and in a few weeks, I'll claim her body legally. Now that I had her here in my house, under my protection and control, there was no way I was allowing her to leave.

She was mine.

The next morning, when I opened my eyes, Delilah wasn't next to me. After imagining waking up to her in my arms so many times, I was disappointed she wasn't here. A brief moment of frustration surged through me when my cock jerked at the thought of Delilah. After last night, morning sex would've been the perfect way to start my Sunday morning.

Sighing, I swung my legs over the side of the bed. My clothes were folded neatly on the armchair next to it. I slid on my boxers, used the bathroom and went to find my fiancée.

It was only ten a.m. and I'd figured after all the champagne she drank last night that she hadn't been up long, and would be in the kitchen. Instead of finding her, I found a

full pot of coffee waiting for me. I poured myself a cup and leaned against the kitchen counter as I sipped the hot beverage.

After finishing the coffee, I washed the cup, returned to Delilah's room to grab the rest of my things, and then made my way to my room. After washing my hair and masturbating to the images of Delilah moaning my name last night, I took a long cold shower to finish clearing my thoughts.

After drying off, I pulled on a pair of boxers, a sleeveless T-shirt and a pair of shorts. I quickly dried most of the water from my hair and headed to the back porch.

Delilah was sitting on the step, her head against the banister, her eyes were distant, glazed over, and her lips pressed in a thin line. I stood there looking at her for a few minutes before sitting beside her. At first, she didn't notice me, so I touched her shoulder. The way she jumped out of her skin told me that she was worried about something.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. Tell me what's bothering you."

"Nothing," she answered quickly.

My tone hardened. "Delilah, the look on your face and your reaction tells me you're not okay. What is it?"

She shook her head. "Look, really, it's nothing I can't handle."

I wasn't buying it. Not for a second. This was a woman who was running for her life and mentioned it to no one until she couldn't hide it anymore. Whether she liked it or not, she was going to tell me what the hell the problem was.

"Did Hawthorne or any of his boys contact you?" I asked, my voice tense as my eyes

narrowed.

“No!” She inhaled deeply and rubbed her hands on the thighs of her fitted jeans. “I mean...no, it’s nothing like that.”

My patience was running low. I'd thought that after the night we'd shared Delilah would be more open with me. “Then what is it?”

She shifted nervously next to me and then stood abruptly.

“I need to shower,” she mumbled and hurried away.

By the time I caught her wrist and spun her to face me, she was already in the house.

“Stop lying to me! Tell me what the hell the problem is!” I demanded, raising my voice.

“Sebastien, you’re hurting me! Let me go!” She tried to yank her hand away from me, but I tightened my grip.

“Not until you tell me what the problem is!”

“The problem is you, okay? The problem is you!” she snapped.

Surprised by her answer, my hold loosened on her wrist, allowing her to free herself. As I watched her storm off it dawned on me.

She regretted what happened between us last night.

Shit!

Maybe she gave in last night because she had alcohol in her system. But she didn't have alcohol in her system when Hawthorne interrupted our kiss or in the dressing stall two weeks ago. Delilah wanted me as much as I wanted her.

So what was the real problem?

Having already paid off her debt and publicly announced our engagement, I knew Deliah had no intention of walking away from our agreement. She feared Hawthorne way too much and wanted to protect Dean and her secret.

I'd let her be. For now.

But, by the end of the day, this little problem Delilah had would be sorted out.

For the rest of the day, every time Delilah saw me, she either went in the opposite direction or left the room. By the time five p.m. had rolled around, I'd had enough of her cat-and-mouse games and cornered her in the kitchen.

"Delilah, that problem you mentioned earlier, it's time to talk about it." I folded my arms across my chest and locked eyes with her.

She tried to step around me, but I blocked her.

"I don't want to talk about it." She met my gaze squarely.

"You don't have a choice. Spill it. You said I was the problem. How am I the problem?"

Delilah sighed deeply. "What happened last night can't happen again." She added quickly, "At least not until the wedding night." She wrapped her arms around herself and lowered her eyes. "I'd prefer to sleep in my bed, alone, until then."

My eyes narrowed and my jaw clenched. Delilah wanted to sleep...alone.

After what we shared last night, I'd been hoping for a repeat, and soon.

I stepped forward, closing the small gap between us. With the palm of my hand, I lifted her chin gently, forcing her to look at me. Her breath quickened.

I leaned in, my lips almost touching hers, my voice dangerously calm. "Is that what you want?"

She swallowed hard. I swore her body shifted slightly towards me. "Yes," she ground out.

"Ms. Malone, enjoy your space while it lasts."

I turned and walked away. I'd play her little game for now, but once she became Mrs. Sebastien Quantum, all games would be over.

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A week had passed since I told Sebastien that the next time we'd be having sex would be our wedding night. His eyes had shot daggers at me and his voice had sent an eerie chill down my spine. It was at that moment I realized how dangerous Sebastien was; to be that calm and furious at the same time, yet have so much self-control, made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end.

Seven days without seeing or hearing Sebastien, at home or at the office. He left before I got up and returned home long after I had gone to bed. Rex and another security guard, Viper, were responsible for dropping me wherever I needed to go.

This was his exact reaction after we made out in the dressing stall.

He was avoiding me.

I was hurt that he chose to be this way instead of understanding.

I missed him.

Why would you miss a man who is upset because you set boundaries for yourself? It's obvious that Sebastien just wants to use you to pass time. Let him stay mad! The more he avoids you, the easier it will be to detach when the time comes.

I sighed.

With Sebastien out of the office, some of my colleagues didn't care if I overheard them gossip about the reasons they thought the Sebastien Quantum had ended up with a nobody like me. Luckily, most of them were genuinely happy for me and didn't

think I was a loose whore who slept to the top or thought I had used witchcraft to bind Sebastien to me.

With everything going on, I hadn't been sleeping well, nor did I have much of an appetite, so most of the time, like today, I just worked through lunch.

Around noon, I received a text message from Sebastien.

Family dinner at Dominic's tonight. Will meet you home at 5:15 p.m. Dress casual.

After work, I wanted nothing more than to take a shower and climb beneath the covers and block out everything. But I knew that staying at home would raise questions I'd prefer not to answer. I shot back a quick reply that I'd be ready and watched as the hours ticked by to the dreaded family dinner.

Promptly at five-fifteen p.m., Sebastien walked through the front door and headed straight for me. I stood awkwardly and waited. Wanting to look nice for the dinner, I left work at three, giving myself enough time to wash and curl my hair. I wore a navy-blue dress, made of soft, flowing material with a sweetheart neckline that hugged my curves before flaring at the waist, stopping just above my knees. I slipped a pair of black sandals on my feet, and applied a touch of makeup to hide the exhaustion on my face.

"When we get to Dominic's we'll pretend to be the happily engaged couple they expect us to be. Got it?" His face was blank and his tone was expressionless.

"Yes."

It's not too late to back out now.

"If my brothers smell anything out of the ordinary, our cover would be blown."

“We’ve been pretending from the beginning, so another night of pretending with your brothers isn’t rocket science,” I snapped.

Sebastien’s jaw twitched, but he didn’t say anything. He walked towards the front door and I followed him. The drive to Dominic’s was quiet, as expected, and I even dozed off a couple of times before Tony pulled into Dominic’s driveway, which already had a row of expensive cars in it.

I opened the door and gaped at Dominic’s house. It was almost twice the size of Sebastien’s. Tall pillars adorned the entrance, and just like Sebastien’s, a balcony looked over the manicured lawn. The stonework on the walls at the front of the house, together with the large windows, reminded me of a palace. I didn’t even realize Sebastien had come to stand beside me until he took my hand in his.

Pushing down the urge to pull away from him, I swallowed hard and allowed him to steer me to the front door. Sebastien opened it and I knew my jaw had dropped. The inside of the house was just as impressive as the outside, but before I could feast my eyes more, tiny arms wrapped around my waist.

“Aunty Delilah, you came!” Lucy exclaimed excitedly.

I wrapped my arms around the excited little girl and kissed the top of her head. “Of course, I came.”

Sebastien cleared his throat next to us. “So you don’t see your favorite uncle standing here?”

Lucy pulled away and I let her go. She beamed up at Sebastien.

“Uncle Vincent is my favorite because he lets me eat chocolate cake for breakfast, but you’re close second.”

My hand shot up to my mouth in an attempt to stop myself from bursting out laughing, despite my tiredness. Lucy threw her arms around Sebastien, and he hoisted her up into his arms, and holding his chest playfully.

“That was a hard blow, Lucy.”

“But you told me to always tell the truth.” She wrapped her arms around his neck and placed her head on his shoulder.

“I did, even if it hurts.” Sebastien leaned his head on hers.

My heart yearned for the affection that he was giving to Lucy. I knew it was wrong of me to be jealous, but I was. Seeing him so gentle and caring for her, I wanted him to be like that with me.

After a moment he pulled away and asked, “Lucy, is everyone here?”

“Everyone, except Uncle Axel.”

Sebastien shook his head. “Of course.”

Sebastien put Lucy back on her feet, and she took my hand and Sebastien’s, leading us to the living room where the others were having drinks and chatting. Dominic held a baby in his arms and his wife Emily, whom I had met briefly at the grand opening, sat next to him. As soon as she saw us, she stood up and walked over.

She wrapped her arms around me. “Delilah, welcome to our home.”

“Thank you.”

She moved onto Sebastien and pecked him on his cheek.

“Do you guys want anything to drink? Lord alone knows what time Axel will get here.” She shook her head.

“I’ll get us something to drink, don’t worry about it,” Sebastien smiled.

Emily returned to her seat next to Dominic and Sebastien steered us to the table with the drinks. He poured me a glass of red wine and he poured himself a glass of whisky before we settled ourselves on a sofa next to Vincent. Sebastien placed his arm loosely around my shoulders as I leaned back into the sofa.

There was lively banter between the men until Axel arrived thirty minutes later. After Mrs. Kensington, Dominic’s housekeeper, set the table and said her goodbyes, we had dinner. I picked at my food as I listened to the conversation around me. I answered a question if it was directed at me, but other than that I just observed how Sebastien interacted with his family. I loved how there were no phones on the table and everyone listened attentively to each other as they spoke, especially to Lucy.

After dinner, I helped Emily clear the table and wash the dishes. We spoke about work—she was Dominic’s PA—and how impressed she was with the grand opening. Once the dishes were cleaned, wiped and put away, she looked at me.

“Delilah, I noticed that you hardly ate anything. Is everything okay?” Emily’s eyes were filled with concern.

“I’m just a bit tired. I’ve been juggling a few big upcoming events at the office,” I lied.

“We have a guest bedroom if you’d like to rest for a bit. I’m sure Seb wouldn’t mind.”

I stiffened at that, and then forced myself to relax. If Emily noticed she didn’t say

anything.

“It’s just one night. I’ll be okay, but if I really do feel the need to take a rest later on, I’ll let you know.”

Emily stared at me for a moment, then nodded. Together, we walked back into the living room to see Lucy standing on Leonardo’s shoulders with her arms stretched out to the side.

“Look at me, I’m an acrobat!” she squealed.

I heard Emily gasp next to me.

“Leo, you know how I feel about you doing that! At least don’t do it while I’m here. It freaks me out,” she scolded Leonardo, who grinned and removed Lucy from his shoulders.

Emily removed a sleeping Lillian from Dominic’s arms and turned to Lucy. “Lucy, say goodnight to everyone. It’s time for bed.”

“Aw, man!” Lucy groaned, but she went around and hugged all her uncles and me saying, goodnight. Then she made her way to Dominic, and he gave her a warm hug and a kiss.

“Good night, Lucy. I love you. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Lucy nodded, took Emily’s hand and then disappeared down the hallway. I took a seat next to Sebastien and the men looked at me.

“What?” I wiped my cheek. “Do I have something on my face?”

“No, I’m just wondering how a gorgeous woman like you ended up with a troll like Seb,” Axel grinned.

I blushed.

“How’s Dean? I thought by now he would’ve shown his face too after hearing that his baby sister got engaged to his best friend,” Nathaniel stated.

“He, uh…”

“He’s in Germany on business. Unfortunately, he may not be able to attend the wedding,” Sebastien said calmly.

“It sounds like you two lovebirds plan to jump the broom real quick. Why not wait till he comes back?” Leonardo asks. “Unless there’s a reason the both of you want to get married quickly?” He lifted his eyebrow and glanced at the others, a smirk on his lips.

Sebastien threw a sofa pillow, and it smacked Leonardo in the head. “She’s not pregnant, bonehead. But the sooner we do get married, the sooner we can have those babies.” Sebastien squeezed my thigh gently, not only did my face flush, but I became instantly aroused, thankful for the padded bra that protected me from being more embarrassed than I already was.

As Sebastien’s brothers tossed questions like missiles my way, he answered playfully, not giving anything away about our agreement or Dean’s real location. For that I was grateful.

“So Delilah, when did you realize that you loved Sebastien?” Dominic asked.

“Delilah, don’t answer that,” Emily strolled back into the room and smacked Dominic

on his arm. “Is that any way to welcome her into this family? If it were Lucy, would you like her husband’s family to be grilling her like this?”

Nobody said a word as the men looked at each other.

“That’s what I thought,” Emily scolded. “I love you guys, but sometimes you just don’t get it.”

Emily walked up to me and took my hand. We left the men dumbfounded and she took me to a quieter part of the house. The room was smaller and there was a French window with a bookshelf carved into it.

“Are you okay? I hope they didn’t scare you off,” Emily said.

“They didn’t, but thanks for what you did there. I appreciate it,” I smiled.

“We Quantum women have to stick together and ward off those bossy tyrants when needed.”

“So Dominic’s the same way?” I gasped.

“He’s the head of the pack—of course, he is. When I met him, he was worse.”

“How did you meet him?” I asked, curious to know their story.

Emily dived into how she worked for Dominic as his PA, made a mistake and was roped into marrying him. But she soon realized that Dominic, the boss versus Dominic, the doting husband and father were two totally different people. And even though she detested him at first, she loved him now more than anything. I knew that Emily wasn’t telling me the entire story, but the fact that she and Dominic eventually fell in love gave me hope that maybe the same could happen between Sebastien and

me.

Don't hold your breath.

Then she gave me a strange look and spoke in a softer tone. "The Quantum men are alpha men. They dominate in everything they do. They're as bossy as hell and don't take no for an answer."

"Sounds just like Sebastien," I muttered before I realized it, and Emily chuckled.

She continued, "But they are fierce protectors and loyal to a fault. Amazing providers financially, and otherwise." Emily winked and I laughed.

"Sebastien couldn't keep his eyes off you tonight, and when you were just pushing your food around your plate, it may have looked like he was chatting with his brothers, but he noticed and looked worried. Sebastien is a good man. Please, don't break his heart."

"I won't."

"Aunty Emily?" Lucy's soft voice came from the doorway.

Immediately, Emily opened her arms to Lucy, and she came up to her and sat in her lap.

"Lucy, what's wrong? Did you have a nightmare?" Emily asked tenderly as she stroked Lucy's wild curls.

"No, I just can't sleep. Can you come stay with me? You too, Aunty Delilah?"

"Sure. Delilah and I can come with you."

Lucy nodded, and together the three of us climbed the stairs and made our way to Lucy's room.

Lucy's room was painted pink. She had rows of tiaras on shelves and princess slippers. A huge dollhouse stood out in one corner of the room, surrounded by at least a dozen large stuffed animals, and a ceiling-to-floor bookshelf on the other. Next to the bookshelf was the paper doll she made at the grand opening, now fully decorated. I couldn't believe she kept it.

While I was scanning the room, Emily had already helped Lucy under the covers and sat on the bed beside her. I moved to sit on the other side.

"Aunty Emily, do you mind if Aunty Delilah read me a story?"

Emily smiled, "Not at all."

After grabbing a book from the bookshelf, Lucy snuggled next to Emily as I read *The Princess and the Red Dragon*.

When I was finished, Lucy yawned, "You're a good reader."

"Thank you," I chuckled. "I love reading."

"Oh, really?" Emily asked interested. "What's your favorite genre?"

"I love to curl up after a long day and turn the pages of a mystery book, but romance novels will always be my first love," I said in a dreamy voice. "There's something about a character who goes through everything life throws at her and eventually gets the life she's always dreamed of."

"I know exactly what you mean."

A knock on the door interrupts us and Sebastien steps into the room.

“Hey, ladies.”

Lucy scrambled out of bed, and Emily shook her head and laughed as Sebastien scooped Lucy into his arms.

“Why are you still awake? You're keeping your dad's wife away from him and my fiancée from me,” he said playfully.

Lucy yawns again. “I'm going to sleep soon and then you can have them back. It's not like you and Daddy aren't sharing rooms with Aunty Emily and Aunty Delilah.” She shrugged innocently.

Sebastien laughed but didn't comment on what she said. He skillfully changed the topic. “It's a school night, and if I were you, I'd go to sleep sooner rather than later. Your dad wouldn't be happy if he came up here and you were awake.”

She tilted her head toward him. “Are you going to tattle tale on me?”

“I will,” Sebastien said with a serious expression on his face.

The look of horror on Lucy's face made Sebastien continue his sentence, “If you don't surrender my fiancée to me. It's time for us to leave.”

Lucy's shoulders sagged and she wiggled out of Sebastien's grip. She climbed into my arms and gave me one last hug, and I hugged her back.

“Thank you for the story.”

“You're welcome.”

When I released her, she crawled back under the covers. Sebastien walked over to the bed, extended his hand to me, and helped me to my feet.

“Bye Emily, see you soon.”

“Bye guys, get home safe.”

As we made our way downstairs to say our goodbyes to the others, I couldn't stop thinking about how sweet Sebastien had been to Lucy tonight. He'd make a wonderful father. A part of me wished we had met under different circumstances, wished he had truly loved me, so we'd have the possibility of having a family together.

Having a child had always been a dream of mine, but with everything so complicated, I knew I'd have to push that dream aside for a few more years. After all, Sebastien and I would eventually go our separate ways.

I blinked back tears as I felt my heart crack, just a little.

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

My mind wandered back to dinner last night at Dominic's. Not so much the dinner or even how well Delilah blended in with Lucy and Emily, but the choice she made.

She chose discomfort to make me look good in front of my brothers. It was the same sacrifice she had made for Dean.

There was no doubt that I had been avoiding Delilah, taking up residence once again at the office at Club Lunaire instead of heading to Quantum Enterprises Head Office. Now, she seemed uncomfortable around me.

Last night, she could've made up an excuse to stay at home, but she didn't. She had dozed off on the way there and hardly ate anything. On the way back to the car, my arm wrapped around her shoulders, and I felt her melt into me sluggishly. I thought she was too exhausted to even realize. Worried about her, I wanted to hold her in my arms until we got home, but as soon as we got into the car, I released her, and we became strangers again.

I knew I was being immature, petty even, but Delilah had made her decision to sleep alone in her bed. Now, she had to deal with the consequences.

A knock on my door interrupted my thoughts. Kevin stepped inside and handed me a stack of mail.

I glanced at my watch, four p.m. I'd been at the club's office since seven a.m., and I was ready to call it a day. However, I began to open the envelopes anyway to ensure none of them was urgent before leaving.

After coming across a brown envelope with just my name on it and no return address, I opened it. I pulled out the letter and froze when a picture of Delilah fell onto my desk. She was dressed in a black lace bra and matching black panties. It looked like she was dancing in front of a group of men, though none of their faces were visible. My hands tightened around the paper as I unfolded the letter and read.

Dear Mr. Quantum,

Since you've decided not to pay the protection fee for your business, maybe you'll consider paying a protection fee for your fiancée. It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? And we have many more where that came from. If you don't agree to pay the sum of one hundred million dollars, her secrets will be revealed to the world. I'll be in contact soon.

Holy mother of fucks!

How did they know I was at this office today? Or did they send one to all my offices? If it was just this one, it meant they were watching me, and most likely Delilah.

Sending picture and letter to the lab meant exposing Delilah, and I couldn't let that happen. Thoughts of sending the envelope flashed across my mind, however, my instinct told me that we wouldn't get anything from it. I tore up the letter and the picture and headed to the bathroom in my office. I burnt the pieces of paper, then flushed the ashes down the toilet. I couldn't tell Delilah that someone had dirty pictures of her and they were threatening to expose her; it would break her. I also knew that paying the money would only lead to more extortion.

It had to have come from Hawthorne. But how did he know about the protection fee threats? Was he involved in that as well? But why? I didn't even know about Hawthorne until recently. None of it made sense.

It was time to pay Elliot Hawthorne a visit.

I dialed Vega's number, my voice icy when he answered.

"Track Hawthorne. I need to pay him a visit, now. Have some of your men follow him and stay in the vicinity. This isn't going to be a friendly visit. He openly threatened my fiancée."

"Soon as I have him on my radar, I'll call you back." Vega hung up.

Next, I called Tony. "Get the car ready. I'll be leaving in ten minutes. Make sure you and the boys are armed and ready to go."

By the time I hung up with Tony, I was seeing red. Hawthorne had crossed the line, and I wasn't just going to let him get away with it. He'd probably be ready for me, but I'd be ready for him too.

My phone buzzed and I answered. It was Vega.

"I got a hit on Hawthorne. He's at his office at his hotel on 6th and Boulevard. My guys are in position and awaiting your arrival."

"Vega, if he makes a move, let me know. Don't let that son of a bitch slip away."

I hung up, grabbed my blazer and phone and headed for the parking lot. Tony was waiting when I arrived.

"Get your guys on site at Hawthorne's office on 6th and Boulevard. Hawthorne's about to learn what happens when he dares threaten what's mine."

I slid into the car as Tony took the wheel and Viper sat next to him.

If Hawthorne thought he could fuck with Delilah and get away with it, he had another think coming. As long as I had breath in my body, no one touched my woman.

Twenty minutes later, dressed in my blazer, with Tony, Viper, and six of my men by my side, I stormed into Hawthorne's office, ignoring his secretary's feeble attempts to stop us.

As soon as we entered, his two bodyguards whipped out their guns, but Tony and my team were already a step ahead, weapons drawn as well.

My lips curled into a cold, dangerous smile. "Mr. Hawthorne, it's good to see you again."

I strode across the room and took a seat opposite Hawthorne at his desk. I crossed my legs at the knee and leaned back, eyes locked on him. His bodyguards didn't lower their weapons and neither did mine.

Hawthorne's voice was smooth and steady when he answered. "Mr. Quantum, such a pleasant surprise to see you...here. What brought you to my establishment?"

My gaze darkened and I leaned forward, both feet firmly planted on the ground. The gun strapped in my boot itched for action.

"I'm so glad you asked." My voice was deadly. "I received a threat today toward my fiancée, threatening to reveal her secrets."

Hawthorne's facade didn't falter. He lifted an eyebrow and leaned back. "How is that any of my business, Mr. Quantum? If you had chosen a stand-up woman and not a classless, slutty whore, she wouldn't have any secrets to reveal, would she?"

Before Hawthorne could take his next breath, I was already out of my chair. Gun in

hand, I reached over, grabbed him by the collar and yanked him halfway across the desk. With the cold barrel of my gun pressed against his heart, a series of safety latches clicked in unison. I didn't move. A red laser appeared in the center of Hawthorne's forehead. Thanks, Vega.

"I know you probably caught wind of someone making threats against my business, and now you've gone and partnered with them, spreading Delilah's secrets. Let me make this clear." I tightened my grip on Hawthorne's collar and growled, "If even a whisper about her past leaks, or anyone dares to lay a hand on her, you see what's happening here, right now? It won't happen a second time. You won't see me coming, Hawthorne. I'll send you so fast to meet your ancestors that even your own shadow won't remember you. And the best part? Nobody will find your fucking body. Don't fucking mess with me or mine."

I shoved Hawthorne back with enough force to send his chair crashing into the wall. Without a second glance, I turned and walked out, knowing whatever went down in Hawthorne's office was already wiped from the servers. No trace. No evidence. Not a single fucking thing left for anyone to find.

Two weeks passed in silence after the scene with Hawthorne. No threats. No fires. No thefts. Nothing. But one afternoon, after an important meeting at Quantum Enterprises Head Office, I walked past the break room and overheard hushed voices.

"I mean, just look at her," one of the women whispered. "What could Mr. Quantum possibly see in a woman like Delilah?"

Another woman snickered. "That sex must be mind-blowing, because that's the only way I could see someone like her snagging someone like him."

"That, or a damn love potion," a third woman chimed in. "She's overweight and nowhere near as pretty as the women he usually dates. I've seen him with way better-

looking women.”

Irritated, I walked past the break room in search of Delilah. If I had heard them gossiping, there’s no doubt Delilah had, too. She’d been there, dealing with their shit, while I’d been playing ghost because she refused to share a bed with me. Appearances mattered now more than ever. I was supposed to be the doting fiancé, not leaving her to handle everything alone. That shit ends today.

I found her closing a meeting with a client, and as soon as she stepped out of the conference room, I wrapped my arms around her. I leaned over and whispered, “I heard the office gossip. I shouldn’t have left you here alone. How about we grab lunch together?”

I expected Delilah to resist but I was pleasantly surprised when she agreed. I took her to my bar and lounge on Third, where we spoke about lighthearted topics like movies, music and places we’d like to see. By the time we walked back into the office, hand in hand, Delilah had that same twinkle in her eye as when I first announced our engagement.

That lunch was the shift we needed. Over the next few days, she didn’t hide from me. After work, we’d cook together and sometimes watch a movie. At times, I caught her staring at me, desire lingering in her eyes, but I didn’t want to scare her away again. My behavior had pushed us back to square one, and I had to work my way back to her again.

About a week later, Delilah had complained of a headache, and I sent her home early. She’d been working tirelessly, organizing fundraisers, team building events, and even coordinating an anniversary celebration for one of my bars and lounges. By six p.m. I called her to check on her.

“I hope you got some rest,” I said, leaning back in my chair.

“I did! Thank you for letting me leave early.”

“What the point of being the boss’s fiancée if you can’t enjoy a few perks?”

She laughed softly. “Is leaving early the only perk I’ll get?”

I smirked. “That depends. What other perks are you hoping for?”

“Wait...is Sebastien Quantum willing to negotiate?” she teased.

“For you? I’ll do just about anything.”

“Oh really? I’m going to have to put you to the test,” she challenged.

“And what do I get if I pass this test?”

She giggled. “Guess you’ll have to wait and find out.”

I exhaled as I felt my cock grow at the possibilities. I loved how easily she flirted now, her voice holding a little more desire each time. We hadn’t crossed boundaries yet, but tonight... maybe we could at least move to second base.

“I’m leaving the office in ten minutes, so I’ll be home soon.”

“I ordered out for dinner, I hope you don’t mind,” she said hesitantly.

“Not at all. You needed rest. I wasn’t expecting you to go home and cook a five-course meal.”

There was a pause. She hesitated before she spoke. “Sebastien?”

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“Thank you,” she said breathlessly.

“For what?”

“For helping me...for treating me kindly these past few days. It means a lot.”

I tone softened. “You’re welcome, sweetheart. I’ll see you soon.”

“Okay.”

We hung up.

I left the office and slipped into my Porsche, my security detail in front and behind. I was hoping to call Delilah on the way home and wanted privacy to do that.

Suddenly, an ear-splitting crash filled the air as a bulldozer rammed the SUV ahead, tossing it aside like it were a plastic toy. Before I could react, another crash came from behind. I glanced in the rearview mirror and a bulldozer did the exact same thing to the SUV behind me.

My car screeched to a halt. I was boxed in.

Instinctively, I reached for my gun strapped in my boot.

“Siri, call Vega!”

Just then, bullets rained through the back glass. As glass shattered over the seats, I ducked, shielding my head.

“Mr. Quantum, what’s going on? Talk to me! Shit!” Vega’s voice came through the speakers.

It wasn’t long before the locks on my back door burst apart from gunfire. The moment the back door yanked open, I fired. A masked man stumbled back, clutching his shoulder, but before I could fire another shot, hands grabbed me and dragged me from the car.

Fists crashed into my face. A steel-toed boot slammed into my ribs, knocking the air out of me. At least a dozen masked men surrounded me; I was at a disadvantage, but I staggered to my feet and swung at the nearest man. I wasn’t about to go down without a fight.

Two men grabbed my arm while another grabbed my hair at the scalp, yanking my head back. Sharp blows landed against my ribs. I tried to wiggle out from their grip and kick at them, but something smashed into my leg, and I crumpled to the ground just as someone landed a punch squarely in my nose.

The beating continued, and the last thing that crossed my mind when my vision blurred, right before I passed out, was if I’d ever see Delilah again.

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I paced the living room, glancing at the clock. It was nine p.m.; Sebastien had called at six p.m. and said he was on his way home. He should've been here by now.

Worried, I called Emily. We'd kept in touch after the dinner at their place. She answered on the second ring.

"Hey Emily, it's Delilah. I'm sorry to call so late. Is Sebastien at your place?" I tried to keep the panic out of my voice.

Emilly sounded more alert now.

"Delilah, is something wrong?" Emily asked, concerned.

I sighed. "He called three hours ago to say he was on his way, and he isn't here yet. I'm sorry if it sounds silly and I'm panicking, I just—"

Emily cut me off gently, "Delilah, it's okay. He hasn't been here. Dominic isn't at home, but let me give him a call and see if the others have heard from him. I'm sure it's nothing. He probably got a last-minute call or something. I'll let you know as soon as I hear something."

"Thanks, Emily."

"No, problem."

We hung up.

Thirty more minutes passed, and I was about to lose my mind. My phone rang. An unknown number. I answered.

“Hello?”

“Delilah, this is Dominic.” His voice was grim. “Seb’s at Memorial Hospital.”

The room tilted and I felt sick to my stomach. “Is he going to be okay?” I didn’t recognize my own voice.

“He’s in surgery. Do you have someone to bring you to the hospital, or should I come get you?”

I nodded, forgetting he couldn’t see me. “Rex is here. I’ll ask him to take me.”

“Good. We’ll see you in a bit.”

“Thanks, Dominic.”

“No, problem.”

I cut the call and rushed to my room. My hands trembled as I pulled on a pair of jeans, a knitted sweater and sneakers. With my phone in hand, I ran out of the house.

“Rex! Rex!”

Rex came running from the side of the house.

“Ms. Malone, is something wrong?”

“Sebastien is at Memorial Hospital. Can you take me there?”

His face tightened. “Yes, ma’am.”

We ran to the SUV, and I jumped in before Rex could open the door.

By the time he climbed into the passenger seat and Viper took the wheel, he was already barking orders into his phone. “What the fuck happened out there today? Mr. Quantum is in the hospital! Get me intel on Tony and the others who were with him, now!”

Viper floored the gas and we screeched out of the driveway. Forty minutes later, Rex and I ran into the hospital as Viper parked.

“I’m here to see Sebastien Quantum,” I stated breathlessly to the receptionist. “I’m Delilah Malone...his fiancée.”

The woman shot me a sympathetic look. “I’m sorry, Ms. Malone, he’s out of surgery but he’s resting. You can wait with the others in the waiting room.”

I nodded, but my feet refused to cooperate. Rex firmly placed his hand on my shoulder and steered me towards the waiting room.

Sebastien’s brothers were already there. Dominic was pacing. Nathaniel and Leonardo leaned against the walls, their arms crossed over their chests, while Vincent and Axel sat stiffly in their chairs. The moment we entered, they looked in our direction.

“What happened? Is he going to be okay?” I asked, my voice raising an octave with panic.

Dominic hesitated. “Maybe, you should have a seat, before I—”

“Just tell me!” I said louder than planned. I inhaled deeply, trying to get myself under control. “I’m sorry. Please, just tell me.”

Dominic’s blue eyes locked with mine. “Based on what we found out, his security detail survived with minor cuts and bruises despite being forced off the road, but Seb’s car was shot at multiple times. After checking the car, nothing appears to be stolen, so robbery is ruled out.”

Security detail being run off the road. Gunfire. This wasn’t an accident. This was planned. This was Hawthorne.

Sebastien was in the hospital because of me.

This was all my fault.

With Sebastien out of the way, Hawthorne would come for me. It was only a matter of time.

I felt as though someone had sucked all the air from the room

I swayed. Dominic moved fast, his arms quickly wrapping around me. Axel and Vincent flew out of the chairs and Leo and Nathaniel moved towards us. Dominic guided me into a chair.

“Rex, get her a bottle of water. Now,” Dominic ordered. He crouched in front of me. His voice was firm but gentle. “Delilah, breathe.”

But I couldn’t. My heart felt as though it was about to tear itself from my chest, as my chest tightened with each frantic breath.

“Delilah, look at me,” Dominic demanded, gently turning my head so I could look

into his eyes.

“Focus on me. Breathe in. Breathe out.”

I did as Dominic said, trying to loosen the knot that had formed in my chest

Rex returned with the bottle of water and handed it to Dominic.

“That’s it. In and out.”

Dominic opened the bottle of water and handed it to me. “Drink.”

I took a few sips and handed it back to him and recovered it.

Dominic’s voice was gentler now. “We’re all here with you. You’re not alone. Sebastien’s a fighter. He’s going to be ok.”

“The family of Sebastien Quantum?” a doctor asked, stepping into the room.

“Over here,” Dominic called, waving to the doctor as he rose to his feet. His brothers gathered around. “Is he going to be okay?” he asked when the doctor stood in front of us.

“He’s going to be okay,” the doctor stated.

I heard a chorus of relieved sighs from his brothers.

“But,” the doctor warned, “for the next few weeks, he’s going to need rest. Lots of it.”

As the doctor explained Sebastien’s injuries—a broken nose, some mild bruising on

his ribs, a concussion, and surgery was done on his shoulder that was dislocated—I was just relieved that he was alive.

“Can we see him, now?” I blurted out, interrupting whatever the doctor was saying.

“Sure.” The doctor nodded, calling a nurse over. “Take them to Mr. Quantum’s room.”

“Ms. Malone is his fiancée, she can go in first while we talk to the doctor,” Dominic insisted.

The nurse nodded. “Follow me.”

“Rex, go with her,” Dominic instructed. “We’ll be there soon.”

“Yes, sir.”

Rex and I followed the nurse down the hallway. She opened a door and ushered me inside. Rex didn’t come inside but closed the door behind me. I walked up to Sebastien and my breath caught.

His upper body was slightly elevated. There was a white bandage on his nose, one eye was swollen shut, and his face was black and blue. He was shirtless and his shoulder was bandaged; his left arm was in a sling. There were bruises on his stomach, chest and arms as well. An IV was attached to his right arm.

Quietly, I sat on the chair next to his bed and held his hand in mine. Whether I wanted to admit it or not, I cared about him. Tears ran down my face before I could stop them.

It wasn’t long before Dominic and the others walked through the door.

Did they know who did it?

When they find out their brother almost died because of me, will they hate me?

“Do you guys know who could’ve done this?” I asked quietly as they approached the bed.

“Not yet, but we will.” Dominic’s voice was hard, his eyes icy.

“And when you do, you better kick their asses,” Sebastien’s voice croaked.

“Sebastien!” I shrieked.

Without thinking, I stood up and threw my arms around him. He winced.

I gasped and quickly pulled away. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

He smiled weakly. “It’s okay, sweetheart, it’s nice to see you too.”

“The dead has arisen,” Axel joked, only to receive a swift tap in the head from Nathaniel.

“Ouch!” Axel grumbled, rubbing the spot.

“Seb,” Dominic asked. “Do you remember anything?”

“I remember talking to Delilah on the phone. I hopped into my car, drove out of the parking lot, and everything after that feels scrambled.”

“It’s probably due to the concussion,” Leo said.

“Do you guys know what happened?” Seb asked breathlessly, trying to make himself more comfortable in the bed as he shifted slowly.

Before anyone could answer Dominic’s phone rang. When he checked his phone to see who was calling, he looked a bit surprised.

“Who is it?” Vince asked, lifting an eyebrow.

Dominic didn’t answer; he walked out the door to take the call.

“We only know what Vega told us,” Nate stated as though the last few seconds didn’t happen. “He said you called him. He heard the bullets, and when you weren’t saying anything, he pinpointed your location. He called the cops and the ambulance. Then he called Dom.”

“That call you made probably saved your life,” Vincent stated solemnly.

Tears welled in my eyes again, and I felt Sebastien’s hand cover my own.

“It’s okay, sweetheart, I’m here now.” His thumb caressed the back of my hand, and the tears began to fall again.

“How long does he have to stay?” I asked.

I knew the longer we stayed here like sitting ducks, the more likely Hawthorne would strike again. We needed to get home.

“A few days for observation and then he’s free to leave,” Leonardo said. “We’ve already instructed the staff that only immediate family members are to be let in to see him. Dominic has contacted Donovan, the head of his security team, to send over a few men in uniform and plain clothes to keep an eye on Sebastien as he stays here. I

also informed them that if anything happens to Sebastien while he's here that I'll sue this establishment so badly that their grandchildren will still be paying by the time they are grown."

"Thank you," I whispered.

"No problem. There's no way we'll let this incident happen again," Leo stated.

Dominic walked back into the room. "Seb, sorry to steal your visitors away, but I just got some information, and I need the guys."

Sebastien frowned. "What kind of information?"

"The only thing you need to focus on is getting better. We'll take things up from here," Dominic stated flatly.

A silent conversation passed between the brothers before Sebastien finally nodded. Without another word, the others followed Dominic out.

Once we were alone, I whispered, "I didn't know if I'd ever see you again."

"I'm here now. That's all that matters," Seb said gently.

"This is all my fault. I know Hawthorne was behind this."

"Delilah, listen to me. Nothing is your fault. You didn't cause this." Sebastien closed his eyes briefly. "I went to his office about two weeks ago and told him to stay away from you."

Mortified, my eyes widened. "Sebastien! Why would you do that?"

“He sent me a threat saying he’d expose you. There’s no way I was going to let that happen.”

“But, Seb, look at you! Look at what he did. They almost killed you.” A sob caught in my throat.

“Sweetheart, I was serious when I said I’d protect you till my last breath.”

I nodded. “I know.” I sighed. “Sebastien, if anything were to happen to you, I’d never forgive myself.”

A knock on the door made me jump. A nurse entered and smiled at the both of us.

“Good night. I’m just going to add some painkillers to your IV, Mr. Quantum.”

Sebastien nodded, and after adjusting the IV the nurse left.

He turned back to me. “Sweetheart, how did you get here?”

“Rex and Viper dropped me off.”

He sighed. “I want you to go home and get some rest.”

“I’m not leaving this hospital without you,” I said stubbornly.

“You can’t stay here,” he insisted.

I lifted an eyebrow. “Are you going to pick me up, throw me over your shoulder and take me home?”

As soon as the words left my mouth, I saw the glint of raw desire in Sebastien’s eyes.

I felt a warm rush between my thighs.

“I can’t, at least not yet,” his words slurred. “But it’s now been added to my bucket list,” he smiled lazily.

I blushed. “You should get some rest.”

Sebastien nodded, closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Over the next few days, Sebastien’s brothers visited, as well as the men from his security detail. I watched how he interacted with them, clipped sentences, and clenched fists. His jaw tightened every time he asked them to bring him his phone, but they refused, insisting that he needed to rest and he’d get it when he was discharged.

There were moments when I felt like they were speaking in code, and though I wasn’t sure. I chose to step out conveniently to give them privacy.

Emily had stopped by as well, bringing me some of my things. I was relieved when she didn’t ask why Sebastien and I slept in separate rooms.

The most heartbreaking moment came when Lucy saw her uncle. The second her tiny arms wrapped around him, her feisty attitude disappeared, and she burst into tears. I didn’t miss the way every man in the room stiffened, and how their faces darkened with pain and worry. Despite their alpha male personas, I knew one thing for sure: Lucy had their hearts, and they’d do anything for her.

But, despite the love surrounding Sebastien, he was the worst patient ever.

He complained about everything.

The food was disgusting, the pillows were too soft, the nurses took too long to check his vitals. Ugh. As the days passed by, I watched him get snappier with the nurses, his brothers and me. Frustration and irritability were written all over his face.

Even though he didn't say it, I knew he was worried. Lying in a hospital doing nothing couldn't have been easy for a man like Sebastien, who controlled the world around him.

By the fifth day, he was finally discharged. And thank God, because if he had to spend another night there, I was pretty sure he'd walk out with or without permission.

I hoped against all hope his mood would improve once we got home.

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Ten days!

Ten fucking days!

That's how long I'd been stuck in bed.

Vega still couldn't find anything about the ambush, who set it up, who the men were, why the ambush happened or how they pulled it off. It was driving me crazy.

I had no doubt that Hawthorne was involved, and if I couldn't get him for the ambush, I needed to find another angle. I told Vega to check every single hotel Hawthorne owns, to see if he's using the women and children, but so far, nothing.

I need something on Hawthorne. Anything.

And I still had no answers on why Obsidian was in town or what the hell his next move was. For all I know, he and Hawthorne set me up.

And then there were my brothers. I knew they were hiding something from me. They acted as though I was helpless because I was stuck in this damn bed, being pumped full of these shitty medications that made me feel useless!

I wasn't.

I couldn't just sit around here doing nothing while Hawthorne was still out there, a threat to me and Delilah.

The only good thing that came out of this mess was the time I got to spend with Delilah. She refused to go out to work, insisting she wasn't going to hire some stranger to come and take care of me. Instead, she'd handled things at the office from home and was in close communication with Caite.

She insisted that I stay in one of the guest rooms downstairs. She stayed in the room with me but on the damn sofa. She fed me, gave me my medication, ensured the doctor came to change the bandages and helped bathe me.

My cock jerked.

Every time, her hands brushed against my skin, ensuring my bandages didn't get wet, I saw the desire in her eyes and my cock hardened in response. But she never took it further.

It was torture.

Having her hands on me and her not touching me where and how I wanted added to my long list of frustrations.

Just then, the door opened and Delilah walked in, balancing a tray in her hands.

"Sebastien, here's lunch. Soup," she said as she set the bowl on the nightstand next to the bed.

I wasn't in the mood for soup.

"I'm not hungry," I grumbled.

"Sebastien, you have to eat," Delilah insisted, her voice calm.

“If I don’t eat, are you going to pour it down my throat?” I snapped.

“Do I have to? You have to take your meds.” She folded her arms, a flash of determination crossing her face.

“I’m not going to die if I take those damn pills without eating this one time.”

“I’m not giving you anything unless you eat. So, please just eat the soup,” she begged.

I saw the frustration in her eyes as she tried to keep her voice steady. She sat on the bed and took the tray from the nightstand, placing it on her lap.

Why was she still trying to feed me soup if I didn’t want it? Did she think I was a fucking child?

Angrily, I grabbed the bowl with my good hand and flung it at the wall. The bowl shattered and the soup splattered on the wall. A few seconds later, my brothers burst into the room, their eyes landed on the mess, then at Delilah, who had moved off the bed and was kneeling to pick up the pieces of the bowl, before they turned their eyes to me.

“Seb, what the hell is going on?” Dominic demanded, his eyes narrowed.

“Delilah, are you ok?” Leo asked. His voice was softer than Dominic’s. She just nodded, picking up the pieces, not looking at any of them.

“Let me help you,” Vincent stepped towards her, but she waved him away.

“I’ll be fine,” she muttered. But just then, Delilah swore and grabbed her hand.

Vincent knelt next to her, his back to us, assessing the damage.

He turned back to look at us. “She cut her hand. I’ll take her to the kitchen to help her clean up.”

Vincent helped Delilah to her feet and they left the bedroom.

“You really are an asshole, you know that?” Nate pressed his lips into a thin line.

“Did you come all the way over here to lecture me?” I gritted through clenched teeth.

“Seb, is that how you’ve been treating Delilah since you got back from the hospital?” Dom asked.

I closed my eyes.

“Seb, talk to us what the hell is going on with you,” Leo said. “This isn’t you. This is totally out of character for you.”

“And besides,” Axel added, “we like Delilah, and if you drive her away because your bullshit attitude, we’ll never forgive you. She doesn’t deserve this.”

I opened my eyes, and my brothers were all focused on me.

I sighed heavily as I clenched my fists. “I’m frustrated. With everything.” I paused. “We know that Obsidian is linked to Eso’s death, but without proof, we can’t pin anything on him. He also killed Eso’s boys, the ones who were asking for the protection fee. If he killed them, then there’s a huge possibility that he is tied to the threats I’ve been receiving.”

I inhaled deeply. “Vega can’t find anything on the ambush. No cameras in the area

spotted anything, and nobody on the streets is talking. I need to know who ambushed me. And if Vega can't find it, that means that someone in the Syndicate is using all their resources to keep us from finding out, which again leads me to think that this has Obsidian written all over it."

I lower my voice "It feels like I'm a walking target, and I have no fucking idea who the enemy is. Delilah and I should be planning our wedding, but here I am stuck in bed, stiff as fuck, feeling useless. And worried that whoever came after me might hurt her too. It sucks, and honestly, I don't know how much more I can take."

Nobody said anything for a moment. Then Leo spoke, "Seb, what do you need from us? Do you need to call someone at two a.m. just to vent? Do you need at least one of us here in this house to help protect Delilah? Whatever you need, we've got you. We may not understand exactly how you feel, but you know we'll do anything within our power to help you through this."

"Thanks," I sighed. "I just need to know for sure who was behind the threats at my bar, who killed Eso, who was responsible for my ambush, and why the fuck Obsidian is in town."

Dominic said, "Victor has information on Obsidian. But he's not going to share it unless he gets to sit down with Emily and talk. He also wants to meet his granddaughter." His jaw tightened. "He called me the first night you were in the hospital."

My heart stopped. Was this the information the others were hiding from me? Victor had been Dominic's best friend who betrayed him for a billion-dollar deal and manipulated the situation so that Emily could marry Dominic because he wanted her to spy on him.

While Dominic had gotten out of the Syndicate, Victor had stayed. I had no doubt

that the information he had on Obsidian would be helpful; however, if he and Hawthorne were working together, then Obsidian knew Delilah's secret. With help from the Syndicate, Obsidian could make it look like Dean was heavy in the drug trade and human trafficking by creating evidence against him. And there was no way I was going to risk exposing Delilah or placing Dean in a worse situation than he was already in. There had to be another way.

"Victor?" I snapped. "He's a snake. I don't trust him. He could feed us anything and lure us into a trap."

"I agree with Seb," Nate said, nodding in agreement. "I don't trust Victor as far as I can throw him. He could say anything just to get close to Emily and Lillian."

"I think it's worth a try to talk to Victor," Axel said, cautiously. "We haven't had any luck thus far. But, Dom, does Emily even want to talk to him?"

Dominic passed his hand through his hair. "I spoke to her already, but she's indecisive. She's forgiven him, but she's still afraid to get close to him, because she doesn't want him hurting Lucy or Lillian."

"But, Dom, will you feel comfortable with Lillian around Victor?" I asked, stoking the fire.

Dominic shook his head. "As much as I may want information on Obsidian, I can't trust Victor, not after what he did."

"There we have it," I stated. "We'll find another way. Dig deeper to find the truth."

Dominic nodded. "I already have Craig, my PI, looking into it. He should get back to me soon."

As the conversation ended, Vincent re-entered. He looked pissed.

“Delilah is resting in the room next door.” His voice had a coldness to it that I’d never heard. He glared at me. “I don’t get you, Seb. You have someone who is nursing you back to health, sacrificing her time and energy to help you. Yet, you treat her like shit! Yes, you’re in pain, you might feel like shit, but have you asked yourself how this affects Delilah? How her seeing you like this makes her feel? What you acting like a complete and utter jackass does to her mental state? Seeing you like this is tearing her apart! If the others haven’t told you, I’ll tell you. You don’t deserve Delilah. You’re a selfish son of a bitch.”

Vincent walked out the door and slammed it shut behind him.

“I’ll go talk to him,” Axel said, and followed Vincent.

Dominic’s gaze met mine. “Vince is right, though. What you’re going through is affecting Delilah, too. I know that she is your first real relationship, but you’ve got to let her in. From one jackass to the next, talk to your woman. Don’t wait until it’s too late to fix this.”

Dominic, Leonardo and Nathaniel gave me one last nod before they left, leaving me with a lot to think about.

The last thing I wanted to do was lose Delilah. After everything I’ve put her through, I’m happy that she’s still here. Dominic was right, I needed to let Delilah in. I needed to apologize.

With a heavy sigh, I planted my feet on the floor and stood. I grimaced as a numbing pain shot through my ribs and shoulder. Cautiously, I made my way to the room next door and opened the door.

Delilah was sitting on the bed, her knees pulled to her chest, her head resting on her arms. She didn't move when I entered.

I took a deep breath and inched my way towards her. "Delilah..."

She didn't look up. "What else do you want from me, Sebastien? I've done everything for you since you've come from the hospital, and you've done nothing but complain. I know it's hard for you so I didn't take it to heart. But you being so upset that you'd throw something? That's where I draw the line. I feel as though every time we make progress in this relationship, something pops up and we have to start all over again. Maybe this agreement was a mistake."

I shook my head as I sat on her left. "Sweetheart, the agreement wasn't a mistake. I came in here to say I'm sorry. I'm just frustrated with everything."

She looked up at me. "Be honest with me, are you frustrated because of me? Because of your promise to help me?"

I cupped her face. "Sweetheart, I'm not frustrated because of you. I'm frustrated because I'm stuck at home when I should be out there trying to find ways to shut Hawthorne down for good."

She placed her hand over mine as it cupped her face. "I know that we agreed to this fake marriage, but I hoped that despite that fact our friendship would've at least been real. Sebastien, I'm here for you. I want you to know that. You don't have to go through this alone."

She placed her head on my shoulder as her hand trailed my chest lazily while my hand gently massaged her hip. We sat there in silence for a bit before she looked up at me, her blue-gray eyes sparking.

“Is there anything I can do you make you feel better?” she tilted her head.

There was only one thing I needed more than air at this point, and it was Delilah.

“Yes,” I said hesitantly, “I want you to seduce me.”

Seduce him?

The way Sebastien looked at me formed goosebumps on my skin. It was the same look he gave me every time I helped him in the shower.

Raw, primal, lust.

He wanted me sexually, and deep down, I wanted him too.

So if he wanted me to seduce him, then that's what I'd do.

"Fix yourself on the bed," I instructed Sebastien, my voice trembling a bit despite my attempt to keep it steady.

Sebastien lifted his brow at me but didn't say anything. A small part of me was elated that I was able to boss Sebastien around and he listened, but a larger part of me was scared that I'd make a total fool of myself.

Once he was in the middle of the bed with his back leaning on the headboard, I helped place a pillow behind his back and one under his arm that was still in a sling. Then, I carefully straddled him, and I heard him inhale deeply.

Sebastien slid down in the bed slightly and shifted himself so that my pussy was sitting directly on his hard cock. I bit my lip to stop a moan from escaping my mouth.

After seeing Sebastien so many times naked and pretending that it didn't bother me, I'd be an idiot to pass this up especially since I was adamant about not sleeping In the

same bed with him till our wedding night. But, since he suggested it, I decided to hop on the opportunity. Pun intended.

Did I have any idea on how to seduce a man? Hell no. But now was as good a time as any to learn. And I wanted to see him happy, to keep his mind, at least for a little while, off his frustration. I wanted to do this for him.

I leaned in and planted gentle kisses on the side of Sebastien's neck and felt his good arm snake around me. In slow movements, I rocked back and forth over his cock and a low moan slipped from his mouth as his grip tightened around me.

I kissed one side of his neck and then the other before teasing his lips with mine. Every time he tried to deepen the kiss, I pulled away slightly. Sliding my fingers under his T-shirt, I caressed his chest and stomach, careful not to irritate his injured shoulder.

Slowly, I pushed his T-shirt right over his head and gently removed it. I watched as his bare chest rippled under my touch and his breathing increased. I leaned forward and licked one of his nipples while I gently twisted the other one between my fingers. His soft moan went straight between my thighs, and I wanted to hear him moan again. And when I tugged lightly at his nipples and he did it again, I couldn't help but moan, too. After teasing both nipples with my tongue, I allowed one hand to roam over his thighs, teasing him without touching his sweet spot.

"Delilah." Seb's voice was hoarse as he shifted below me. He was trying to wiggle off his sweatpants.

I helped him take those off as well as his boxers. I already saw precum on the tip of Sebastien's cock, and with the flick of my tongue I licked it off.

"Fuck!" Sebastien inhaled deeply.

I had only ever given a blowjob once in college and the guy said that I had wasted fifteen minutes of his time, after he had exploded in my mouth. I had watched a few videos on blowjobs after that experience hoping to do a better job next time, but I never saw him again. But Sebastien's reactions made me want to try it on him.

I used my tongue to tease his cock and mustered all the courage I had in me, looking him dead in the eye. I curled my tongue around his cock then licked his shaft as it twitched. When it was moist, I wrapped my fingers around him gently and began to move my hand up and down. And when I put my mouth around his cock I saw Sebastien roll his eyes in his head and swear. I smiled. I moved my eyes from him and focused on pleasing him, listening to his moans for what felt good and watching his body language to see what didn't. Sebastien's cock was pulsating under my fingers and his legs stiffened.

"Delilah, stop," he groaned.

I looked up worried. "Am I doing it wrong? I know I don't have much experience, I just thought..."

His voice was strained. "You're doing everything right, but I'd rather release in your pussy than your mouth."

"I thought all men liked that."

"Not me." He smiled. "You still have all your clothes on. You need to do something about that."

I nodded, wiped my mouth and straddled him once again. Placing my weight on my lower legs, I yanked off my t-shirt swiftly followed by my bra and tossed them aside. Sebastien's gaze immediately locked on my breasts and my breathing increased. He tried to touch one, but I smacked his hand playfully, my finger wagging as I teased

him.

I cupped my breasts, squeezing them gently, my fingers teasing my nipples until they were hard and pointing straight at him. Sebastien licked his lips and pulled me closer to him. I shifted my weight over him and kneeled so that my nipples were close to his mouth. He smiled wickedly before sucking on one of my breasts. I continued to fondle them as he went from one to the other. I leaned my head back and moaned as Sebastien's arm was firm around my back.

With one swift movement, his hand came behind my head and his lips crashed into mine. I felt my hands hold him slightly on his shoulders as he devoured my mouth, our breathing coming in fast, shallow gasps.

"Take your pants and panties off and sit on my cock," he said breathlessly between kisses.

I pulled away slightly. "Sebastien, your shoulder and your ribs, I don't want to hurt you."

He stared at me, a predatory glint in his eyes. "Do it," he growled.

I came off the bed and quickly removed my pants and underwear. By the time I got back on the bed, Sebastien was lying flat on his back. One pillow propped up under his head, the other under his injured arm.

I kneeled over him, close to his cock that was rubbing against my inner thigh. Sebastien slid two fingers between my wet folds, a low groan escaped me as his fingers, slightly curved, gently moved in and out of me, rubbing my G-spot.

I arched my back and grabbed either ankle for support as I moaned. His thumb had found my clit, and while his fingers increased their thrusts, his thumb flicked my clit

back and forth.

“Yes, Sebastien, yes. More please,” I moaned.

“Delilah, sit on me,” Seb ordered.

I lifted myself up right and shifted over Sebastien’s cock as he stroked it. I sat over him and slowly sank onto him and he moaned, sending a pool of wetness to my folds.

When he had completely filled me, I moved my hips back and forth, and Sebastien’s hand gripped my waist, guiding me as our bodies met in a rhythm.

His hand left my waist and moved to my breasts, pinching and kneading them as he pulled me lower and kissed me again.

Then Sebastien growled, a primal sound that made my body shake. He flipped me over onto my back, then turned me onto my left side. He grimaced a bit as he got himself into a kneeling position and he opened my legs wider. He straddled my left leg and lifted the other over his right shoulder. Sebastien didn’t take it slow this time. He held my thigh and pounded me into oblivion.

A wave of pleasure hit me, and Sebastien groaned loudly and, in a final, desperate thrust, came inside me. He stayed still for a moment, before slowly pulling out. I felt his cum run out of my pussy and onto my thigh. I lay there, catching my breath. He collapsed beside me, breathing heavily.

“Are you okay?” I asked breathlessly.

“I’m fine. I’ll be okay. Cuddle with me,” he said, pulling me into his right side.

I snuggled into him, and as his finger trailed my back, I drifted into a peaceful sleep.

Over the next few days, Sebastien and I continued our sexcapades. I decided there was no harm in enjoying the sex he and I shared. I was an adult and he was my soon-to-be husband, and as long as he legally tied to me, I'd enjoy every moment of him.

One night, after another tender night together, Sebastien held me in his arms, his voice soft and serious.

"Sweetheart, we have to set a date for the wedding."

My heart fluttered. It had been almost a month since the ambush, and Sebastien's shoulder no longer needed the sling. His cuts and bruises had healed and the black and blue marks had faded, though his nose was slightly crooked now.

"Do you think we can plan everything in two weeks? So much time has already passed..."

Sebastien's lips brushed my forehead.

"Do you have a guest list?"

"All the staff of the establishments, plus one each, my brothers, and a plus one, Lucy, Mrs. Kensington. Security personnel. Anyone else you want to invite?"

I paused, thinking. "I don't have anyone besides Dean...and maybe a few office friends, which you've already stated are on the list."

Sebastien was quiet for a moment before kissing me softly. I sighed. Even though I knew this was just an agreement, I wished Dean could've been there to walk me down the aisle. I blinked to stop the tears from falling and focused on the wedding I

was about to plan.

“I’ll call Caite and get a headcount for staff and their names. And for the venue? Maybe the Grand Seraphine? I already know the layout of the ballroom. Do you have any particular colors in mind for the color scheme? Do you think Lucy would want to be my flower girl? I don’t have any girlfriends for bridesmaids, maybe I could ask Emily, but...” I was rambling and I knew it.

Sebastien kissed me on my lips. “We’ll work on that tomorrow. But tonight, you’re mine.”

He pulled me closer, and I melted into him. But deep down, a small voice whispered that I would eventually have to face the reality of it all. This was temporary, and when it ended my heart would be ripped out of my chest and shattered into so many pieces that I’d never be the same again.

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

I glanced at my watch for the millionth time as I paced the penthouse of the Grand Seraphine. Dominic, Nathaniel, Leonardo, Vincent and Axel sat in the suite, all dressed in black tuxedos like me, looking at me with amusement.

“Seb, if you pace any more, you’ll fall right through the damn floor,” Nate reminded him, a smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

“The last time you were this nervous was the time you thought you got Phoebe Kasson pregnant when you were in college,” Leo teased.

“I can’t understand why they’re taking so long,” I grumbled as I slumped onto the sofa next to Dominic.

“Maybe she got cold feet, and decided not to go through with it.” Axel’s response got sofa pillows thrown at him.

Dominic’s phone rang and he answered. He chatted for a few seconds and hung up a huge smile on his face. “It’s showtime!”

Everyone made their way to the elevator, but right before I got in, Dominic placed his hand on my shoulder and stopped me. The others got in, and when the elevator closed behind them, I turned to Dominic.

“Sebastien, I’m happy that you found love. I see the way you look at Delilah, heck, we all do.”

Was it that obvious?

“Thanks,” I said not knowing what else to say.

“I know things haven’t been great for you the past six weeks not knowing who ambushed you, together with physiotherapy for your shoulder and all the pain you’ve had to endure.” Dominic’s blue eyes were intense as he continued, “But, you pushed through. You kept your head in the game, and we’re here today to watch the both of you get married. And we’ve got your back, this place is locked down tighter than Fort Knox, so don’t worry about anything. My only advice to you today is never stop pushing through.”

Dominic pulled me into a hug and he patted my back. When he pulled away, he smiled. “Now, let’s get you hitched.”

Ten minutes later, I stood in the front of the guests in the atrium of the Grand Seraphine, with Dominic, waiting for Delilah. The guests comprised of Emily’s best friend Kristi, who was coddling Lillian and sitting next to her was her boyfriend, Ethan. Even though my brothers had the opportunity to bring dates they chose to come alone, sat next to Mrs. Kensington, who was more than happy that another Quantum man was now off the market. I had invited a few business partners. The rest of the guests were from head office, minus the three women I overheard gossiping about Delilah and me, and my staff from businesses. I had decided to close my businesses for the day.

The front doors of the atrium opened, and as I adjusted my suit nervously I heard Dominic chuckle next to me. The organ music began to play and Emily stepped into view. She looked absolutely beautiful. Her hair was pulled up to the top of her head with a few loose strands that framed her face. There were a few small flowers attached to her hair and in her hand, she held a small bouquet of lilac flowers in her hand. The champagne-colored dress she wore showed her curves and I heard Dominic inhale deeply next to me, and I smiled. Her eyes never left Dominic as she walked towards us. When she took her position, Lucy stood by the door, smiling

broadly. She wore a frilly champagne-colored dress that fell all the way to the floor. Her brown hair was curled and fell loosely over her shoulders, and she held a flower girl basket in her hand. She walked toward them slowly sprinkling flower petals from her basket until she stood next to Emily.

When the wedding march began to play, the guests stood up and looked towards the door. Delilah stepped into view and I stopped breathing.

Dominic whispered next to me, “If you don’t start breathing soon, you’ll be passed out on the floor before Delilah reaches you.”

I nodded slightly, inhaled and exhaled.

Delilah looked nothing short of breathtaking. Her dress hugged her hourglass figure before it flared out into layers right above her knees. The front had a deep sweetheart neckline that extended towards shoulders. The long train behind her swooshed with every step that she took. Today, her hair fell in soft curls framing her face and falling on her shoulders. The long veil that hung in front of her face was secured to the top of her hair with a diamond comb. As I watched her walk to me, I couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty that Dean couldn’t be here to give away his sister since their parents were now deceased.

When she finally reached in front of me, Emily took her bouquet, which was a bigger version of what Emily had, and turned to me. As I looked at Delilah through the veil, I saw how scared she was, yet excited. I took her hands which were trembling slightly and rubbed my thumbs over them, and I visibly saw her relax.

“You look gorgeous,” I said softly.

“You don’t look too shabby yourself,” she smiled.

They both turned to the pastor who began, “We are gathered here today to join this man and this woman...”

An hour later, in the Grand Seraphine ballroom, I watched as Delilah threw her head back laughing at something Kristi said while Emily whacked her friend playfully as she rocked Lilian in her arms. Dominic was on the dance floor with Lucy while his brothers and Ethan chatted around their table. Mrs. Kensington had already left.

The wedding had gone off without a hitch and Delilah had outdone herself with the reception.

At the heart of the room was a beautifully set head table reserved for the bridal party, with delicate lilac florals, candles and gold-trimmed dishes. Nearby, tables were reserved for my brothers, as well as Kristi and Ethan. The white velvet curtain, drawn open, offered a sense of intimacy while they stayed connected.

After pictures, Dominic’s toast and the cutting of the five-tier cake, the first dance and each of my brothers taking a turn dancing with Delilah and officially welcoming her to the family. It was time to enjoy the rest of the night.

As I watched Delilah, who was now on the dance floor with Lucy, I couldn’t help but wonder what it would’ve felt like if Delilah had married me because she wanted to not because she was forced to because of the threat over her head and my stupid agreement. She had fit right in with my brothers, Emily and Lucy as if she was meant for us, meant for me.

I loved the fact that she still wore her wedding dress, minus the veil and the train, and hadn’t changed.

I made my way to the dance floor.

“Hey, Lucy, do you mind if I dance with my wife?” I asked playfully.

“It’s your special day, so I guess it’s okay.”

I crouched in front her. “I think it’s a special day for all of us. I got a wife; Delilah not only got a husband, but she got five brothers, a sister and an incredible niece.”

“She did get an incredible niece,” Lucy beamed, and I laughed and stood up. She ran off to sit on Dominic’s lap as he spoke to Leonard at the bridal table. I watched as she sank into him and instinctively, he wrapped his arm around her, pulling her close.

“She’s a special little girl, isn’t she?” Delilah whispered as she entangled her fingers with mine.

“That she is,” I said as I pulled my gaze from Lucy and Dominic to Delilah. “I’m just glad that she has another person in her life who’ll love her as much as we all do.”

Delilah didn’t say anything as I unwrapped her fingers from mine and placed them around my neck while I snaked my arms around her waist.

“Have I told you how stunning you look?” I asked as she swayed in my arms.

“Hmmm, along with gorgeous, breathtaking, amazing, delicious? Yup, you’ve told me,” she giggled.

I leaned over and whispered, “I can’t wait to get you home, strip you out of this dress and make love to you for the first time as my wife.”

Delilah flushed. “Maybe we should’ve made a detour before coming straight to the reception area.”

My cock hardened in agreement and I looked at her and she tried to pull back.

“Sebastien, no!” she tapped me lightly on the chest. “I know that look in your eyes. If we leave here now your brothers are going to know exactly why we left.”

I grinned, “But everyone knows what we’ll be doing tonight, so why can’t we get the party started early?”

Delilah turned a deeper shade of red and I tilted her head and kissed her. Her grip tightened on my tux as she responded hungrily. She moaned softly as she pulled away gently from me.

“Mr. Quantum, are you trying to get me to change my mind?”

I smiled. “That depends, is it working?”

Just then a loud crash was heard across the room, and I pushed Delilah behind me protectively. I heard chairs being pushed backwards as I scanned the room. I breathed a sigh of relief when I realized a waitress had accidentally bumped into someone and a tray of glasses fell to the ground.

“That’s my cue to get away from you. I’ll go see if I can help.”

“Sweetheart, you know you don’t have to.”

“I do, because if I stay here any longer with you, we’ll do more than make out and Lucy will be scarred for life.”

I chuckled as she gave me a light kiss then hurried to the waitress who was having a meltdown. I made my way to my brothers who were having a lively chat. Before I could even sit I was handed a glass of champagne and had to choose a side on the

debate of which Quantum brother was least likely to ever get married. My money was on Vincent, hands down.

As the night wore on, Delilah and I danced some more, and made out, before we broke off to our different groups, her to the ladies and me to the men. She looked happy and I was enjoying myself, almost forgetting the real reason I had gotten married in the first place.

After our last make-out session, I decided to sit by the bridal table knowing, that if I sat at the table with my brothers they'd see my hard on and never let me live it down.

As I sat by the table I noticed an envelope with my name on it. As I picked it up, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. It had the same handwriting as the letter that came to the office with Delilah's picture in it.

I opened the letter and scanned the words.

It was another threat.

Motherfucker.

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Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 4:51 pm

The night before was amazing. After we had gotten home from the reception, Sebastien and I made love until the sun came up before finally giving into exhaustion and falling asleep in each other's arms. And this morning I woke up to Sebastien's head between my legs, eating me out as though his life depended on it.

Now my head was placed on his shoulder, his arm wrapped around me as his fingers trailed my hip under the covers.

"Sweetheart, there's something I have to tell you."

The seriousness in his voice made me pull away slightly and look up at him.

"I received another threat yesterday. If I didn't deposit money into their account, you'd be exposed."

I shifted quickly and sat up pulling the covers with me. "When?" I panicked.

"Yesterday, at the reception, someone left a letter at the table with my name on it."

Six weeks, that's how long it had been. I thought Hawthorne would have given up and let me live my life, but apparently, that wasn't the case. The fact that he waited until we got married means that he was still watching. Now that Sebastien and I were married, exposing my past didn't only affect me, but it would affect his reputation as well.

"If you pay the money, that doesn't guarantee they wouldn't expose me."

Sebastien squeezed my hands, “I know.”

“Sebastien, I’m worried. If I’m exposed, I’m afraid it’s going to affect you more than it does me.”

“I’ll be okay. You’ll be okay. I’m handling it.”

I nodded and allowed Sebastien to pull my back into his grip.

“Now that that’s out of the way...” he leaned in to kiss me. “I think I know a few ways to get you to stop worrying. At least for today anyway.”

I giggled and allowed Sebastien to make love to me...again.

A week had passed and Sebastien and I were finally back to work. We went to work in the same car and drove home in the same car, like a real married couple.

But you’re not.

At work, Sebastien would leave me flowers and chocolates in my office. And we’d even go on lunch and dinner dates. We had even spent a night at Dominic’s and had a game night, the girls against the guys. They had even convinced Mrs. Kensington to play. I was amazed at how much respect the men had for her. They didn’t treat her like staff but like family, and the gentle scoldings they got for putting their feet on the furniture and telling the other men that they needed to settle down solidified that she cared about them, too.

Even though it was six against four, the ladies won, despite Axel and Vincent trying to cheat.

Don't get used to this life, Delilah.

It was a nagging reminder that this wasn't my life and it was all a hoax. Everything I had ever dreamed of was in my life right now, at my fingertips, but it was all a lie.

Everything except your feelings.

One afternoon, I had gone to lunch alone when I saw a familiar face walk out the head office. It was a past colleague from the magazine, Percy.

Before I knew what was happening, he pulled me into a hug.

"Hey stranger, it's good to finally see you. You just disappeared and left us, not even a text," he said playfully.

"Life got busy, you know how it is," I smiled as I slipped out of Percy's arms, though he still held my hand. "What are you doing here?"

"I just came to check a friend of mine, and I'm glad I did, or I wouldn't have run into you. And I hear congratulations are in order, Mrs. Quantum."

I blushed. Having my name associated with Sebastien's still had my head reeling. I wasn't sure if I'd ever get accustomed to being called Mrs. Quantum.

"Thank you."

Just then Sebastien stalked out of the building and headed straight for us.

Shit!

"Well, Percy, it was nice meeting you again." I checked my watch. "I have a very

important meeting to attend to, I'll catch you later."

Before Percy could respond, I walked off just as Sebastien had reached us, but I didn't stop. I hustled to my office, and sure enough, less than three seconds later, Sebastien barged in.

"What the hell was that about, Delilah? Is that how married women behave?" he barked, his eyes glued to mine.

I leaned against my desk and folded my arms. I snapped, "And how did I behave, Sebastien? I greeted a past colleague of mine, I gave him a hug and we chatted for a bit. Unless you're telling me I'm not allowed to talk to any other men besides you and your brothers."

Sebastien remained quiet and the look on his face made me wonder if he was considering what I had just said.

I glared at him. "I don't get you. Before we were married, you were this raving lunatic, much like you're acting now. After we got married, you've showered me with flowers, and gifts and meals to expensive restaurants, but now we're back to what I had to deal with before marriage. Is this what I signed up for? Thinking we're making progress just for you to blow things out of proportion and send us back?"

Sebastien stepped towards me, and I moved to stand behind my desk.

"Mr. Quantum, I have work to finish, and deadlines to meet," I stared at him. "I'm sure you understand."

"Delilah, I—" he started, but I cut him off.

"I get it. I'm not really your wife, so maybe I'm not deserving of respect. As of now,

I think it's best to remind each other that this thing between us is fake. I can pretend to do the niceties in public, but I don't want your gifts, flowers or meals. I'll see you later."

I sat in my chair and began to flip through some files, hoping he'd take the hint and leave, but this was Sebastien. He wouldn't take a hint if it slapped him in the face.

Instead, with one quick movement, he rounded my desk, dropped the file from my hands on my desk, pulled me to my feet and pinned me against the wall under him.

"Delilah, I'm sorry about what just happened."

"Yup, sorry. Until you see me talking to another man, and then you'll act like a lunatic again." I tried to sound firm, but my voice came out in breathless gasps.

Sebastien stepped back and let my hands go. I fixed my clothing, my heart still racing.

"When I saw you talking to him, I got jealous. The same when I saw you talking to Daniel and that fool at the grand opening."

Jealous? He wasn't making any sense.

"Why would you be jealous of another guy talking to me?"

Sebastien closed the gap between us once again, pushing a strand of loose hair behind my ear.

"Because you're a gorgeous woman, Delilah. I see how men look at you. And yes, if I had my way, the only men you'd be allowed to talk to, besides me, are my brothers."

I had no idea what Sebastien was talking about, but no man had ever looked at me the way Sebastien did, the way he was looking at me now, with insatiable desire. His gaze dropped to my lips and I licked them instinctively.

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She should have pulled away, even snapped at me, but she licked her lips as her chest rose and fell in short, sharp bursts. Her eyes grew wide and her face flushed.

The irritation I expected to fill Delilah wasn't there. The only thing I saw on her face was desire.

“Sebastien, I'm not responsible for the way men look at me, I'm only responsible for the way I act.” She closes her eyes and inhales deeply before meeting my gaze once more. “Just because this marriage isn't real doesn't mean I'm going to step out on you. I'll never do that to you.”

I noticed that was the second time she mentioned our marriage was fake and my chest tightened.

“You're a good woman, Delilah. I'll keep sending you flowers, chocolates and anything else that will put a smile on that beautiful face of yours. You're my wife, legally, and I'm legally obligated to take care of you and all your needs.”

“All my needs?” she asked, looking up at me. She took a step closer, her breasts grazing against my chest.

“All. Your. Needs,” I said huskily.

I had fallen for Delilah. Hard. I'd never taken any other woman out on a date, much less buy them flowers. I also didn't give a rat's ass about whoever the women I had been fucking were talking to. But with Delilah all that changed. I wanted to be a better man...for her.

At that moment, I vowed to make amends for how I treated her in the past. She deserved much more from me, and she was going to get it. But, first, I needed to please her, to get that longing from her eyes. And just like her, I didn't think I'd be able to wait until we got home.

Without a word, I gently pushed her back against the wall and kissed her hard. Delilah wasted no time in responding with the same urgency I had. My fingers quickly undid the buttons of her blouse and pushed her pink-laced bra below her breasts as her chest moved up and down rapidly.

I covered one of her breasts with my mouth while I twisted the nipple of the other. Delilah grabbed the back of my head, pushed her breast deeper into my mouth and moaned deeply.

My cock hardened and with my mouth still on her breasts, I hiked up her skirt over her hips. I was thankful she wore a skirt today and not her usual pantsuit. As I pushed her panties aside, Delilah widened her legs and gave me room. When I inserted one finger then another into her wet folds, she gasped and dug her fingers into my shoulders.

Seeing that she was wet and ready for me, I quickly removed my cock from my pants. I lifted her against the wall and Delilah shrieked, then wrapped her legs around my hips.

“Sebastien,” she said breathlessly, “I don’t think you can hold—”

Her words were cut off as I shoved my cock into her, taking her hard and fast. The sounds that came from Delilah were erotic and I was happy she didn’t give a shit if people knew she was being fucked by her husband at the office.

Her pussy muscles tightened around me, and I knew Delilah was on the verge of a

climax. Even though we'd been having sex, she'd never really gotten off.

"Come for me, sweetheart. Come all over my cock."

My words sent Delilah over the edge. She cried out as her legs shook and I felt her wetness soak my cock. I was right behind her with my own climax and emptied myself in her.

We were both breathing heavily and I kissed her lightly on her lips before setting her down, keeping my arms wrapped around her to steady her. She looked up at me.

"I had an orgasm." She blushed.

"You did, sweetheart. I think the fact that we're having sex in a somewhat public place was a major turn-on for you."

I watched her dazed expression turn to panic and she flushed again.

"Shit. Do you think anyone heard?"

"I sure as hope the fuck they did," I smiled.

She buried her face in my shirt and groaned and I chuckled.

"I'm not leaving the office for the rest of the day." Then she looked up at me, looking super embarrassed. "Do you think we could leave a bit later today after everyone else leaves?"

I kissed her. "Anything for you, sweetheart. Now, let's get cleaned up."

I steered her to the bathroom in her office, and after we both cleaned up, we went

back into her office.

“I’ll see you later, sweetheart.” I gave her one last kiss before heading to my office next door.

An hour later, I was still thinking about how I had fucked Delilah in her office when my phone rang. My muscles tensed as I sat upright and answered it.

“Emily, is something wrong with Dominic or Lucy?”

“Seb, no, nothing like that. They’re both fine. However, I would appreciate it if you didn’t tell Dominic I called you.”

Ever since Emily had walked into my lounge and drank because she was pissed at Dominic, I’d been looking out for her. I was also there with Dominic when she and Lucy were rescued after being kidnapped. I admired Emily and saw a lot of her in Delilah—strong, resilient and determined. I knew she didn’t keep secrets from Dominic, so it had to be important for her to ask this of me.

“Anything you need. What’s up?” The tension from my shoulders didn’t go away completely as I leaned back in my chair.

“I think you should talk to Father.”

A lump formed in my throat. I wanted nothing more than to know what information Victor had on Obsidian, but it was a risk I wasn’t willing to take. The price was too high.

“Emily, do you trust him to tell us the truth? What if he just wants to manipulate us to get to you?”

I heard Emily sigh on the other end. “Seb, after what my father did, honestly, I don’t think I’ll ever be able to bond with him like I used to. However, even if he is telling lies, I believe he would say something that would bring us closer to knowing who ambushed you.”

There was a pause before she continued, “Lucy,” her voice cracked and I knew Emily was on the verge of tears, “after Lucy saw you in the hospital, she cried for days.”

“Fuck, Dominic didn’t tell me anything.”

“That’s because he doesn’t know. Lucy doesn’t want to look weak in front of him.”

“But she’s only six!”

“Yes! Surrounded by alpha men most of her life who don’t ask for help or show their feelings.” I heard the emotion in Emily’s voice. “I was just happy that I was there to comfort her and let her know it was okay to cry. And even though she doesn’t cry anymore, she knows something is going on, and she’s scared to lose you.” She added, “We all are.”

I closed my eyes. While I was trying to protect Delilah, it seemed as though I was hurting everyone else around me by not taking Victor up on his offer. Knowing that at such a young age that Lucy was entuned to not only her father but to the rest of us made me feel proud yet uneasy at the same time. I knew I had to talk to my brothers about this sooner than later.

“Emily, I didn’t want to talk to Victor because I didn’t want you to feel pressured into talking to him or exposing Lillian to him if you weren’t ready.”

“Sebastien! This is your life we’re talking about. I can handle one meeting with my father. And I’d gladly do it for a man who barely knew me at the time, yet stood up

for me and took a swing at his older brother.”

I was shocked. Dominic had told her about that?

“So Seb, please, think it over. We’re family and we look out for each other.”

Just then, I heard the sound of a baby crying.

“That’s Lillian. I’ve got to go, but Seb. Think about it. Please, bye.”

“Bye.”

That afternoon I had pushed through my thoughts and kept myself busy, reading contracts, looking over proposals and new building sites. I was so engrossed in my work that I didn’t hear when Delilah walked in. Only when she rapped my desk with her knuckles did my eyes shoot up to hers.

“Hey. I knocked but you didn’t hear. It’s almost seven, are you ready to leave?” she asked.

“Hey, I’m sorry. I didn’t expect to stay so late,” I said, closing the file in front of me and shutting down my computer.

“Nothing to be sorry about. I’m a workaholic just like you. It was only when my stomach rumbled I checked the time. I knew if I didn’t come to get you, you’d never leave this office.”

“Never leave?” I chuckled, “The only way I’m never leaving this office is if you’ll stay here with me.” I stood and kissed her forehead. “How about we grab some

dinner before we head home? There's a new seafood place a few blocks away we can try that out."

Delilah scrunched up her nose. "I'm not really a fan of trying new things."

I wrapped my arms around her waist and pulled her close, "But you tried office sex today and that was fun."

She blushed and smacked me playfully, "Not the same!"

"Oh yes, they are!" I argued. "I've tried the lobster and it's really good, but if you don't like it, we can go wherever you want."

"Fine."

I unentwined myself from her long enough to grab my jacket and my briefcase and we headed to the SUV where Tony and Rex were waiting.

When we got to the restaurant, it was packed, so we had to wait fifteen minutes for a table, but Delilah didn't mind. We sat by the bar while she drank wine and I drank whiskey and just talked. Once seated we ordered, it took another twenty minutes for the lobster, truffled mashed potatoes and garlic butter asparagus to be placed in front of us. I helped Delilah remove the shell from the lobster, and when she tasted it she loved it. After dinner, we did a little more drinking and dancing before heading home.

The second the front door was locked behind us, our hands were all over each other. But just as I ripped off her blouse and thrown my shirt to the floor Delilah placed her hand on her chest.

"Sweetheart, is everything ok?"

She nodded and tried to smile.

I passed my hand on her arms and despite the air conditioning in the room, her skin was clammy.

Before I could ask her anything else again, Delilah flew down the hallway and locked herself in the bathroom. I knocked on the door, as I heard her puking on the other side.

“Delilah, open the door.”

More puking and heaving. Shit. Was she allergic to seafood?

I knocked on the door. “Delilah, open the door. Now.”

If she was allergic and it was bad, I needed to get her to the hospital. I heard the door click and it opened slowly.

“Do you feel better now?” I asked titling her chin so she could look into my eyes.

“I feel a bit better,” she whispered.

“Do you think you’re allergic to seafood?”

“I don’t know but my stomach hurts. I’m sorry about ruining the night.” Her eyes refused to meet mine.

I lifted her chin, forcing her to look at me. “You didn’t ruin anything. Let me help you to bed.”

She nodded and we slowly made our way to the master bedroom.

Delilah had just puked her guts out and she was worried about disappointing me. She was a one in a million woman. And she was all mine.

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That was the third time I had thrown up that morning. Last night Sebastien and I had a great time! And I couldn't wait to reach home and devour my husband.

My husband.

But my stomach had other ideas. I ran to the bathroom and brought up the dinner we had shared. My stomach felt as though it was in a vice grip and someone was twisting it.

Last night, Sebastien stayed up with me, held my hair and brought me crackers, hoping to settle my stomach.

It had for a few hours and I got a little sleep. But I had gotten up again around five a.m. to throw up again.

Sebastien was worried and insisted that he take me to the hospital, but I told him that I'd be fine. We compromised that if by tomorrow I was still throwing up he'd take me to the hospital. Sebastien wanted to stay with me but he had an important meeting today. The client had flown all the way from China, so it wasn't a meeting he could've postponed.

I pulled the covers over me, my head spinning, hoping it was nothing more than a little food allergy. But then it dawned on me that I hadn't had my period yet. Usually, it would come late if I was highly stressed, which I had been, but it should have happened by now.

My head jerked to the nightstand my phone vibrated on it. I stretched my hand to see

a call from Sebastien coming in. I pressed the answer button and mustered all the strength in me.

“Hello?”

“Hey, sweetheart, how are you feeling?” his voice was low and husky, sending shivers down my spine. “And please tell me the truth.”

I sighed. “I threw up a few minutes ago. I think it could just be a food allergy, worst case scenario a little food poisoning. My body is doing what it’s supposed to do by getting rid of it. I think once that’s done, I’ll be ok.”

“Make sure and stay decent and leave the bedroom door unlocked. I’ve instructed Rex to check in on you from time to time. He’ll knock, but if he doesn’t hear any answer, he’ll come in.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, sweetheart. Do you still have crackers and water by the bed? Do you need anything else?”

The tray Sebastien had left on the nightstand before leaving this morning with water, crackers and a few apples, was still untouched.

“You,” I blurted out, and bit my lip as soon as I did.

“I’ve already canceled the rest of my meetings for the day. As soon as this meeting with Mr. Chen is over, I’ll be home.”

Just then I heard a faint knock and then a woman’s voice on Sebastien’s line. He exchanged a few words with her before turning his attention back to me.

“Sweetheart, I’ve got to go. Mr. Chen is here. See you soon.”

“Can’t wait.”

Sebastien hung up.

As I thought more and more about my period not showing up, I wondered if I was pregnant.

I called Rex on the phone.

“Mrs. Quantum, is everything ok?”

“Hi, Rex, everything is okay. Can you take me to the pharmacy to get a few things to settle my stomach? I should be ready in fifteen minutes.”

“Sure. I’ll be there.”

I thanked Rex and hung up the call.

Fifteen minutes later, I opened the bedroom door to head downstairs, and Rex was already there waiting for me. "You're here already?"

“Mr. Quantum told me that he wanted me to check on you today, and I figured it must be serious if he’d want me to go into the room if I didn’t hear anything when I knocked.”

“I think it’s a little food poisoning, but I think I’d feel better once I get to the pharmacy and they recommend something. Bu thanks for coming up to meet me.”

“No problem, Mrs. Quantum.”

Rex extended his elbow to me and we made our way down the stairs. I was happy for the extra support since walking downwards made me feel nauseous.

Ten minutes later Rex had escorted me into the pharmacy. He hadn't stayed by my side, but he hung around ensuring I was safe. After discussing my symptoms with the female pharmacist she recommended that I take a pregnancy test. She also prescribed some pills that would be safe for me to take if I was pregnant if the symptoms persisted.

Twenty minutes later, I was standing in the bathroom looking at the two lines on the pregnancy strip: positive.

Shit!

Before I could wrap my head around what I had just found out, my phone buzzed again. I thought it was Sebastien sending me a text, but it wasn't; someone had tagged me on all my social media platforms.

I clicked the first link and my phone almost dropped out of my hand. It was a video of me stripping! And that wasn't the only video. There were multiple videos of me dancing and stripping for the world to see. It wasn't long before the comments started coming in.

My life was ruined!

With trembling fingers and tears streaming down my face, I deactivated all my social media accounts.

I felt sick to my stomach, and I felt lightheaded. I paced the bathroom trying to call Sebastien but to no avail. He was probably still in the meeting, and I had no choice but to wait until he was finished.

I placed the pregnancy test in the bag it came in, tied it up and tossed it in the trash. I popped two of the pills I had bought into my mouth and made my way to the bed, pulled my covers and closed my eyes, just wanting to shut out everything out.

I must have fallen asleep because something made me bolt right up in bed.

Someone was calling my name—screaming my name, actually.

I slipped on my flip-flops and ran down the stairs to the front door. On the ground was Dean; Viper had his arms secured tightly behind his back even though Dean was twisting and angry below him.

“Get off of me, you son of a bitch. Get my sister out here now!” Then he screamed my name again, “Delilah!”

“Viper!” I screeched as I ran up to the men. “It’s okay. He’s my brother, let him up.”

With a nod of his head, Viper released Dean, who scrambled to his feet. Viper turned and walked back to his post.

Dean glared at me, his face contorted with anger as he screamed at me, “Delilah, what the fuck is going on? I came out of rehab, went to your place and there was no sign of you, only to find out from social media that you are now married to my best friend? But that’s not the worst part. Is this what you’ve resorted to, acting like a slut and having men take videos of you?”

My anger flared. Who the fuck did Dean think he was, coming here talking to me like this? After everything I sacrificed for him? I slapped Dean across the face. Hard.

“And where did you come from? Rehab, right? Do you know what I had to do to pay your debt? Did you not think Hawthorne would come after me if they couldn’t find

you? Don't come here acting all self-righteous. You have your own skeletons in your closet!"

I saw the hurt in Dean's eyes, but I didn't care. I stormed off, leaving Dean, and headed into the house.

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Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

The meeting with Mr. Chen had gone great. Leonardo was there ensuring that the legal side of things were taken care of and as soon as the meeting over I pulled out my phone to call Delilah. But I got a message from a number I didn't know telling me to check social media.

And when I did my skin crawled there were at least a dozen videos of Delilah dancing and stripping.

Leonardo was the only one in the conference room with me, he sat looking at me and when I got up to go to my office he followed. He stood by the closed office door looking at me as I frantically dialed Vega's number.

"Vega! Hawthorne posted videos of Delilah online. I need them down, now."

"I've been trying to take them down since they've been posted. I got an alert for her name being used. I bypassed security and reached the file, but the moment I deleted it, an automated script restored the video. No matter what I did, a fresh copy replaced the deleted one instantly. Someone wants to make sure these videos never disappear."

"Shit!" I roared. I slammed my phone onto the table. My fists clenched and I drove my knuckles into the dry wall of the office repeatedly until a jagged hole appeared. I barely registered the pain as Leonardo moved and pinned my arms to the side from the back.

"Leo, let me go!" I screamed.

I tried to get lose from Leo but even though he was younger than I was he was taller and three times as big.

“No chance in hell that’s going to happen. You need to calm down so we can talk about this,” he said firmly.

I knew Leonardo was right. I forced myself to calm down and after I few minutes he asked, “Can I let go now?”

I nodded and I felt him release me. He guided me to the sofa and we sat.

“What’s going on? What videos of Delilah do you want taken down?”

“Hawthorne posted some videos of Delilah, of her past. Is there any way we can get him arrested for this?”

“What’s in the videos?”

I sighed, “It’s her dancing and stripping for men in a hotel room.”

I expected to see some sort of reaction from Leonardo, but his expression was blank. I guess it came with the territory of being a lawyer and hearing crazy confessions.

“If we have solid proof that he’s behind it, then yes, we can. If Delilah’s at the office today, let Tony take her home. Because this shit is about to blow up, and you don’t want her caught in it.”

I placed my head in my hands. “We went out last night, she’s been sick since. She thinks it’s an allergic reaction. She’s home today.”

“Good. Now call the others and tell them to come to your office now. Because

knowing you, there's more to this story, and it's time you came clean."

Knowing that Delilah was safe at home. I focused on calling my brothers. Within the hour, they had gathered in my office, and I told them everything: about the fire, the continued threats, money that was stolen but was repaid by Mr. Jaxson, about Dean and how Delilah got roped into everything, Hawthorne's threat to say Dean was in the drug trade and was a human trafficker, my suspicions that Hawthorne and Obsidian were working together but I couldn't quite make the connection yet, my threatening Hawthorne at his office, and the real reason why I married Delilah.

When I was finished, my brothers looked at me like I had grown an extra head.

"What is it with the men in this family who get themselves into fucked up situations and instead of asking for help decide to try to fix things on their own? What the fuck do you guys take us for? Chopped liver?" Vincent asked in disbelief, the anger in his voice unmistakable.

"The real reason you didn't want us to talk to Victor was because you think Obsidian knows about Delilah's past and he'd tell us about it. You were trying to protect Delilah, weren't you?" Dominic asked.

I nodded. "But I made a fucking mess of everything. Hawthorne has exposed her. Some protector I turned out to be."

"Call me the devil's advocate, but what's the big deal with Delilah's videos being leaked?" Axel asked.

He put his hand in the air to ward off the insults the others were about to send his way.

"Here me out. I've seen the videos, and one, Delilah is wearing clothing. People go to

the beach dressed in bikinis all the time. Not a big issue. Two, Delilah looks scared and she isn't enjoying herself. Any smart person would know that she isn't doing it because she wants to. And three, none of us here see her any differently because of the videos, and as far as I'm concerned, those are the only opinions that matter, excluding Emily, Lucy and Mrs. Kensington."

"Axel does have a point." Vincent stated. "However, we've all gone to parties where the striptease and lapdancers were intoxicating and I don't know about you guys but I fully enjoyed myself." Vincent looked around the room at everyone. "If she was doing it willingly, would it have been a problem? Would any of us now look at her differently? Her body, her choice if that was the case. I'm just putting that out there."

"While the both of you have made compelling arguments, and I don't think any of us would've given a shit if she'd done it willingly, but the fact is she, Dean and Seb are in danger and that's where our focus should lie," Leonardo stated gruffly.

"Leo's correct. Hawthorne had been holding that leverage over your head for a long time, but now that it's out there, what's his end game?" Nate asked.

"Hope that my businesses will crash, sink Delilah's reputation to the ground along with Dean's. We didn't even know they had those damn videos, although after getting the picture I suspected. But Delilah was more worried about Dean's rep and how others knowing that he used drugs would affect him. That's what got her to agree to Hawthorne's so-called job in the first place."

"But now that we do know they have videos, by sinking Delilah wouldn't Hawthorne be sinking himself? Now that the videos are out, what makes him think that Delilah wouldn't go to the police and report him?" Vincent asked.

"Fear. Dean was using drugs. If she squeals on Hawthorne, Dean could get thrown in jail, and Hawthorne has enough money to buy off judges, lawyers and juries," Leo

stated.

“But how does Obsidian play into all of this? Something still isn’t adding up.”

There was a knock on the door and Caite entered.

“Sir, there is a Victor Montgomery here to see you,” she looked at me.

Everyone froze.

“Sir, should I send him in?” she looked around the room then looked at me once more.

“Yes, Caite, thank you,” I said.

She nodded and left, returning shortly with Victor who she ushered into the office and closed the door behind him.

Victor looked way older than the forty-one years he was supposed to be. He had a lot more grays in his hair and his suit looked a size too large, which meant he lost weight. His eyes looked dull and there were prominent wrinkles by his eyes.

“Dominic,” he stated firmly.

“Victor,” Dominic responded in kind.

Victor didn’t move. He stood where he was and spoke. “Emily reached out to me this morning. We met at my house. When she arrived, she had Lillian.” His voice cracked a bit. “I hadn’t spoken to my daughter in over a year because of what happened between us.” He scanned the room before he continued, “After seeing the videos of Delilah, I had already decided to come here, because it could’ve easily been Emily,

and as a father, what kind of man would I be if I withheld information that could put that bastard behind bars?" His voice hardened at the end.

Dominic nodded. "Thank you for coming. We appreciate it. Please tell us what you know."

"A little over a year ago, Obsidian met with a few older heads of the Syndicate. Dominic, he was pissed when you and Sebastien had confronted him and threatened to take down the Syndicate."

Dominic and I shared a glance, but we didn't say anything. Victor looked at Dominic when he spoke. "He stated that you broke the code by telling Sebastien about Syndicate and the fact that you guys were able to gather all that information about them meant that you all were threats. He wanted the Syndicate to destroy you."

Victor's jaw clenched, "But, when everything came out in the open after Emily and Lucy were rescued from Amber, the other members understood why you would've thought the Syndicate was behind it and that you did what any upstanding man would do for his family."

"But Obsidian wasn't having any of that, was he?" Dominic asked.

Victor shook his head. "Obsidian wanted blood, your blood. The other members thought that going after you would be reckless and unnecessary. Obsidian knew that if he went directly after Dominic, the Syndicate would catch on..."

"So, he came after me." I finished his sentence.

Victor nodded in agreement. "In every way possible. Since he couldn't get everyone on board he recruited Hawthorne."

“So Hawthorne is a part of the Syndicate,” Leo stated, and Victor nodded again.

“He also tried to recruit me, saying that any man who could sell out his own daughter and best friend would be the type of ruthless man he needed for the job.” Victor’s gaze softened. “I regretted everything I did to Emily, and I was still trying to get her to forgive me, so there was no way in hell I’d go after her brother-in-law. But even though I didn’t join him, Obsidian couldn’t help but brag. He was the one who threatened your staff so they’d quit and offered your vendors better deals so they’d break your contracts.”

“Fuck. I thought all those things were coincidental,” I said.

“They weren’t. He was trying to get you frustrated so that when the big plan was rolled out he’d get you right where he wanted.”

“What was the big plan?” Axel asked.

Victor focused on me as he spoke. “While Obsidian worked on you, including the protection fee threats and the fire, Hawthorne worked on Dean. He befriended him, even got him new clients. So when he told him about wanting to get the rare luxury cars, he already had Dean, hook, line and sinker. That’s when Obsidian made his move as a car dealership owner.”

Shit! That was the piece we had been missing all along. The connection.

I told Vega to check all the clients of Dean’s business right before he went bankrupt. Had I told him to check back a few more months I’m sure we would’ve been able to figure out that Hawthorne and Obsidian were working together earlier.

“Obsidian shipped in the cars, knew they were stolen and had forged papers, but him getting them into the country past security was child’s play because of his

connections. They thought that after bankrupting Dean, and after he began to use drugs, he'd come running to you, because you were his best friend. But he didn't."

My blood ran cold.

"So everything that happened to Dean was because Obsidian was trying to get back at me?" I asked, my chest tightening.

Victor nodded.

"But, why did he want Dean to come to me?" I asked confused.

"Because if he came to you and you found out that Obsidian was the one behind it..."

"And Seb had lashed out, he could've gone to the Syndicate and said Sebastien was now a threat. Fuck!" Nate said angrily.

The others swore under their breaths.

"Correct. So when Dean didn't do as they predicted, they got hold of Delilah. They did a fake police raid and let her get away. But she didn't run to you either, even though she knew you were Dean's best friend, so they emailed her CV to you. She'd been sending out so many e-mails that she would've never remembered if you were one of them."

I had to give it to Obsidian, that fucker thought of everything.

My voice was strained as I spoke. "So everything that Dean and Delilah went through was because of some kind of sick vengeance scheme because of Obsidian? Is that the reason why he killed Eso and his boys?"

“Yes, and he planted that picture for you to find,” Victor stated. He continued, “The problem however was when you did get pissed off you went to Hawthorne and not to Obsidian. Hawthorne's boys were the ones who ambushed you and when I found out, I decided to leverage it. I wanted to see Emily and hoped that because you guys are now family that she would jump at the chance help you.”

My head felt light. Eso, Dean and Delilah had all been affected because of me.

"That shit was a lot to unload," Vincent nodded.

Everyone nodded. “But now we know that Obsidian is itching for a fight. We can’t give him the fight he’s looking for, but we damn well can make sure that he never fucks with any of us again,” Dominic stated.

“Guys, there’s one more thing.”

Everyone turned to me.

“I found out that Lucy had been crying herself to sleep after my accident.”

“Fuck,” Dominic whispered.

I focused on Dominic. “She didn’t cry in front of you because she didn’t want to look weak in front of you.”

“But she’s six!” Dominic exclaimed. I could see the hurt in his eyes.

“That’s the same thing I said. Also, she knows that something is up and she’s worried. Worried that something else would happen to me. Sometimes, we forget how old Lucy is because of how she interacts with us, and that’s something that we need to change. Honestly, I don’t know how, but the fact that she thinks not showing

emotion is a good thing—I'm worried what else she's been hiding from us, from you, Dominic."

I saw the frustration in Dominic's eyes as he passed his hand through his hair. "I'll talk to Emily when I get home."

"You can't let her know I told you or she'll never tell me anything again," I told him.

Dominic nodded. "Let's get these fuckers out of the way so we can focus on Lucy."

We all agreed.

For the next two hours, my brothers and I, together with Victor, came up with a plan on the best way to take down Obsidian and Hathorne. Victor was able to get someone from the Syndicate to take down the videos. And by the end of the meeting, we were one step closer to taking Hawthorne and Obsidian down.

I extended my hand to Victor when he was ready to leave, "Thank you. For everything."

He shook it firmly. "You're family. No thanks needed." He left.

Dominic patted me on the back. "Seb, you look like shit. Go home and take care of your wife."

Leonardo asked, "Are you going to tell her that everything that happened to her and Dean within the past year is because of your connection to Obsidian?"

I scratched my head. "I don't know. I mean, I don't want any secrets between us, but I don't know if telling her is going to be the right thing to do."

Axel shook his head. “You’d better tell her before someone holds that over your head. I don’t know about you guys, but having to deal with the Syndicate and its members is cutting it too close for all of us.”

“I agree. Tell her,” Dominic said. “Delilah loves you. She’ll understand that none of this is your fault.”

“I sure fucking hope so.”

After a chorus of goodbyes, I finally left my office feeling lighter than I had in a long time. Now the only thing I had to worry about was Delilah.

An hour later, I walked through the front door. In a rush to see her, I left my jacket and bag in the SUV.

“Sweetheart, are you—”

Before I could finish my sentence, someone lunged at me and hit me with a punch to the face that sent me reeling backwards.

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After I stormed inside and Dean followed me, I apologized for what I said and tried to talk to him, but he wasn't having it. His focus was Sebastien and he wanted his head on a spike. He felt betrayed by both of us, not so much that he wasn't invited since he was in rehab, but the fact that neither one of us thought it was necessary that my only relative wasn't notified of the biggest event in my life.

I had left him fuming downstairs and I went upstairs to rest. My stomach felt more settled and I drifted off to sleep. Suddenly, I heard something break. It sounded like a table shattering. I flew out of bed and got to the top of the stairs and Dean and Sebastien were fighting below.

I raced down the stairs and tried to pull Dean off Sebastien. Even though six weeks had passed since his accident, Sebastien's shoulder still needed time to heal the last thing he needed was to be in a fight.

"Dean, get off of him! Stop it!"

Sebastian had kicked Dean, and I moved out of the way just in time for Dean to fly backwards and hit his back against the sofa.

As Sebastien marched towards Dean, I placed myself between him and Sebastien.

"Sebastien! Please, stop this!" I pleaded.

It didn't seem as though Sebastien heard anything I said until I placed my hand on his chest and he froze. Then he looked down at me. I could see the bruise starting to form on the right side of his face.

Dean stood up and the men stood still.

“Fighting is not going to solve anything. Can we please sit and discuss this?”

Sebastien nodded and focused on me. “How are you feeling?”

I sighed. “I’d feel much better if the two most important men in my life were sitting and not glaring at each other as though they want to kill each other.”

Without a word, Sebastien took my hand in his and lead me to the sofa where, he sat. Dean sat in the armchair opposite us.

“Somebody needs to start talking. Why the fuck didn’t anyone tell me about the marriage, and why are there videos of Delilah dancing like a fucking porn star on the internet?” Dean asked through clenched teeth.

I opened my mouth to speak but Sebastien stopped me. “So, you come into my house to attack me in my home wanting answers? Answers to what? Why you couldn’t protect your sister? Answers to why you decided to not only smuggle drugs for Hawthorne but started to use, knowing damn well you owed that son of a bitch money? Or do you want answers as to why the fuck you decided to hide away in rehab while your younger sister had to face Hawthorne alone until I came into the picture?”

When Dean didn’t say anything, Sebastien continued. I knew he was pissed although he tried to control himself.

“A few months ago, Delilah came to work for me. One night her place was trashed and she told me about your dealings with Hawthorne. Because you weren’t available, they came after her.”

I saw the look of horror on Dean's face as he looked at me.

"They made her quit the job she loved so much and made her work for them, stripping for rich bastards to pay off your debt. She didn't do it because she wanted to, she did it because she was protecting your name. Now hers is being dragged through the mud. The fact that you think your sister did it because she wanted to shows how little you think of her. But we were able to get the videos that were posted online removed."

"You did?"

Sebastien turned and looked at me. "Yes, we did. I'll tell you everything when we're alone."

I nodded as Sebastien turned back to Dean. "As for the wedding part. Delilah and I came up with an agreement. I'd pay off the loan..."

"And I'd pay Sebastien back..."

"I'd pay off the loan, protect her secret and we'd get married to deter Hawthorne from coming after her. He, however, has continued to come after her, but he's at the end of his rope. My brothers and I are making sure of that."

Dean leaned forward his elbows on his knees and he rubbed his hands over his face.

"Delilah, I'm sorry that you went through all of this because of me, because of my stupid mistake. I promised Mom and Dad that I'd look out for you, and I've been doing a terrible job at it."

I moved from Sebastien's side and pulled Dean to his feet.

“You’re the best brother a girl could ask for. You’ve always looked out for me and you’ve been my only friend for so long. Yes, you made a mistake, but we all do. Mom and Dad would be happy that you agreed to go to rehab and get your life back on track. The only way you’ll be terrible at looking out for me is if you choose to give up.”

Dean pulled me into a hug and I wrapped my arms around his waist. When we pulled apart, he smiled as he sat back down, and I went back to Sebastien’s side.

“Dean, why didn’t you come to me for help? Everything could’ve been avoided if you had done that the moment you lost your money and Hawthorne’s from a bad investment.”

Dean sighed. “I just thought I could figure it out on my own. I hadn’t expected things to escalate as quickly as they did.”

“Next time, come to me; we’ve known each other since we were eight. We’re like brothers. It hurt to know that you needed me, and you didn’t trust me enough to help you. And it’s not like I couldn’t afford to help you.”

“I’ll remember that.”

“When my brothers found out that I had been trying to deal with Hawthorne alone they were pissed. I have an amazing support team, but just like you, I wanted to do it alone. Wanted to prove that I could do it alone.”

“It’s a male ego thing,” I said.

Sebastien looked at me, “Oh, really? If I hadn’t pried the information from you, you wouldn’t have told me anything.”

I shrugged my shoulders, “The difference is I had no one to go to, no best friend, and Dean was in rehab,” I said. I turned to Dean. “I couldn’t tell you what Hawthorne was doing. I knew you would’ve left rehab, and I didn’t want that for you. I wanted you to finish, to be clean.”

“You’re right, I would’ve left,” Dean stated unapologetically.

“And probably gotten yourself killed and I would’ve never forgiven myself,” I said.

Dean nodded.

My stomach started to gurgle again, and I sighed. “Now that you guys are playing nice with each other, can I please go up to bed?”

“Dee, what’s wrong?” Dean asked, concerned.

“Allergic reaction to something I ate. I’ll be okay.”

“I’ve been such a bonehead. Since I got here, it’s been about me, me, me. Do you need me to get anything for you?” Dean asked.

“That’s my job, now,” Sebastien stated as he stood up from the sofa and pulled me to him. “If you need anything to eat or drink the kitchen is through there,” Sebastien pointed at the door that led to the kitchen. “I’ll order something for dinner. So, we’ll see you around six-thirty.”

“Sure.”

Sebastien and I made our way to our bedroom, and once we closed the door, he pulled me into a kiss, like he hadn’t seen me for years. I looked into his eyes, and he looked worried. I’d never seen him look like this.

“Sebastien, what’s going on?” I swallowed. “Did you tell us that the videos were taken down just to appease Dean?”

Sebastien cupped my face with both hands. “We’ve taken down the videos. And my brothers said they don’t see you any differently, just in case you try to get out of ever seeing them again.”

My stomach twisted. “Your brothers saw the videos?”

“Sweetheart, you have nothing to be ashamed of. Axel took one look and said you weren’t enjoying yourself and that the only opinions that mattered about the situation were my brothers', mine, Emily's, Lucy's, Mrs. Kensington's and, well, now Dean's. And we know the whole story, so we don’t give a fuck.”

“I’m sorry but having your brothers see me like that your words are doing little not to make me feel weirded out about it.”

Sebastien’s eyes were intense, before he sighed, “It’s my fault. Everything you and Dean went through, Eso being dead. It’s all my fault.”

“Sebastien, I don’t understand. How is this your fault?”

Sebastien led me to sofa in the room and we sat down before he told me everything from the time he and Dominic visited Obsidian to what happened at his office today.

Neither of us spoke for a few minutes.

“Sebastien, before that day you went with Dominic, you’d never met Obsidian? Didn’t kill his pet turtle? Give a rose to his crush? Nothing?”

Sebastien shook his head.

I placed my hand on his. “Sebastien, I don’t blame you for anything that power hungry piece of shit chose to do. None of it is your fault. I’m sorry about Eso and I’m sorry that he used your best friend to try to be your downfall. This could’ve turned out worse.”

“I know. I could’ve retaliated so Obsidian ruined not only my life but the lives of those around me. I know that even though the videos were taken down that people might still trash talk you. But trust me that we’ll get through this together, not just as husband and wife, but as a family. Leonardo is prepared to send out as many cease and desist letters as it takes if anyone wants to drag you online.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, sweetheart.”

“Sebastien?” I tilted my head.

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“Kiss me.” I placed my hand on his chest.

“My pleasure.”

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After dinner, Delilah, Dean and I laughed and talked about our childhood. Around 8:30 p.m. Delilah decided to call it a night. She looked tired, more so than usual. She told me she had gotten medication at the pharmacy and it had helped her. Now, Dean and I sat alone on the sofa as a basketball game played in the background on the television.

“Hey, now that Delilah is gone, I hoped we’d be able to talk,” he said.

“Yeah, sure, what’s up?”

“I just want to thank you for fake marrying Delilah and paying off the debt. I know things would’ve been a lot different if you hadn’t been in the picture.”

I inhaled deeply. “You’re welcome, but to me, this is no longer a fake marriage. Our agreement was to stay married for a while and then we’d get a divorce amicably. But I can’t see myself living without Delilah. I don’t want a divorce. I plan on staying married to your sister.”

Dean’s laugh was humorless. “You want to stay married to Delilah so she can cook, clean for you and maybe give you a few kids while you go out there and have fun? I know you Seb, you’ve never been a one-woman type of man. Hell, you’ll have as many women as you can in your bed all at once. Once this Hawthorne thing is over, divorce my sister so she can find a man who actually loves her.”

“Dean, even before Delilah and I reconnected, I hadn’t been with a woman in over a year. It sort of gets old picking up random women who are only interested in sleeping with you because of the name attached to your body. With Delilah, things are

different.”

Disbelief lingered in Dean’s eyes. “How so?”

“She calls me out on my bullshit, even after everything she’s been through she’s still selfless and loyal, she’s hardworking, her event planning skills are out of this world. And she’s ...”

Dean interrupted me, “Seb, wait. Do you love Delilah?”

“Yes.”

Dean was quiet. “Does she know that you love her?”

“No.”

“Why the fuck not?” He furrowed his eyebrows.

I sighed heavily. “Because I’m not sure if she feels the same.”

“Do you guys sleep together?”

I rolled my eyes. “Dean, you and I both know that because someone sleeps with you doesn't mean they love you.”

“You’ve got a point there, but I’ve seen how she looks at you. Like you’re a tall glass of lemonade on a hot ass day,” he smiled.

“The passion is there, but I don’t know...” My voice trailed off not knowing what else to say.

“I know what your problem is.”

“What?”

“You’re part of the Quantum playboy six. There’s not a woman you can’t get. All you guys have to do is walk into a room and the women are drawn to you. Why the fuck don’t you think I don’t bring my girlfriends around you anymore? At some point they ask for a threesome and I get excited until they mention your name.”

I laughed.

“But, to make my point. You’re afraid Delilah would reject you. I never thought I’d see the day that Sebastien Quantum was afraid to tell a girl how he felt about her. And not any girl, his wife!” Dean laughed.

I had to agree with Dean; I was scared.

“I guess you are right. Delilah is amazing and if she says she wants a divorce after we put Hawthorne away, she’ll be my first real heartbreak.”

“Wait, I thought Jenna Cummings was your first heartbreak?”

I grinned. “Nope, because her friend, Tina, came up with a solution at the back of her father’s truck, real quick.”

Dean laughed, then turned serious, “But, Seb, I know my sister. She loves you if she didn’t, you would’ve known. Delilah may try to build walls around her emotions but once she likes you those walls come tumbling down. And I’m sure you’ve seen them.”

I had, but I still wasn’t sure if telling Delilah that I loved her was a good plan.

“Look, if you’re worried about it, I can talk to her for you.”

I shook my head. “I’ll figure it out. But on another note, now that you’re out of rehab, what’s next for you?”

“I’ll find a nine to five job. I’ve tried being my own businessman, and it failed. So for now until I’m really sure about what I want to do in the future I’ll just send out a few resumes and hope for the best.”

“I can help you with that. Send me your CV.”

But Dean shook his head. “This is my redemption stage. I have to make things up to Delilah. I want her to be proud of me.”

“And you think she isn’t? She’s damn proud of you! Not many people in your position would’ve immediately gone to rehab and stuck it out. And I’m proud of you, too.”

“Thanks, it means a lot.”

“But, if you need any help with anything, let me know.”

“Actually, I do. I’ll need a place to stay until...” His voice trailed off and he looked at me uncertainty in his eyes.

“Done,” I cut Dean off. “I have enough room, and you can stay as long as you want.”

“Thanks.”

Just then there was a knock on the door. I walked to open it. It was my brothers.

“Why are you guys here? Is something wrong?”

“Everything is great, but Obsidian and Hawthorne are about to get fucked without the lube.” Axel grinned.

“That was a picture I didn’t need to be formed in my mind,” Nate said as he walked past Axel and into the living room.

Leo chuckled. “How’s Delilah? Did she hit you when you told her everything? There’s a fresh bruise on your cheek.”

I swatted Leonardo’s hand away from my cheek.

“Nope, it wasn’t Delilah, that was courtesy the asshole waiting in the living room. And as for how she’s doing, she’s a lot better.”

I closed the door and we walked to the living room.

“Dean!”

My brothers greeted him heartily.

“It’s nice seeing you, man. When did you get out?”

“I got out this morning,” Dean said as the guys found places to sit. “And when I went on social media and saw Delilah was married to this player and the videos, I was pissed. As soon as Sebastien came through the front door, I sucker punched him.”

“Seb, you’re getting old, bro. You should’ve seen that one coming,” Axel chuckled, and I shook my head and rolled my eyes.

“Okay guys, what’s the plan,” I asked, looking around.

“We’ve got a few, and if they pan out, we never have to worry about those assholes again,” Dominic said.

“First,” Vincent said, “Dominic and Victor are going to talk to the...” Vincent cleared his throat. “The leaders of the organization, see if we can convince them that Hawthorne and Obsidian are rouge players and they’ll cause more harm than good. We want them to get kicked out.”

Nate continued, “And if they are kicked out, they wouldn’t be able to hide. We’ll be able to get them arrested and jailed for life.”

“I’d like to come and talk to the leaders of the organization and let them know how everything played out on my end,” Dean said.

“I think that’s a good idea,” Dominic said.

Leonardo added, “I’ll take up that case personally.”

“What’s the other part of the plan?” I asked.

“Someone’s going to have to talk to Hawthorne, to get him to spill the beans on exactly what he and Obsidian did to Dean, Delilah and Eso,” Dominic said.

“I’ll do it.” Everyone’s head turned to see Delilah walking down the stairs.

I jumped up to meet her by the stairs. “I don’t want you around Hawthorne.”

Delilah ignored me. “Hey, guys.”

“Hey,” they said in unison.

The muscles in my jaw tightened. “Delilah, I’m serious, I think it’s a bad idea. Maybe I can go in.”

“So that you and Hawthorne can kill each other? I’m not ready to be a widow yet.” She looked at Dominic. “What would I have to do, and would you guys be there to protect me if anything goes down?”

Dominic looked at me. I was grateful that he looked at me to seek my approval. I gave him a nod.

“We’ll need you to get Hawthorne to admit to having used you and Dean. We’ll also need the name of the hotel he has the other girls in. We also need him to drop Obsidian’s name and his part of the plan and how they worked together. Anything else is just icing on the cake.”

“And what about Dean, would he get into trouble for smuggling, selling and using drugs?” Delilah asked looking at her brother.

“If it does come down to that, we’ll get a plea bargain, and I’ll push for no jail time.”

“But if—”

Dean stood up and walked over to Delilah. “Delilah, we have a chance to get rid of these men. I don’t want them coming after you. We have a chance to make them go away, for good. I did what I thought was best at the moment. It was a mistake, but if I have to do jail time to rectify it, then that’s what I’ll do.”

Delilah sniffled and Dean wiped the tears that rolled down her cheeks.

“Delilah, please, don’t cry. You have to let me do this, okay?”

She nodded, and he continued, “No matter what?”

“No matter what.”

“Good. Let’s get to planning,” Dean asserted.

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I inhaled deeply as I sat in the cafe waiting for Hawthorne. I had called him yesterday saying I was ready to make a deal and to meet me at the cafe at ten a.m. It was already 9:57 a.m.

“Hey, sweetheart,” Sebastien’s voice came through the earpiece hidden under my hair that was loose around my shoulders.

“Hey,” I said meekly.

“Hawthorne is on his way to you. You’ll be okay, and if anything goes wrong, we’re coming in.”

“Okay,” I whispered.

At ten a.m., Hawthorne walked into the cafe with his two bodyguards. He quickly spotted me and took a seat opposite me while his goons stood behind me.

“Delilah, I was so happy that you reached out.”

He placed his hand on the table, palm open, and looked at me. I placed my hand in his and he turned over his hand with mine in it to rub the back of my hand. My skin crawled, and I wanted to pull my hand away, but I didn’t.

“I wasn’t sure if you’d want to see me after everything that happened.” He smiled. “Delilah, you were one of my best. I’m just wondering what kind of deal you’re willing to make.”

“I’m willing to come back and work for you, but only for six months. After that you back off. You never come close to me or my family again.”

Hawthorne released my hand and leaned back. I placed my hand on my lap, not losing eye contact with him.

“I’m supposed to believe that Sebastien is just going to let you come back and work for me?”

“Please,” I looked around in feigned panic, “I don’t want him to know.” I looked down at my hands before meeting Hawthorne’s. “The thing is, Dean just got out of rehab, and if I had to choose between Sebastien and Dean, I’d choose Dean. He’s the only family I have. If we can set something up so that I can work for you during the day so he doesn’t catch on, please.”

“Sure, I’ll take you back,” he leaned forward with his elbows on the table and clasped his hands at the front. “But I have some demands of my own.”

“Which are?”

“Dean comes to work for me for six months as a drug mule.”

“No! Please, he just came out of rehab, that would kill him.”

“I’ll let the both of you only work for three months each. Dean works as a mule, and you will upgrade from a dancer to an escort. Fuck some real men before you go home to that husband of yours.”

I heard Sebastien swear under his breath.

“That’s the deal, take it or leave it,” he snapped.

I sigh heavily, “Fine, it’s a deal. Where do Dean and I meet you?”

“Dean will meet me tonight. I have a shipment heading to Columbia and he needs to be on a plane by seven a.m. and you, my little whore”—I flinched—“you’ll meet with me first so that I can get a taste before sharing you with my colleagues. After I fuck you in all your holes, you’ll meet the other girls at my hotel on Gilmore Avenue. You’re the oldest of them, but you’ll have to do.”

“Ask about Obsidian,” Sebastien asked in my ear.

“Do I have to fuck Obsidian too?” I asked softly.

“I see Dean told you everything and you guys realized Obsidian and I were working together to fuck over Sebastien. But yes, if Obsidian wants to fuck that pretty pussy of yours, he’ll fuck it. After all, if it wasn’t for him, we wouldn’t be sitting here. We may not have been able to extort that one hundred million from Sebastien, but fucking his wife and killing his friend would have to do.”

“Delilah, duck now!” Sebastien yelled.

Just as Sebastien’s warning came over the earpiece, police swarmed the cafe. I ducked under the table and heard gunshots, screaming as Hawthorne’s bodyguards dropped next to the table, their eyes still open.

I squeezed my eyes shut as I heard feet running around me. I heard them slam Hawthorne on the table before he swore he’d find me and cut me into little pieces. Someone touched my arm and I screamed.

“Sweetheart, it’s me.” Sebastien’s voice came from next to me.

I scrambled out from the table and he helped me to my feet.

“You did good, sweetheart. Now, let’s get out of here.”

I allowed Sebastien to lead me outside. He took me to a rundown motel across the street where they were doing surveillance. Once we got in the room, he removed my earpiece and the chain that was around my neck that had a microphone and a camera. After handing them to the officers, they said they’d be in touch. He took my hand and walked to another room. In this one, Axel, Leonardo, Vincent and Nathaniel were waiting.

“You did a great job,” Vincent smiled.

“Thank you.” I looked at Leonardo. “Do you think it will be enough to keep him in jail?”

“It would be more than enough to hold him while we gather more evidence.”

Just then, the door opened, and Victor, Dominic and Dean walked in. I rushed over to Dean and hugged him.

“Yup, that goes to show that she’ll definitely choose Dean over you, bro,” Axel teased Sebastien.

Dean looked confused and I shook my head. “How did it go?”

“We were able to convince the Syndicate to let Obsidian and Hawthorne go. They have vowed they’ll take care of them,” Dean said.

“Make them examples, so to speak,” Dominic said.

I felt relieved that this was finally over.

Sebastien gently took me from Dean's side and snaked his arms around my waist.

“Now that you’re finally free, that’s the best news I’ve heard all day.”

I bit my lip. I still hadn’t got the nerve to tell Sebastien that I was pregnant. Our situation was supposed to be temporary, but a baby would make it permanent, and I wasn’t sure how he’d take it.

“Sweetheart, what is it?” His eyes searched mine.

“Does me being pregnant qualify as good news?” I whispered.

Sebastien took a step back and looked at me, and I could feel the tears building behind my eyes. Then he stepped toward me and gently placed his hand on my stomach.

“Delilah, you’re pregnant?”

“Yes, but I know that this things between us wasn’t supposed to be permanent...”

Sebastien pulled me into a passionate kiss. I wrapped my arms around his neck and barely heard Axel tease us about getting a room. When we pulled apart, I was breathless.

“I love you, Delilah, and taking down Hawthorne and Obsidian for good isn’t the best news that I’ve heard today. The woman that I love being pregnant with our child is the best news I’ve heard today.”

“I love you, too.” I smiled up at him.

He turned to his brothers proudly.

“Dominic, tell Lucy that she’s going to get a cousin to play with in about nine months.”

After his brothers congratulated him, Sebastien pulled me into a hug and whispered, “When we get home, I going to show you exactly how happy I am with the news you shared with me.”

I giggled.

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“Sebastien Quantum, shoo!” Emily teased as I stood behind Delilah, massaging her shoulders, her legs elevated under pillows on the sofa. She placed one hand on her seven-month belly and held out the other to receive the glass of juice Emily had brought for her. “We’re here so you can stop driving your wife crazy.”

“Sweetheart, I’m not driving you crazy, am I?” I leaned over and planted a kiss on her forehead.

“Baby, you know I love you, but yes you are,” Delilah smiled sweetly.

Lucy walked into the room. “Uncle Seb, you’re here again?” Lucy asked dramatically. “Aunty Delilah needs some breathing room.”

Emily and Delilah giggled, and Lucy tried to push me to the backyard from behind.

“How much money did your father give you to come get me?” I asked.

“Ten bucks,” she said as she stepped in front of me.

“If I give you fifteen, will you give me two more minutes?” I begged.

“Make it twenty and it’s a deal.” Lucy stretched her hands for the money.

I patted my pockets and grinned. “I don’t have my wallet on me.”

“Late payment means the price just went up to twenty-five bucks.”

Delilah laughed, “The lady drives a hard bargain.”

Lucy grinned at her. “I’m a Quantum; it’s what I do.” Then she looked at me seriously. “Your two minutes starts now.” Lucy skipped off.

Emily looked at Delilah and me. “Are both of you ready for that?”

“I’d be ready for twenty of those if Delilah lets me.”

Delilah looked up at me, “Let’s finish with this one first and then we’ll think about chatting about others.”

Delilah held my hand, “But, Seb, I’ll be okay. I promise, if I need you, I’ll call.”

I leaned over and kissed Delilah and she kissed me back. When I raised my head Lucy was standing there with her arms folded. “Let’s go, Uncle Seb.”

“Fine.”

Lucy grabbed my hand, and I allowed her to drag me to the backyard. We would’ve had a barbecue, but the smell of it made Delilah nauseous, so instead we ordered pizza, lots of it.

“Ah, there he is, the runaway husband,” Leo teased.

I sank into one of the patio chairs and Lucy skipped back out to the gazebo where Kristi was playing with Lillian.

“Ha ha ha,” I wanted to be annoyed, but I smiled anyway. “I’m just worried.”

Dean spoke, “Seb, you more than worry. If you could put her in a bubble and leave her there until the baby is born, you would.”

“After that scare a few months ago...” I inhaled deeply. “I don’t know what we would’ve done if we lost the baby.”

When Delilah was two months pregnant, she had been driving to one of the clubs for the last assessment from the day. She was on her feet the entire time. Without Hawthorne and having to look over her shoulder, she loved the freedom of driving around without having to call Rex. But while driving there she had gotten bad cramps and pulled over to the side of the road. Her phone had died, and she didn’t know until she tried to call me. She was able to get out of the car, and a good Samaritan had picked her up before she passed out. Delilah’s car has a tracker on it, and when I received a call saying she hadn’t arrived at the club, I tracked the car, but when I arrived and she wasn’t there, I thought that Hawthorne had somehow gotten hold of her, and I panicked.

I called my brothers and after calling around we found her at the hospital. The doctor said that if she'd waited any longer to get to the hospital, we would’ve lost the baby. Luckily, since then she’s been home, but I had to admit that there had been no more incidents or bleeding, and we hadn’t had sex since then, although the doctor said it was okay.

“Seb, it’s okay to worry, but don’t you think that you hovering over her is stressing her out? I mean, she had to call us to rescue her today,” Vincent stated.

“And still he finds a way to always sneak inside to see her.” Axel shook his head. “Pussy whipped.”

The others laughed.

“So, do you guys know if it's a boy or girl yet?” Ethan asked.

“Delilah wants it to be a surprise. Honestly, I don’t care about the gender as long as the baby is healthy.”

“Yeah, you won't care until she's sixteen and you have to pull out a shot gun to ward off the boys.” Axel looked at Dominic. “Sorry, bro.” He patted Dominic on the back playfully and everyone laughed.

“You guys did see me at sixteen, right?” I lifted an eyebrow.

“Yeah, but that's different, it was something out of the ordinary. But one thing I can say right now is that even if there is an untimely death, we will take care of each other's families,” Nate said.

“For sure.”

“No doubt.”

“You got that right.”

“So, Dean,” Leo looked at Dean, “Seb tells us that you got a job at a marketing company.”

“Yup, it's nothing fantastic, but I get to save while staying here, I help with the bills, and I'm able to pay him back something each month for paying off my loan.”

“Wait, Delilah was serious about that?” Vincent asked.

Dean nodded. “As a heart attack.”

“And she checks every month to make sure it's in, too.” I laughed.

“But, she's right, though. I got myself in that mess. Paying it back every month reminds me to think before making choices, and if It's too big for me to handle, I have a large group of friends I can come to for help.”

“I’m just glad that everything worked out in the end,” Dominic said.

About three months after Hawthorne’s arrest, Hawthorne was killed in a brawl in jail while waiting for trial, and Obsidian was found overdosed in one of Hawthorne’s hotels after a raid. Two men were eliminated.

“Hey Sebastien, can I see you for a second?” Emily asked as she walked out on the back patio.

I shot up from my chair. Was something wrong with Delilah?

As though she read my mind, she said, “Your wife is fine. She just needs you to help her with something.”

Emily went to sit next to Dominic while I made my way inside. Delilah was lying in the same position as when I last saw her. When she saw me, she smiled. “Hey, baby.”

“Hey, sweetheart, is something wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong, per se,” she grinned. “But, I need help changing my clothes.”

“You did it again, didn’t you,” I grinned.

“I can’t wait to get my bladder back. A girl can’t even laugh in peace without wetting herself.”

“But Emily could’ve helped you change,” I said as I gently placed her feet on the ground and helped her stand.

“I know, but I wanted you.”

I leaned in and gave her a quick peck on the lips before I helped her to the guest

bedroom downstairs, which we had moved into since climbing the stairs was too much for her. Once she was seated, I quickly retuned to the living room, snatched the cushions, and placed them to the side; I'd deal with that later. I made my way back to Delilah, where I helped her get out of her wet clothes and helped her into dry ones.

Once she had changed, I led her out of the room, but instead of heading to the back porch, we headed down the hallway.

"Everyone's outside. Where are you taking me?"

"I know I've been a pain in the ass. It's just that I love you and the baby, and I want you guys to be safe. But, after today, hopefully I can give you some room, and you'll be able to call on me when you need me like you did just now."

"Baby, I love that you love me so much and want to take care of me, I don't ever want you to think that I'm not appreciating your effort. I see you, and I love you, but..."

"But sometimes I'm a pain in the ass, I get it," I grinned.

We stopped and I opened the door in front of me and led Delilah inside and locked the door behind us. She looked around, her eyes wide, before she turned to me.

"You told me you were renovating to do a playroom for the baby," Delilah sniffed as she walked further into the room.

"I wanted to do something for the woman that I love. You don't ask for anything, so I plan on giving you everything. I never gave you a wedding gift and I'm sorry it's a bit late."

Delilah hugged me. "Baby, I love it. Thank you."

Over the past few months, I hired a contractor to build a library for Delilah. It was soundproof so you couldn't hear anything from outside, but there were safety cameras she could access to see what was going on outside, and I also had access to them just in case something happened and I need to see her.

Floor to ceiling mahogany bookshelves lined two walls and were filled with books of her favorite authors. I added a reading nook with cushions as well as a comfortable recliner and a large three-seater plush sofa, big enough for her to sleep comfortably. There was a marble fireplace and a small tea station with some of her favorite tea blends. I also decided to add a beautiful writing desk with journal and stationery. I knew she may not use it until after the baby, but it was a sweet gesture. The floor was covered with a dark grey carpet that was soft to the touch, and a door in the corner of the room led to a small bathroom.

“This is so beautiful. Thank you.”

I wiped her tears. “Baby, I’d do anything for you.”

“Then make love to me.”

I stiffened.

“Sebastien, you haven’t touched me in five months.”

“Because I was worried about the baby.”

“Sebastien, the doctor said it would be ok, but if bleeding does occur, we could go to the hospital. I’ve tried to be patient with you, but I need my husband.”

She glided her hands up my T-shirt and looked at me. “Please.”

I swallowed hard and couldn’t tear my gaze from Delilah. I wanted more than

nothing to feel my wife's pussy around my cock, but what if I hurt her? I sighed.

"Sweetheart, if you feel any pain or discomfort, you'll let me know?"

"I will. Now make love to me."

I ran my thumb over her lips and wrapped an arm around Delilah's waist. Delilah licked her lips and I leaned forward and kissed her. Immediately, she opened up to me and our tongues danced. Slowly, I lifted the sundress that Delilah wore over her head and then removed her bra and tossed them on the floor. I took Delilah's hand and led her to the sofa.

I loved how full and round her breasts looked and licked my lips before kneeling in front of her. I took one breast in my hand and squeezed it gently. Delilah leaned her head back and moaned and my cock lengthened. I hadn't realized how much I missed hearing that sound from her. I tilted my head and took her stiff nipples into my mouth, teasing and caressing with my tongue. When I was done licking and sucking her breasts and nipples I gently helped Delilah to lean back against the sofa. I placed a pillow under her head and one below the arch of her back.

"Comfortable, sweetheart?"

She nodded. I gently removed her panties, tossed them in the pile, and quickly removed my clothes and did the same. I bent her knees and positioned myself between her legs, my cock rubbing against the entrance of her pussy. I placed my hands on either side of her and she placed her hands on my biceps.

"Sweetheart, promise me if you feel pain, you'll let me know."

"I promise," she moaned.

I shifted myself, dropped my head between her legs and tasted her, the sweetness of

the peaches shower wash lingering on my tastebuds as well as Delilah's natural taste. She moved under me slowly as I fucked her with my tongue and fingers.

"Fuck, yes, baby, more please," she groaned.

Her moans seeped through me, and I felt precum oozing down the tip of my cock. I found her clit with my tongue and sucked it gently before flicking it back and forth with my tongue as I finger fucked her dripping pussy.

"Sebastien," she panted, "Fuck me."

Gently, I removed my fingers from her licked them off and slowly, slid my cock into her.

"Fuck, yes," Delilah moaned as her she tried to grab onto the sofa beneath her.

When I was all the way in I stopped and watched her face to see if she was in any pain. Not seeing any sign of any, I hovered over her, one hand on either side of her belly, and immediately Delilah gripped them. At least this way, even though the sofa is huge, I felt more at ease knowing she wouldn't slip off. I began to move, thrusting into her slowly, then building momentum, making sure I didn't put my weight on her stomach as I did so.

My gaze never left her as I watched the pleasure on my wife's face. She felt so good around me. There was no way I was ever going to let five months pass again without being in my wife.

"Sweetheart, you feel so good..." I groaned. "Fuck!"

After a few more thrusts, I slammed into Delilah as far in as I could go, and then I came. My cock twitched a few times, and I sighed with content as I pulled out.

“Thank you,” she smiled.

“You’re welcome, sweetheart.”

I got up and gathered the blanket from the reading nook and walked back to the sofa. I removed the pillow from below Delilah’s back. I pulled the blanket over both of us and snuggled in next her on my side, as my hand lingering under her protruding belly.

“I love you, Mrs. Quantum.”

“I love you too, Mr. Quantum.”

THE END