



Slash Me Savagely (The Blackwater Reaper Hockey #1)

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Category: Sport

Description: GEMMA

I never wanted to be here.

The roar of the crowd, the stench of sweat and spilled beer, the brutality on the ice—I hate all of it. But I came anyway, because I always do what I’m supposed to. One game, one night, and then I’ll walk away.

At least, that was the plan.

Until I feel him watching me.

Matthew Sokolov plays like a predator—fast, lethal, merciless. When our eyes meet through the glass, something shifts. It’s dark, primal, a hunger that wraps around my throat like an unspoken promise.

I should look away. I don’t.

He doesn’t either.

Because Matt doesn’t just want to win. He wants to take. To own.

And he’s decided I belong to him.

Even if that’s the last thing I want.

MATT

She shouldn’t be here.

She doesn’t belong in this world of bloodstained ice and shattered bones. She’s too soft, too fragile, too fucking perfect. But then she looks at me—really looks at me—and I see it.

The spark. The fear. The curiosity.

She doesn’t know it yet, but she’s already mine.

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Chapter 1

Gemma

I took a breath, the damp air thick with the scent of pine and something else, something sour. Reaper's Hollow loomed ahead, its dark exterior swallowing the fading light. The arena stood like a monument to madness, and I could almost feel the chill crawling up my spine.

Rob turned off the engine and shot me a sideways glance. "You just keep quiet and look pretty, right? I know you don't know anything about hockey."

I rolled my eyes. "You could have taken Bruce?—"

"He couldn't go." His tone hardened, slicing through the dimness of the car. "Trust me. If you didn't have to be here, you wouldn't."

Ignoring his jab felt easier than answering it. We had been snipping at each other for weeks, every little comment sparking like kindling in a fire. My stomach churned at the thought of another argument echoing in this place that already felt suffocating.

The headlights illuminated the entrance to Reaper's Hollow, casting eerie shadows that danced along the cracked pavement. A group of fans congregated outside, their excited chatter mixing with shouts and laughter that barely masked an undercurrent of tension.

"Let's get this over with," I muttered, gripping the door handle.

Rob's laughter held no warmth as he stepped out first. "You're such a trooper."

I pushed open my door and followed him into the fray. The moment my foot hit the ground, a rush of noise enveloped me—a cacophony of cheering fans mingled with deep-throated growls from players warming up inside.

The air buzzed with anticipation, but I felt nothing like it. Instead, a heavy weight settled on my chest as we made our way toward the entrance. Inside, low lighting cast deep shadows across faces filled with fierce loyalty to The Blackwater Reapers.

As we approached our seats, I caught sight of Rob's friends—grinning guys clad in jerseys who greeted him like he was some kind of rock star. Their laughter bounced around us like bullets ricocheting off walls.

"Gemma!" one shouted over the din, his enthusiasm forcing a tight smile onto my face.

I forced myself to nod back but felt out of place among their raucous energy. Each cheer that erupted from them only reminded me how much I wanted to be anywhere but here.

The arena swallowed me whole. A thick haze of excitement mingled with the scent of popcorn and sweat, wrapping around me like a heavy cloak. The dim lights flickered overhead, casting shadows across the bleachers filled with fans who painted their faces in black and red, the Reapers' colors. I stepped further inside, my eyes scanning the vast space where cheers would soon erupt.

The glass that separated us from the ice gleamed under the lights, reflecting the vibrant chaos around me. I could hear the players' skates carving into the ice as they warmed up, a sharp sound that sent a shiver through my bones. The sound was almost hypnotic, a steady rhythm punctuating the rising tide of adrenaline in the air.

“I’m gonna grab a beer,” Rob announced, his voice barely cutting through the noise. “I’ll get you a water. You driving home, right?”

Before I could even nod or shake my head, he disappeared into the crowd, leaving me standing there alone. I rolled my eyes at his back, irritation simmering beneath my skin. I didn’t need him to take care of me like some fragile thing. At least our seats were good—right behind the player benches—where I could see every scowl and fierce determination etched on their faces as they prepared for battle.

I settled into my seat and let my gaze drift to the ice. The players glided effortlessly across its surface during warm-ups, their bodies fluid and powerful. One guy sent a puck sailing toward an open net; it ricocheted off the post with a resounding clang that resonated deep in my chest.

The energy buzzed around me like electricity. A couple of players exchanged sharp words, their intensity radiating even from this distance. I couldn’t help but lean forward, fascinated by their precision and focus as they went through their drills.

A group of fans nearby erupted in laughter as one player tripped over his own skates during a drill. It was absurdly humanizing amidst all that raw athleticism—the kind of moment that turned pro athletes into real people rather than untouchable icons.

I sighed and shifted in my seat, trying to shake off the feeling of being out of place in this raucous environment. But there was something about watching them move—like they belonged to this place more than anyone else ever could—and for just a second, I felt a flicker of envy deep inside me.

I leaned back in my seat, the buzz of the crowd surrounding me, when an unsettling sensation prickled at the nape of my neck. Someone watched me. My pulse quickened as I turned, scanning the rink until my gaze landed on him.

A Reaper stretched on the ice, looking directly at me. I glanced over my shoulder, thinking he was looking at a girlfriend or a sister behind me... but no. No one else was there. The low arena lights caught the sharp angles of his face, his platinum hair spilling over like liquid silver. He had an inexplicable intensity about him—feral and fierce, yet dangerously captivating.

His gaze locked onto mine, dark eyes holding a vigor that made my breath hitch. Something in his expression shifted; it felt like he could see right through me, stripping away layers until I was bare and exposed. The way he studied me made my skin prickle with awareness, turning my stomach into a tight knot.

I squeezed my thighs together instinctively, feeling a deep pulsation there—a strange mix of numbness and undeniable awareness that sent shockwaves through me. My heart thudded louder with every passing second.

But I broke our connection first, tearing my gaze away as Rob emerged from the crowd, beer sloshing in his hand.

“Hey!” I yelped as he stumbled into the row beside me, splattering foam across my lap. He didn’t even glance at me as he shrugged off the spill like it was nothing.

“Oops.” He chuckled before settling in beside me, a satisfied grin plastered across his face. “You’re gonna love this game.”

He handed me a water bottle without even acknowledging what just happened. I took it mechanically but couldn’t shake the feeling that the player’s eyes remained on me. Even with Rob sitting right next to me, laughter echoing all around us, that gaze lingered—a silent challenge hanging between us like charged air before a storm.

Rob rambled on about stats and lineups while I forced myself to focus on him instead of what had just happened. But every time I glanced back toward the ice, I felt it—his

stare bore down on me with an intensity that made it impossible to ignore. What did it mean?

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Chapter 2

Matt

I stood at center ice; the arena buzzing around me, lights blaring down like spotlights on a stage. The scent of sweat and fresh ice filled the air. As the puck dropped, adrenaline surged through my veins.

I pushed off hard, gliding forward, my skates carving into the ice with precision. My eyes scanned the rink, assessing the opposition's movements. I spotted a defender closing in on me. With a flick of my wrist, I sent the puck flying past him—quick and unexpected.

“Fuck, Sokolov!” shouted a teammate as he took off down the left wing.

I chased after him, weaving through players like a needle through thread. The crowd erupted with each successful pass. Every time I touched the puck, it felt electric. I had to keep moving, keep creating space.

With one swift motion, I picked up speed, my skates digging into the surface beneath me as I approached the goal line. A defender shadowed me closely; his breath fogged in the cold air. I feigned left and darted right, slipping past him like he was stuck in molasses.

The goalie crouched low in anticipation. I barreled towards him. Time slowed as I positioned myself for a shot—just me and him now.

“Come on!” someone yelled from the stands.

I pulled back my stick and released a snap shot that sliced through the air like lightning. The puck soared towards its target but clanged off the crossbar with an echoing thud that sent fury spiraling through my gut.

“Get it back!” someone shouted from behind me.

I didn’t hesitate; instincts kicked in. I sprinted after the rebound as it bounced into open ice. My teammates scrambled to regain possession, voices rising in urgency around me.

“Over here!” I called out.

The chaos felt alive as players collided and sticks clashed. Finally, one of my linemates scooped up the loose puck and passed it to me with precision.

With a quick glance at my options, I made a decision. Instead of shooting again, I feinted another shot to draw out the goalie before sliding a perfect pass across to Peter Wolfe stationed at the far post.

He didn’t miss his mark; his blade connected solidly with the puck as he sent it flying into the net with a satisfying swish that echoed triumphantly through our home arena.

“Yeah!” The roar of our team erupted around me while cheers rang out from every corner of the stands.

The roar of the crowd faded as I turned to find her. She stood a few rows up, just beyond the glass, caught in a moment of celebration. Long blonde hair cascaded over her shoulders, catching the arena lights in a way that made it shimmer like polished wood. Her eyes sparkled with excitement—deep green, bright as emeralds, alive with

the energy of the game.

She wore a fitted shirt, one that hugged her frame just right, and every time she laughed or cheered, it sent an unexpected jolt through me. She hadn't seem eager to be here, but she was getting into it.

There was something about her, something different that pulled me in. I couldn't quite put my finger on it; maybe it was the way she seemed genuinely invested in every play or how her smile lit up even the duller moments.

I leaned against the boards, momentarily distracted from the celebration around me. My heart raced—not from the thrill of the game but from an overwhelming urge to approach her. To consume her. To see if those eyes would hold mine for more than a fleeting glance.

Then he appeared—her boyfriend—a broad-shouldered guy who pulled her close and planted a kiss on her lips to celebrate Wolfe's goal. The sight hit me like a punch to the gut. He grinned like he owned the world, and for a second, I wished I could wipe that smug look off his face.

I would wipe the smug look off of his face.

I clenched my fists at my sides as jealousy coursed through me. How dare he? She was mine.

She didn't fucking know it yet, but she was mine.

And I didn't fucking share.

The game continued behind me; cheers erupted sporadically as our team took control again. But all I could focus on was her—how she shined even brighter than any

victory we could claim on that ice.

“Let’s go!” one of my teammates shouted beside me, pulling me back into reality.

But my gaze lingered on her just a heartbeat longer before turning back to focus on the ice.

The game picked up speed after our goal, and the energy surged through the arena like an electric current. I felt alive, every muscle in my body pulsing with the rhythm of the game.

But then I noticed something shift in the atmosphere. The Reapers were known for their dirty play, and it didn’t take long before that reputation reared its ugly head. A hard check sent one of our guys sprawling into the boards, his body crumpling like a rag doll.

“Get up, man!” I shouted as he groaned on the ice.

The crowd roared with excitement, but there was an edge to it—a sharp anticipation that sliced through the usual cheers. It wasn’t long before fists started flying. A scuffle broke out near the blue line, two players locked in a tight embrace, swinging wildly at each other like they were trapped in a storm.

The Reapers thrived on chaos; we lived for it. Rumors swirled around us—whispers of curses and demons lurking within our ranks. Each time we faced anyone, we wanted them to feel like they were stepping into a dark abyss where nothing was off-limits.

I shook my head. I’d do anything for my team. They were my brothers—the ones who fought beside me every night on that ice. If anyone threatened them, hell would have to freeze over before I let it happen.

As bodies collided and shouts erupted around me, I caught sight of Wolfe squaring off against one of their forwards—some asshole with a face you just wanted to fucking crosscheck. Wolfe had always been more of a talker, but he didn't back down from anyone.

"C'mon, Wolfe!" I yelled as he landed a solid punch.

His opponent retaliated, but he kept coming—driven by pure adrenaline and determination.

"Let's show these bastards what we're made of!" someone bellowed from the bench.

I leaned forward against the boards, heart racing as if I were in that fight myself. My fists clenched tight; I could feel the anger bubbling beneath my skin. We didn't just want to win—we wanted to break them.

I scanned the ice again, watching as more players piled into the fray. There was no hesitation on my part—I'd jump into that brawl if needed because every last one of those guys mattered to me more than anything else in this world.

Then another figure caught my eye—the girl from earlier—her wide eyes fixed on the chaos unfolding before her. Fear danced across her face as she leaned forward in her seat, almost willing herself to intervene.

But something else was in those eyes.

Something that made me smirk.

As scared as she was, there was curiosity in that gaze. Curiosity and desire.

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Chapter 3

Gemma

The game had been a frenzy of noise and chaos. Bodies collided, blood sprayed, and the air thickened with the smell of sweat and something metallic. I stood near the exit, still processing what I'd just witnessed.

"Ready?" I asked, trying to shake off the adrenaline.

"Hell no," Rob shot back, grinning like a kid on Christmas morning. "As a season ticket holder, I get to meet the team after the game. And you get to take pictures for me."

He pinched my cheek, that annoying gesture that made me feel five years old again.

I pulled away, rolling my eyes. Meeting the team? My stomach churned at the thought. The players loomed larger than life on the field, but up close? I wasn't sure I wanted to see their smug grins or hear their loud laughter echoing in this echo chamber of brutality.

"C'mon, it'll be fun!" Rob nudged me with his elbow, his excitement infectious despite my reservations.

"Fun?" I shook my head. "You call watching those guys beat each other senseless fun?"

“It's not about that.” He waved his hand dismissively. “It’s about being part of something big! The energy! The camaraderie! You’ll see.”

I glanced around at the throng of fans pouring out of the arena, faces flushed with excitement or shock—some wore expressions like they’d just seen a horror movie. I shifted from foot to foot, feeling out of place in my oversized hoodie I put on after the game was over and the adrenaline wore off while everyone else seemed dressed for battle.

“They’re just people,” I said quietly, wishing to quell his enthusiasm without sounding like a wet blanket.

Rob scoffed. “Just people? Nah! They’re gladiators! Warriors!”

I bit my lip and surveyed the scene again. Blood-streaked uniforms crumpled on the ground where players had fallen. The aftermath hung heavy in the air like an unwelcome fog.

Rob practically bounced on his toes as we waited for the elevator. The doors slid open, and a uniformed attendant ushered us inside, flanked by other season ticket holders who wore matching jerseys and wide grins.

“This is it,” he whispered, eyes gleaming.

I swallowed hard as the elevator descended, the soft hum of machinery drowning out the distant roars of fans above us. The atmosphere shifted; excitement hung thick in the air like smoke.

The doors opened with a soft ding, revealing a dimly lit corridor lined with glossy photos of players in action. A faint echo of laughter and chatter reached us as we walked toward the locker room.

“Right this way!” a cheerful voice called from up ahead. A man in a polo shirt gestured us forward. “Welcome! I’m Dave, your guide for tonight.” He flashed a broad smile that reminded me of a toothpaste commercial.

Rob elbowed me again, this time harder. “See? It’s gonna be awesome!”

“Let’s hope so,” I muttered, half-heartedly smiling back at Dave.

We stepped into the locker room, and I was immediately struck by the overwhelming scent of sweat and leather mingling with a hint of something else—maybe liniment or fresh paint. The space opened up before us, revealing rows of dark wood lockers lined against one wall. Jerseys hung from hooks like banners waiting for their champions.

A massive whiteboard covered in scribbles and diagrams dominated one end, and scattered around were plush leather chairs that looked like they had seen better days. Posters of past glories plastered every surface—a shrine to victories carved out of blood and grit.

“Take your time! The players will be here shortly,” Dave announced while gesturing for us to settle in.

I glanced at Rob; his eyes sparkled with anticipation as he practically bounced from one foot to the other.

“Are they really coming?” I asked quietly.

“Of course! You didn’t think we’d just sit here and watch paint dry, did you?” His laugh echoed off the walls.

Just then, another group entered behind us—a couple of older fans who carried foam

fingers emblazoned with slogans that made my skin crawl.

“Did you see that last hit?” one shouted excitedly, waving his hands animatedly as he leaned against a locker.

I took a deep breath and tried to shake off my nerves. Here I was, about to meet these athletes who seemed larger than life just hours ago. What if I said something stupid?

What if he was there?

I shifted nervously in my chair, the leather cool against my skin. The buzz of conversation surrounded me, laughter mixing with the thud of footsteps. My heart raced as a group of players filed in, their presence electric, transforming the locker room into something almost sacred.

“Gemma! Over here!” Rob’s voice cut through the chatter as he waved me over. I reluctantly pushed myself up and followed him, my palms clammy.

“Guys, this is Gemma,” Rob introduced me to a couple of towering figures with broad shoulders and confident grins.

“Hey!” One player slapped his palm against mine, his grip firm. “You’re in for a treat tonight.”

I managed a smile while Rob chattered away about the game, throwing in jokes that fell flat for me but earned laughs from everyone else.

Then it happened. Rob spotted someone across the room and his eyes lit up like a kid who’d just found his favorite toy.

“There he is! Matt Sokolov!” He nudged me forward before I could process what was

happening.

Matthew Sokolov.

The player from before.

Matthew stood tall, his hair tousled just enough to look effortless. His jawline was sharp, and his lips were pressed into a hard line. The red of his jersey contrasted sharply with the coldness in his blue eyes that seemed to draw me in.

Rob pushed me closer as if giving him a nudge was all it took to initiate an introduction.

“Sokolov! This is Gemma!”

He turned to me with that icy stare, and again, there was that pulsing, that awareness.

“Nice to meet you,” he said smoothly, extending his hand toward mine. The moment our palms met sent a jolt through me—a thrum of electricity that caught me off guard.

I felt my cheeks heat as I shook his hand, trying not to dwell on how warm and strong it felt against mine.

“You survived the game,” he said with a heavy Russian accent. “That’s impressive.”

“I’m still not sure if I’m traumatized or exhilarated,” I replied, managing to keep my voice steady despite my racing heart.

“Exhilarated is definitely the right choice.” He leaned slightly closer as he spoke, lowering his voice conspiratorially. “It gets better from here, I promise you.”

His gaze held mine longer than necessary—an unspoken connection sparking between us.

Was I being crazy?

Did he feel it too?

The moment hung in the air like a secret, and I couldn't help but feel that everything else faded into the background. Rob's voice became a distant murmur as I locked eyes with Matt. His gaze felt like a brand, searing itself into my memory—an imprint I doubted I'd ever shake off.

“Gemma!” Rob interrupted, waving his hands animatedly. “Did you see that last play? It was insane! I mean, Sokolov here was like a freight train! Just plowed right through them!”

I nodded mechanically, still caught in the web of Matt's stare.

Matt's expression remained steady, his lips slightly curved at the corners as if he found something amusing in our banter. The crowd buzzed around us—other players, fans laughing, the echoes of conversations swirling—but it felt as if we were encapsulated in our own little bubble.

“Yeah,” I said, my voice quieter than intended. “You really had a game tonight.”

Rob continued to ramble on about statistics and highlights, his enthusiasm infectious yet strangely irrelevant in that moment. All I could focus on was Matt's intensity—how it seemed to draw me in deeper.

“I don't think anyone expected you to pull that off so effortlessly,” Rob prattled on, oblivious to the tension coiling between Matt and me. “I mean, look at the size of

these guys! You just... smashed through them!”

Matt didn’t break eye contact with me; his blue eyes sparkled with mischief and something else I couldn’t quite place.

“Yeah, well,” he finally replied. “Sometimes you have to take risks.”

His words resonated deep within me. It wasn’t just about the game; it felt personal, like he was saying more than what lay on the surface.

“Right?” Rob chimed in enthusiastically. “That’s what makes you a legend! You’re fearless out there!”

Still locked in that gaze, I hardly registered Rob’s excitement until he nudged my shoulder gently.

“Gemma? You okay?”

I blinked and turned toward him for a brief moment before glancing back at Matt. His expression hadn’t changed—still focused, still unwavering—and something stirred within me that made my heart race.

“Yeah,” I said softly. “I’m good.”

Rob kept talking; I barely heard him now. My world had narrowed down to this single moment with Matt—a tattoo inked deep into my thoughts as if it would linger long after this night faded into memory.

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Chapter 4

Matt

Once the last of the season ticket holders shuffled out, the locker room felt heavier. Alaric Knightly stood at the front, arms crossed, his dark attire blending into the shadows. He was like a specter, sharp features illuminated by the overhead lights. His gaze swept across us, piercing and calculating, reminiscent of a ravenous hawk sizing up its prey.

“Listen up,” he said, his voice low and steady. “You’ve fought hard this season. But hard work isn’t enough if you don’t know how to harness it.” He paused, letting his words hang in the air. I leaned forward, eager for more but caught in my own thoughts. “If you want to win,” he declared, “you must want it more than your opponent.”

His eyes fixed on me again, unwavering. The challenge stirred something deep inside—a fire ignited by the image of Gemma watching from the stands.

Of her wearing my jersey in the stands.

I envisioned her face lit by stadium lights as she cheered for us—no one else mattered then. I wanted to be close to her; to bridge that gap between admiration and something more intimate. My heart raced at the thought of sharing more than just glances.

As Knightly wrapped up his speech with an admonition to remember our training

drills for next week's game, my resolve solidified. I'd make my move soon; I couldn't let this opportunity slip away.

The other players filed out slowly after Coach dismissed us. My pulse thrummed with anticipation as I lingered in the locker room alone for a moment longer—ready to claim what I desired most: Gemma.

The locker room echoed with the distant clatter of departing teammates, their voices fading into the night.

I stood under the shower, hot water pounding against my shoulders, washing away the grime and sweat of the game. Steam billowed around me, creating a cocoon of solitude. My muscles relaxed, but my mind was anything but calm.

Gemma.

Her name echoed in my thoughts, a persistent drumbeat.

I pictured her in the stands, her eyes following me, her lips curved in a smile that hinted at secrets shared only between us. The image shifted, and suddenly, she was closer, her lips parted, her breath warm against my skin.

I closed my eyes, letting the fantasy take over. Gemma, on her knees, looking up at me with those fiery eyes. Her lips, soft and inviting, wrapping around me. The thought sent a jolt of electricity through my body, and I felt myself harden, the heat of the shower nothing compared to the fire burning within me.

I leaned against the cold tiles; the contrast heightening my senses. My hand moved almost of its own accord, wrapping around my length, mimicking the fantasy playing out in my mind. I could see her, feel her, as if she were right there with me. Her eyes, wide and teary, but filled with a hunger that matched my own.

I stroked myself, the rhythm steady, driven by the pulsating need that coursed through my veins. Each stroke was a step closer to her, each breath a whispered promise of what could be. The steam swirled around me, smothering me in thoughts of her.

My breath hitched as I chased the edge, the tension coiling tighter and tighter.

I wanted to make her choke on my dick, on my come.

I bit back a groan; the sound echoing off the tiles. My hand moved faster, the fantasy playing out in vivid detail. Gemma, taking me deeper, her eyes locked onto mine, her body trembling with the same desire that threatened to consume me.

The tension snapped, and I came undone, the release sweeping through me like a tidal wave. I braced myself against the wall, panting; the water cascading over me, washing away the remnants of the fantasy. But the image of her lingered, a ghostly imprint that refused to fade.

I turned off the shower, the sudden silence jarring. The locker room was empty now, the echoes of my teammates long gone. I toweled off, the rough fabric still not snapping me back to reality. The fire within me still burned, the need for her unquenched.

I dressed quickly, the cold air of the locker room a harsh reminder of reality. But as I stepped out into the night, the image of her lingered, a promise of what could be, a challenge waiting to be met.

The stadium lights flickered off, leaving the parking lot in a soft glow. My heart raced—not just from the adrenaline of the game but from thoughts of her. I glanced around, my gaze scanning the empty spaces, as if expecting her to appear from behind a car or step out from the shadows.

Every time I caught her eye in the stands, something primal stirred within me. She wasn't just another fan; she was mine in some unspoken way. I could feel it in my bones. That connection sparked a possessiveness that simmered beneath the surface, twisting and tightening like a noose around my heart.

"Hey, Sokolov!" A teammate's voice broke through my reverie. It was Gideon Howard, his scars slashing across his face. "You good? You look like you've seen a ghost."

I forced a grin, shoving down the darker thoughts swirling inside me. "Yeah, just thinking about next week."

"Sure you are." He chuckled, nudging my shoulder playfully. "Don't let that girl distract you too much."

But she wasn't just a distraction; she was everything I wanted and more. The idea of someone else looking at her sent heat pooling in my stomach—a burning jealousy that I couldn't shake off. If anyone dared to approach her...

Even her own boyfriend...

The thought knotted my fists at my sides. I reached my car and leaned against it for a moment, inhaling deeply.

"You're fucking mine," I murmured under my breath, staring into the darkness where I imagined her standing beside me.

No one would ever touch her again. Not while I was around.

At all costs, I vowed silently to myself.

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Chapter 5

Gemma

The next few days blurred together. I barely remembered waking up, heading to class, or even grabbing coffee from the café down the street. My thoughts kept circling back to that night in the locker room, the heat of Matt's gaze lingering like a brand on my skin.

Rob had left for a business trip early Tuesday morning. He'd been distant, but now he was gone, leaving an echoing silence in his wake. I tossed my phone aside after reading his text—just a reminder about the conference, nothing more. The tension between us had been building ever since that game, but without him around, it felt even more pronounced.

Every time I stepped out of my apartment, a prickling sensation crawled along my spine. I glanced over my shoulder as I walked to campus, half-expecting to find someone lurking behind a tree or leaning against a lamppost. The feeling clawed at me, knotting my stomach tighter with each passing day.

I spent most of my afternoons in the library, drowning myself in textbooks and notes for my thesis. The shelves surrounded me like sentinels, but they couldn't shield me from that watchful feeling. Whenever I paused to stretch or sip from my water bottle, I caught glimpses of shadows darting just outside my peripheral vision.

One evening after class, I found myself lingering by the entrance of the library. A couple of students rushed past me with laughter echoing off the stone walls. I turned

away from them and pulled out my phone, pretending to scroll through messages while stealing glances outside.

I glanced around, the library's wooden doors creaking slightly as they swung closed behind me. No one lingered in the shadows. The campus felt deserted, just me and the chill that wrapped around October like a tense hug. The air carried a crispness that bit at my cheeks, making me pull my jacket tighter.

I stepped outside, the fading light casting long shadows on the cobblestone path. The trees lining the walkway swayed gently, their leaves whispering secrets in the evening breeze. It all added to an unsettling vibe that sent shivers racing down my spine.

With each step I took toward home, I fought against the creeping sense of unease that clung to me. Maybe it was just my imagination running wild—spurred on by those lingering looks Matt had shot my way after that game (it was one game? Why was I acting this way?), filled with a strange mix of admiration and something darker.

My boots clicked rhythmically against the pavement as I moved forward. The familiar sights blurred into a muted backdrop—the café on the corner with its warm lights glowing softly, the park where kids played until dusk swallowed them whole. But all I could focus on was that feeling of being watched.

The street lamps flickered on one by one as twilight descended, casting pools of golden light onto the ground. I quickened my pace, heart thudding louder with each footfall. My phone buzzed in my pocket—a text from Rob about his trip, telling me he'd be working late and to not expect a call.

I didn't reply. The air felt too heavy to respond to mundane messages when every instinct screamed at me to hurry up and get inside.

Reaching my apartment building, I glanced back over my shoulder one last time. Just empty streets and swaying branches met my gaze. Still, I couldn't shake off the feeling that someone lurked just out of sight.

Once inside, I locked the door behind me and leaned against it for a moment, letting out a shaky breath as I listened to the quiet envelop me like a protective cocoon.

I shrugged off my coat; the fabric sliding down my arms and pooling at my feet. The chill in the air receded, but the lingering sensation of unease followed me as I kicked the coat aside. The throw blanket was folded neatly on the couch.

But.

But I thought I draped it on the arm.

Maybe... maybe I was just imagining things.

I headed upstairs, each step echoing through the empty apartment. The familiar creaks of the floorboards greeted me as I moved toward my bedroom. The soft light from my bedside lamp cast gentle shadows across the walls, making everything feel almost dreamlike.

Once inside, I closed the door behind me and took a moment to breathe. My heart still raced with remnants of anxiety from the outside world. I reached for my top and peeled it off, letting it fall carelessly onto the floor. Next came my jeans, their snug fit giving way to freedom as I stepped out of them.

With each article of clothing discarded, thoughts of Matt invaded my mind like uninvited guests at a party. His face—all angles and edge—and that voice...

There was something there, something darker; a sense of possessiveness that sent

tingles racing along my spine.

Naked now, I stood before my mirror for a moment longer than necessary. The reflection showed me—just me—and yet all I could think about was him. What would it be like to have his hands on me? Would they be gentle or rough? My breath hitched at the thought as I crawled onto my bed.

The sheets felt cool against my bare skin as I sank into them, pulling them up around me like armor. My imagination took over, painting vivid images in stark detail—Matt's gaze lingering on me with intensity, his fingers trailing along my body as if he were mapping every curve.

My heart raced with anticipation and fear mixed together. Would he whisper sweet nothings or demand what he wanted? A thrill shot through me as I let myself drift deeper into fantasy, losing track of reality while enveloped by thoughts of him.

His gaze, his voice, the way he moved with such confidence—it all consumed me. My fingers traced a path along my collarbone, lingering on the spot where his eyes had lingered that night in the locker room.

I closed my eyes, allowing myself to fully indulge in the fantasy. My breath hitched as I imagined his hands replacing mine, exploring every inch of my body with a possessive hunger that sent shivers down my spine.

My fingers trailed lower, brushing against the swell of my breasts. I could almost feel the weight of his stare, heavy and intense, as if he were watching me even now. The thought sent a thrill through me, and I bit my lip to stifle a moan.

The fabric of my sheets felt cool against my skin as I slid further down, my body responding to the phantom touch of his hands. My heart raced, pounding in my chest like a drumbeat that matched the rhythm of my desire.

I let my fingers drift lower still, teasing the sensitive skin just above my mound. The anticipation was almost unbearable, each breath coming faster and shallower as I imagined Matt's lips following the path my fingers had taken.

With a trembling hand, my fingers found the slick heat between my legs. I gasped at the contact, my body arching involuntarily as I imagined Matt's touch replacing my own.

My hips moved in time with the rhythm of my fingers, each stroke sending waves of pleasure coursing through me. I could almost hear the roughness of Matt's voice, whispering dark promises in my ear as he claimed me as his own.

The tension built within me, coiling tighter and tighter like a spring wound too tight. I could feel myself teetering on the edge, my body trembling with the effort of holding back.

"Oh, Matt," I murmured. "Oh, Matt . Yes, please!"

And then, with a final stroke, I tumbled over the edge, my body shuddering with the force of my release. I cried out; the sound muffled by the pillow pressed against my face as I rode out the waves of pleasure that washed over me.

"Such a good little girl, aren't you?" a low voice said, emerging from my closet. "Are you ready to come for me again?"

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Chapter 6

Matt

I stepped out from the shadows of Gemma's closet, each footfall a whispered secret on the carpet. Her room was a sanctuary of soft light and even softer breaths, her flushed form a magnet drawing me in. I reached her bed, looming over her. I couldn't resist any longer. I leaned down, my face inches from her warmth. I tasted her, a slight graze of my lips against her skin.

"W-what—?" Gemma snapped her eyes open, her voice a faded murmur. But I didn't stop. I couldn't. I trailed kisses down her body, my hands gently parting her thighs.

She jolted, her body tensing. "What are you doing here?" Her voice was a hiss, a mixture of shock and disbelief. She tried to squirm away, but I held onto her hips, my grip firm yet gentle. "How—"

"Stop," I whispered, my breath hot on her skin. "I know you want this. I know you want me. I heard you scream my name when you came. I want you to do it again."

She struggled, her body writhing beneath my touch. "Let go of me," she demanded, but her voice lacked conviction.

"Shh, printsessa ," I soothed, my thumbs drawing circles on her hipbones. "Let me make you feel good."

She stilled, her breath hitching in her throat. I could feel her pulse quickening, her

body betraying her as she responded to my touch. I leaned in, my intentions clear. Her protests died on her lips, replaced by a soft gasp as I began to explore her, my tongue tracing patterns on her most intimate place. Her body arched, a silent plea for more. And I obliged, losing myself in her taste, her scent, her essence.

"I... I have a boyfriend," she whispered, her voice barely audible, a feeble protest lost in the heat of our exchange.

But her body told a different story.

I felt her growing wetter, her scent intoxicating, her taste... it was a drug I'd never get enough of.

I lapped at her, my tongue relentless, drawing out a gasp from deep within her. She tried to close her legs, to deny me, but I was too far gone. I growled, the sound primal, possessive.

"I will make you come." I slid a finger inside her, her warmth enveloping me, her body betraying her words.

"You can't—" she started, but her voice hitched as I curled my finger, finding that spot that made her hips buck. Her breath came in ragged gasps, her body trembling as I stroked her, my tongue and fingers working in tandem, driving her to the edge.

"Tell me to stop," I challenged, my voice a low rumble against her flesh. I looked up, my eyes meeting hers, daring her to deny what her body so clearly wanted. Her eyes were wild, her pupils dilated, her lips parted in a silent plea.

She didn't tell me to stop. Instead, her hands found my hair, her fingers tangling in the strands, pulling me closer. I took that as my cue, my tongue flicking against her clit, my finger moving faster, harder. Her body tensed, her breath caught, and I knew she

was close.

"Come for me, printsessa ," I commanded, my voice a harsh whisper.

And she did. Her body convulsed, her orgasm ripping through her, her cry of pleasure filling the room. I didn't stop, not until I'd wrung every last drop of pleasure from her, not until her body went limp, her breath coming in soft pants.

Only then did I pull away, my face glistening with her release. I looked up at her, our eyes locking. "You're mine now," I said, my voice steady, sure. "And I'm never letting you go."

Gemma's body trembled beneath me, her breath hitching as tears welled up in her eyes. They spilled over, tracing silver paths down her cheeks. I lowered myself onto her, my cock throbbing with need. Her eyes widened, fear and desire battling within their depths.

"Please," she whispered, her voice choked with emotion. "Please, don't."

I leaned down, my tongue catching her tears, their saltiness a stark contrast to her sweetness. I slid my hands under her, cradling her head, my thumbs brushing away her tears. Her body shivered, her breath coming in ragged gasps.

"I won't hurt you," I murmured, my lips brushing against her skin. "I promise."

I shifted my hips, my cock nudging against her entrance. She tensed, her nails digging into my shoulders. I pushed in, her warmth enveloping me, her body yielding to mine. She gasped, her eyes fluttering closed, her tears flowing faster.

"Look at me," I commanded, my voice gentle yet firm.

Her eyes snapped open, her gaze locking onto mine. I slid deeper, her tightness gripping me, her heat consuming me. A groan escaped my lips, the sensation overwhelming.

"Feel that?" I whispered, my voice hoarse with desire. "Feel us?"

She nodded, her lips parted, her breath coming in soft pants. I began to move, my hips rocking against hers, my cock sliding in and out of her. Her body responded, her hips meeting mine, her breath syncing with my thrusts.

Each stroke sent waves of pleasure coursing through me, her body fitting mine like a glove. I could feel her heartbeat, her pulse racing in time with mine. Her tears slowed, her gasps turning into moans, her body arching to meet mine.

"You feel so good," I murmured, my lips brushing against hers. "So fucking good."

Her eyes fluttered closed, her body trembling as I picked up the pace, my thrusts becoming harder, deeper. Her moans grew louder, her nails digging into my back, her body coiling with tension, even though she tried so hard to resist.

"Let go," I whispered, my voice a harsh rasp. "Let go for me, printsessa ."

And she did. Her body shuddered, her orgasm ripping through her, her cry of pleasure filling the room. I could feel her pulsing around me, her body milking mine, drawing out my own release. I thrust deep, my cock throbbing as I came, my groan echoing her cry.

I collapsed onto her, our bodies slick with sweat, our breaths mingling. Her tears had stopped, her eyes closed, her body limp beneath mine. I rolled off her, pulling her into my arms, her head resting on my chest.

"You're mine," I whispered, my fingers tracing patterns on her skin. "Mine."

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Chapter 7

Gemma

I woke up to an empty bed; the sunlight slicing through the blinds, mocking the darkness that clung to me. The events of the night before crashed into my consciousness like a wrecking ball, and I curled in on myself, trying to escape the memories that flooded my mind. My body ached, a traitorous reminder of his touch, of the way I had responded to him.

Tears stung my eyes, hot and accusing. How could I have let this happen? How could my body betray me like this? I felt a sob rise in my throat, and I choked it down, refusing to let it escape. I wouldn't give him that power, not again.

But how had he been there?

The question gnawed at me, a relentless, grinding doubt.

Had he been watching me?

The thought sent a shiver down my spine, a cold, creeping dread that spread through my veins like poison.

Was he the one who'd been watching me all this time? The one whose gaze I could feel like a phantom touch, even when I was alone?

I hugged my knees to my chest, trying to make sense of it all. None of this made

sense. None of it. The pieces refused to fit together, no matter how hard I tried to force them. It was like trying to solve a puzzle in the dark, each piece slippery and elusive, always just out of reach.

I took a deep, shuddering breath, trying to calm the storm that raged inside me. I needed answers. I needed to understand. But more than anything, I needed to regain control of my body, of my life. I wouldn't let him take that from me. Not again. Not ever.

But even as I made the vow, I could feel the ghost of his touch on my skin, a lingering echo that refused to fade. And I knew, with a sinking certainty, that nothing would ever be the same again.

The door creaked open, and Matthew walked in, two steaming mugs of coffee in his hands. I glared at him, clutching the sheet tighter around me, as if cotton could shield me from the nightmare unfolding.

I couldn't tear my eyes away from him. He stood in the doorway, completely naked, his body a work of art. His skin was pale, almost translucent, and it seemed to glow in the dim light of the room. His muscles were lean and defined, a testament to the hours he spent honing his body into a weapon. A thin line of light hair trailed down from his chest, leading my gaze to the hard length of him, jutting out from between his legs. He was beautiful, in a terrifying, predatory way. And I hated myself for wanting him.

He set the mugs down on the nightstand, his movements slow and deliberate. "I thought you could use some coffee," he said, his voice low and rough.

I didn't trust myself to speak, so I just nodded, my eyes still locked on his body. I could feel the heat rising in my cheeks, and I couldn't stop it. I didn't want to want him. I didn't want to feel this way. But my body had other ideas.

He crossed the room, closing the distance between us in a few long strides. I could feel the weight of his gaze on me, heavy and possessive. He reached out, his fingers brushing against my cheek, and I flinched at the contact.

"Don't," I whispered, my voice barely audible.

He ignored me, his fingers tracing a path down my neck, over my collarbone, and down to my breast. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, my breath coming in short, shallow gasps. I wanted to push him away, to scream at him to leave me alone. But my body had other ideas.

He leaned in, his lips brushing against mine in a feather-light kiss. I could taste the coffee on his breath, bitter and strong. And I hated myself for wanting more.

"Please," I whispered, my voice trembling. "Don't do this."

But he didn't listen. He deepened the kiss, his tongue sliding against mine, and I felt myself melting into him, my body responding to his touch despite my best efforts to resist.

And as he lowered me onto the bed, his body pressing against mine, I knew that I was lost. That I would never be able to escape him. That he would always own me, body and soul.

"What are you doing?" I demanded, voice shaking with anger and fear.

He looked at me, and I hated how good he looked, blond hair falling casually into his face, like this was just another morning. Like he hadn't torn my world apart.

"You raped me," I spat, the words tasting like acid on my tongue.

"You wanted it, Gemma. Your body begs for me again."

"You're crazy," I started, the words tumbling out in a rush. "I never would have betrayed Rob. I never would have?—"

Suddenly, his fingers coiled around my throat. His grip was firm, not crushing, but a promise of power. "You will not speak his name in my presence," he said, voice low and dangerous. "You're mine, printessa ."

Fear caused my heart to skip, a primal response to the predator before me. I could see it in his eyes, the possessiveness, the obsession. It was terrifying. It was exhilarating.

"I've been watching you," he murmured, his thumb tracing the line of my jaw. "I know he treats you like an afterthought, like something he forgot about. You don't deserve that."

"And you'll treat me better?" I asked, the words barely a whisper.

"Like a princess," he said, his eyes never leaving mine. "My princess."

His lips found my throat, a soft, lingering kiss that sent a shiver down my spine. I closed my eyes, the room spinning around me. This was wrong. This was all wrong. But my body betrayed me, leaning into his touch, craving more.

His mouth moved lower, kissing and biting, marking my skin as if it were his territory. I gasped as his teeth grazed my collarbone, a sharp, sudden pain that sent a shockwave of pleasure coursing through me. I hated how my body responded to him, how it craved his touch despite the fear and anger that boiled within me.

He shifted, his body pressing against mine, and I could feel the hard length of him against my thigh. His fingers found my throat again, coiling around it like a snake,

gripping slightly. Not enough to hurt, but enough to remind me of his power, of the control he held over me.

"Matthew," I whispered, his name a plea and a curse on my lips.

He looked at me, his eyes dark and hungry. "Tell me you want this, Gemma," he said, his voice a low growl. "Tell me you want me."

I hesitated, the words stuck in my throat. I didn't want to want him. I didn't want to give him this power over me.

"I... I want you," I whispered, the words torn from me like a secret.

A slow, triumphant smile spread across his face. He leaned in, his lips brushing against mine in a kiss that was both gentle and brutal. I could taste the coffee on his breath, the faint hint of tobacco that clung to him like a second skin. And I could taste something else, something dark and dangerous, a hunger that matched my own.

He entered me then, a sudden, brutal thrust that stole my breath away. I gasped, my nails digging into his shoulders, clinging to him as if he were the only solid thing in a world that was spinning out of control.

His fingers tightened around my throat, gripping slightly, a reminder of his power, of his control. I could feel the panic rising, the fear that he would go too far, that he would take too much. But even as the fear gripped me, I could feel the pleasure building, a dark, twisted thing that coiled in the pit of my stomach, threatening to consume me.

He moved faster, his body slamming into mine, each thrust a claim, a possession. I could feel myself spiraling, falling into the darkness, into the pleasure that was too much, too intense. And as I fell, I heard his voice, a low, guttural growl in my ear.

"You're mine, Gemma. Mine."

The room filled with the sound of our bodies meeting, a raw, primal rhythm that matched the pounding of my heart. Each thrust sent a shockwave of pleasure through me, building and building until I was teetering on the edge of a precipice, ready to fall into the abyss.

"Matthew," I gasped, his name a plea, a curse, a prayer. His fingers tightened around my throat, his grip a leash that kept me tethered to him, to this moment.

"Come, printessa ," he growled, his voice a low rumble in my ear. "Come for me. Show me you belong to me."

And I did. I let go, falling into the darkness, into the pleasure that consumed me. My body shook, waves of ecstasy crashing over me, drowning me in their intensity. I could feel him pulsing inside me, his body shaking as he found his own release, his groans mingling with my cries.

We stayed like that for a moment, our bodies locked together, our breaths ragged and syncopated. His forehead rested against mine, his eyes closed, his fingers still wrapped around my throat, though the grip was loose now, almost tender.

I could feel the sweat cooling on my skin, the air in the room suddenly too cold. I shivered, and he pulled away, his body separating from mine with a suddenness that left me feeling bereft.

He stood up, his back to me, his shoulders heaving with each breath. I watched him, my body still trembling with the aftershocks of our shared climax, my mind a whirlwind of confusion and fear and something else, something darker, something I didn't want to acknowledge.

He turned to face me, his eyes meeting mine. There was a possessiveness in his gaze, a hunger that sent a shiver down my spine. He reached out, his fingers brushing against my cheek, a soft, almost tender touch that belied the darkness in his eyes.

"You belong to me," he murmured almost tenderly. "There's no escape for you now."

"But... why me?" I asked.

"Fate," he replied. "The gods brought you to me like an offering. And who am I to refuse them?"

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Chapter 8

Matt

The shrill beeping of my phone cut through the haze of early morning. I blinked at the screen, heart pounding as I wrestled with the reality of the moment.

"I need to get to morning skate," I murmured, my voice low and gravelly. "You. Call him and tell him it's over."

Gemma stared at me, wide-eyed and frozen, caught in a whirlwind of confusion. "I... I didn't even say I wanted this."

"You want this." My tone shifted, sharper now. "If you don't break things off with him, I'll kill him."

Her face paled, lips parting in shock. Good. She needed to know how serious I was.

"Matt..." she started, but the words faltered as they danced on her tongue.

I moved closer to her on the bed, invading her space until she could feel the heat radiating off me. The scent of sweat mixed with that damned locker room lingered between us, electric and intoxicating. "You think I'm joking?" My voice dropped to a whisper as I held her gaze steady. "I'm not."

She swallowed hard; the tension hanging thick like fog around us.

“You don’t understand.” Her eyes darted away for a moment before snapping back to mine. “It’s complicated.”

“Complicated?” I laughed softly, bitterly. “You’re wasting time. And I do not share.”

She opened her mouth again but hesitated; something flickered behind her eyes—fear or maybe realization? The air crackled between us as she weighed my words.

“His life is in your hands, printessa .”

Her breath hitched as if she were trying to process everything at once—the stakes of our conversation colliding with her heart’s desires.

I shifted down the bed, my gaze locked onto hers, holding her captive. I moved lower, her body tensing in anticipation. I could see the faint sheen of sweat on her skin, the flush of desire spreading across her chest.

My face pressed against her, inhaling her scent, the musk of us mixed together. A primal satisfaction surged through me as I saw the remnants of our passion, my seed glistening at her entrance. It was a mark, a claim staked. One day, I’d make sure it stayed there, a permanent testament to my possession.

Her hips bucked slightly as I kissed her, my tongue tracing the line where we’d joined. She tasted of us, a heady blend that sent a jolt of raw need through me. I delved deeper, my tongue exploring every inch of her, savoring the taste of our mingled desires.

She gasped, her fingers tangling in my hair, gripping tightly as I began to devour her. I could feel her pulse quickening, her body responding to every flick of my tongue. Her moans filled the room, a symphony of surrender that spurred me on.

My fingers found their way inside her, pushing deep, feeling her clench around me. She was so responsive, so ready. I curled my fingers, hitting that spot that made her cry out, her back arching off the bed.

Her breaths came in ragged pants, her hips moving in sync with my mouth and fingers. I could feel her getting closer, her body tensing, her muscles tightening around me. I wanted to push her over the edge, to make her shatter under my touch.

Her hands gripped the sheets, her head thrashing from side to side as she rode the wave of pleasure. I could feel her pulsing around my fingers, her body trembling with the force of her climax. She cried out, my name a broken whisper on her lips as she came undone.

“Matt...,” she breathed out slowly, an edge of uncertainty creeping into her tone.

I couldn’t let that doubt linger. Not when every part of me burned to claim what was mine—what should’ve been mine all along.

“Don’t make me wait,” I urged, every syllable coated in intensity. “Make your choice before it’s too late.”

The rink's chill bit into my skin as I stepped onto the ice, the familiar scratch of blades against the frozen surface grounding me. The taste of her still lingered on my tongue, a sweet and musky reminder of the morning's conquest. I could still feel the ghost of her touch, the echo of her moans resonating in my mind. It was a distraction I couldn't shake off, a hunger that gnawed at me, demanding more.

The guys were already warming up, their voices echoing through the vast, empty arena. Stick taps and the occasional burst of laughter punctuated the air, but it all faded into a dull hum, background noise to the symphony of memories playing in my head.

I joined the drills, my body moving on autopilot. The puck slid smoothly across the ice, my stick handling it with practiced ease.

But my mind was elsewhere.

It was back in that room, tangled in those sheets, lost in her scent. I was skating, shooting, scoring, but all I could think about was her. The way she responded to my touch, the way she came undone beneath me. It was intoxicating, addictive.

I needed more.

Coach blew his whistle, signaling a change in drills. I fell into line, my breath fogging up in the cold air. The intensity of the morning skate ramped up, but it was nothing compared to the fire burning within me. I was impatient, restless. I wanted the day to fast-forward, to skip the hours and minutes until I could be with her again.

Every pass, every shot was fueled by a raw, primal energy. I was playing like a man possessed, driven by a hunger that had nothing to do with the game. The guys noticed, exchanging glances and murmurs. They knew something was up, but they didn't know the half of it.

The whistle blew again, signaling the end of the skate. I was drenched in sweat, my heart pounding in my chest. But it wasn't enough. Not even close. I needed her. I needed to feel her, to taste her, to claim her again. And again. And again.

I hit the showers, the hot water scalding my skin. But it was a poor substitute for her touch. I dressed quickly, my mind already racing ahead, planning, scheming. I had to see her.

I had to have her.

And I wouldn't let anything stand in my way.

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Chapter 9

Gemma

I leaned against the cold wall, trying to catch my breath. Matthew would deal with Rob. I shivered, but not from the chill. I believed him. He would kill Rob if he had to.

I closed my eyes, trying to wrap my head around the intensity that radiated from Matthew. It was like a furnace, hot and consuming, but I couldn't understand it. Did he care for me? Or was I just a prize to be won, a possession to be protected? Maybe it didn't matter. Maybe I didn't want it to matter.

My body ached, a delicious soreness that spread from my hips to my toes. The things he had done to me...

I squeezed my eyes tighter, but that only intensified the memories.

His hands, rough and demanding, leaving trails of fire on my skin. His breath, hot and ragged, against my ear. His voice, deep and commanding, whispering words that made me blush even in the darkness of my closed eyelids.

I bit my lip, trying to suppress the heat that pooled in my belly. But it was no use. I could feel the wetness between my thighs, my body betraying me, craving him. I wanted him again. I wanted him to touch me, to take me, to make me his.

I opened my eyes, my breath coming in short gasps. My room was empty, the silence deafening. But I could still feel him, his presence lingering like a shadow. I hugged

myself, my fingers digging into my arms. What was happening to me? Why did I want this so badly? Why did I want him ?

I took a deep breath, trying to calm my racing heart. But it was no use. I was already falling, already drowning in the intensity that was Matthew Sokolov. And I wasn't sure I wanted to be saved.

I pulled on my jeans, the denim rough against my sensitive skin. My hands trembled as I buttoned my shirt, the fabric brushing against the marks Matthew had left on me. I sat down at my desk, my thesis staring back at me, the words blurring into an incomprehensible mess. I rubbed my eyes, trying to focus, but my mind was a whirlwind, my body still humming with the echoes of Matthew's touch.

The sound of the front door opening jolted me from my thoughts. I turned to see Rob standing in the doorway, his eyes scanning the room, his gaze landing on me.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, my voice steadier than I felt.

"I got home early," he said, his eyes narrowing as he stepped closer. "What happened, Gemma? Why..." He sniffed. "Why does it smell like sex? Why are you covered in hickeys?"

I opened my mouth, but no words came out. I could feel the color draining from my face, my heart pounding in my chest.

"I... I didn't mean..." I started, my eyes blurring with tears. "It just... I didn't want this."

"Have you cheated on me?" he demanded, his voice rising. He stalked up to me, his hand wrapping around my neck. "You fucking whore. Tell me why I shouldn't fucking kill you right now."

"Rob, I didn't mean..." I choked out, tears spilling down my cheeks. "I didn't have a choice."

He dropped his hand, his voice almost desperate. "Then why? Why, Gemma?"

"I didn't have a choice," I repeated, my voice barely a whisper.

He stepped back, his face contorting with anger and pain. "Liar," he spat. "You're a fucking liar."

Rob's face twisted into a snarl, his hands clenching into fists. He scanned the room, his eyes landing on the first target—a vase, a gift from my grandmother. He smashed it against the wall, the shattering of ceramic echoing through the room.

I jumped up, my heart pounding. "Rob, stop!" I reached for his arm, but he shook me off, his rage a tangible force.

He stormed into the kitchen, sweeping his arm across the counter. Dishes crashed to the floor, glass and pottery exploding into shards. I followed, my bare feet crunching on the debris. "Please, Rob. Calm down."

He whirled on me, his eyes wild. "Calm down? You want me to calm down?" He grabbed the nearest object, my laptop, and hurled it across the room. It hit the wall with a sickening crunch, the screen splintering.

My thesis. My work. My future. Gone in an instant.

A scream tore from my throat, raw and primal. I lunged at him, my fists pummeling his chest. "You bastard! That was my thesis!"

He grabbed my wrists, his grip bruising. "You cheated on me, Gemma. You fucked

someone else in our bed." His voice was a low growl, his breath hot on my face.

I wrenched one hand free and slapped him, the sound sharp in the sudden silence. His head snapped to the side, a red welt blooming on his cheek.

He turned back to me, his eyes cold. Before I could react, his hand whipped out, backhanding me across the face. Pain exploded in my cheek, my vision swimming with stars. I stumbled back, my hand pressed to my face, the taste of blood in my mouth.

The room spun, Rob's figure blurring. I blinked, trying to clear my vision, trying to understand what had just happened. The world tilted, and I felt myself falling, the darkness rushing up to meet me.

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"That was not a good idea," I said, watching Gemma crumple to the floor. Her eyes fluttered closed, a soft moan escaping her lips. A primal urge to protect her surged through me, every muscle tensing.

"Matthew Sokolov?" Rob's voice cut through the tension, incredulity dripping from each syllable. "You... you and her...?"

I turned to face him, my gaze steady, unyielding. "She's mine," I declared, the words echoing in the suddenly silent room. "And you destroyed her work, her home. You put your hands on her." I stepped closer, my voice dropping to a low growl. "This is not good for you, Rob."

His face contorted, a mix of anger and disbelief. "You think you can waltz in here and claim her? She's just a piece of ass to you, isn't she?" His voice rose, echoing off the cold locker room walls. "I've known her for years, and you—you're just some hotshot center who thinks he can have whatever he wants!"

He lunged at me, fists flying. I sidestepped, his punch grazing my shoulder. Rob charged again, his face red with rage. This time, I stood my ground, bracing for impact. His fist connected with my jaw, pain exploding across my face. I staggered back, then straightened, a slow smile spreading across my lips.

"That all you got?" I taunted, wiping a trickle of blood from my mouth.

His eyes narrowed, and he came at me again, a whirlwind of fury and frustration. I met his blows, blocking some, taking others. Each hit fueled my determination, my need to protect Gemma burning hotter with every punch. This was more than just a

fight; it was a statement, a claim.

And I wouldn't back down.

Rob's fist swung wild, telegraphing his moves like a rookie.

I ducked, his knuckles grazing air. My heart pounded, not from exertion, but from the sight of Gemma, crumpled and bruised. That was fuel, pure and potent.

I drove my fist into his gut. He doubled over, gasping. I followed with an uppercut, snapping his head back. He stumbled, caught off guard by my ferocity. I didn't give him time to recover. I advanced, each step a promise, each blow a testament to my vow. She was mine to protect.

Rob tried to rally, swinging wide. I caught his arm, twisted, and sent him crashing to the floor. His eyes widened in shock and fear. I straddled him, my hands wrapping around his throat. His flesh yielded under my grip, his breaths growing shallow, then desperate.

"You. Don't. Touch. Her." Each word was punctuated by a squeeze, his face turning a mottled red. His hands clawed at mine, nails digging into my skin. I barely felt it. All I saw was the bruise on Gemma's cheek, the fear in her eyes when he'd loomed over her.

His struggles grew weak, his eyes bulging. His mouth opened and closed like a fish out of water. I leaned in, my voice a low growl. "Never again."

His body convulsed, then stilled. His chest stopped moving. I held on, counting the seconds, making sure. Then, I released him, standing up slowly.

I turned to Gemma, my breaths coming in ragged bursts. She stared at me, eyes wide, hand pressed to her cheek.

Anger surged through me, hot and fresh, at the sight of the bruise marring her skin. I stepped over Rob's body, my foot connecting with his lifeless form.

Once.

Twice.

A pathetic vent for the rage inside me.

"Matt..." Gemma's voice was soft, barely a whisper.

I knelt beside her, her body trembling like a leaf in a storm. My hand hovered over her cheek, not yet touching, but close enough to feel the heat radiating from her skin. "He's dead," I said, voice flat, devoid of emotion.

She shuddered, her breath hitching. "Why?" The word escaped her lips like a secret, whispered into my ear.

I leaned in, my voice a low rumble. "Because he touched you." My fingers brushed her cheek, tracing the bruise that marred her perfect skin. A surge of protectiveness coursed through me, dark and consuming. "You cannot escape from me, printessa . You're mine now."

Gemma's eyes met mine, wide and searching. Then, she did something I didn't expect. She leaned in, her lips pressing against mine. It was soft, tentative, a question more than a statement.

I froze, surprised by the sudden contact.

She pulled back, just enough to speak, her breath mingling with mine. "Fuck me."

My cock hardened at her words, a rush of desire sweeping through me. I looked at

her, really looked, seeing the darkness lurking behind her eyes. A slow smile spread across my face.

"There's darkness in you," I murmured, my hands moving to her shirt, deftly unbuttoning it.

I pulled out her tits, my thumbs brushing over her nipples, feeling them harden under my touch. I leaned down, taking one into my mouth, sucking, biting gently.

She gasped, her hands fisting in my hair, pulling me closer. I growled, the sound vibrating against her skin.

"I knew it," I said, moving to her other breast, giving it the same attention. "I knew there was a reason I wanted you so badly."

I released her breast, my mouth trailing up to her neck, biting, sucking. She moaned, her body arching into mine. I pushed her down, my hands rough, demanding. She hit the floor, breath whooshing out, eyes wide with surprise and desire.

"Here?" she gasped, looking at Rob's lifeless body beside us.

I grinned, a dark, feral thing. "Here," I growled, unbuckling my belt, pulling down my pants. My cock sprang free, hard and ready.

Her eyes widened, pupils dilating. She licked her lips, a quick dart of her tongue. I gripped her hips, flipping her onto her stomach. She let out a soft cry, her hands scrambling for purchase on the bedroom floor.

I yanked down her jeans, her panties, exposing her to me. She was wet, glistening. I ran a finger through her folds, a low groan escaping me. She pushed back against my hand, a silent plea.

I gripped her hips, positioning myself at her entrance. Then, with one hard thrust, I was inside her. She cried out, her body tensing, then relaxing, accepting me.

I began to move, my hips driving into her, each thrust a claim, a statement.

She was mine.

Mine to protect.

Mine to fuck.

Mine to possess.

Her moans filled the room, echoing off the cold, hard surfaces. I leaned down, my body covering hers, my hand snaking around her throat. I squeezed gently, feeling her pulse race under my fingers.

"You like this, don't you?" I growled into her ear, my hips never stopping their relentless pace. "You like being fucked next to his body. You like the danger, the darkness."

She whimpered, her body trembling beneath me. I could feel her orgasm building, her muscles tightening around me. I released her throat, my hand moving to her clit, rubbing in tight, fast circles.

Her body quivered as I circled her clit, my cock driving into her relentlessly. Her moans echoed, raw and primal.

"Tell me you love this," I growled, my voice a rough whisper against her ear. "Tell me you love the way I fuck you."

She gasped, her nails clawing at the floor. "I... I love it." The words escaped her lips

like a secret, whispered into my ear.

A dark chuckle rumbled in my chest. "That's not enough, printessa . Tell me you love me. Tell me you love me like I love you."

Her body tensed, her muscles clenching around me. I could feel her heart pounding, her breath coming in ragged gasps. I slowed my thrusts, teasing her, drawing out her pleasure.

"Say it," I demanded, my hand gripping her chin, turning her face towards me. Her eyes met mine, wide and wild, filled with a storm of emotions.

"I love you," she whispered, her voice barely audible.

But it was enough. It was everything .

A feral grin spread across my face. "Good girl." I rewarded her with a hard thrust, my hips snapping against her ass. She cried out, her body writhing with pleasure.

"You feel that?" I murmured, my voice a low rumble. "That's us, printessa . That's our love. Dark. Dirty. Perfect."

She moaned, her body moving in sync with mine, meeting each thrust with eager desperation.

"You're close," I whispered, my hand moving from her chin to her throat, squeezing gently. "I can feel it. I can feel you."

She whimpered, her hands scrambling for purchase, finding none. She was at my mercy, completely and utterly mine.

"Come for me, Gemma," I commanded, my voice a dark whisper. "Show me how

much you love this. How much you love me."

Her body responded instantly, her orgasm crashing over her like a wave. She screamed, her muscles clamping down on me, her body convulsing with pleasure. I rode her through it, my thrusts never stopping, drawing out her orgasm, making her mine.

As her body began to relax, her breaths growing slower, deeper, I leaned down, my lips brushing against her ear.

"My turn," I whispered, a dark promise in my voice. Her body tensed again, ready and eager. And I gave her everything I had, my love, my darkness, my soul.

All of it.

For her.

"Come for me again, printessa," I commanded, my voice a low rumble. "Come all over my cock. I know you can."

Her body released the tension that had been building up, her orgasm ripping through her again. I gripped her hips tighter, my pace increasing, chasing my own release.

I came with a roar, my body shuddering, my cock pulsing inside her.

I collapsed on top of her, my breaths coming in ragged gasps. Her body was slick with sweat, her heart pounding against my chest.

I rolled off her, my body spent, my mind racing. I looked over at Rob's body, a grim smile spreading across my face.

This was just the beginning.

She was mine now.

And I'd do whatever it took to keep her safe.

To keep her mine.

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