



The Deity of Death (Virgins and Villains #3)

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Category: Action&Adventure

Description: Virgins and Villains~ because ~ Sometimes the villain gets the girl

Head of Security and Advisor to one of the most important men in the country. Those titles don't look too bad on my business card.

But they become meaningless when I set up a deal with a petroleum magnate from the West. It's supposed to be simple. She marries the boss' son, her father signs some papers, and we all walk away with boatloads of cash and more power than anyone should have.

The plan goes to shit the second I set eyes on Melina Remington, my life spinning out in glorious chaos.

She's bubbly. Innocent. Gorgeous. Perfect!

More importantly, she's mine. I don't give a flying f*ck if she's supposed to marry someone else. The moment it becomes clear to both of us that she wants this as badly as I do, then I stake my claim.

And here's the thing about me—I protect what I own, and I don't share.

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MALIK

Seeing all of Melina Remington in person, I know I've made a terrible mistake.

Big time.

"Whiskey on the rocks and a bottle of water." Given the circumstances, I'm surprised to see her freckled cheeks raised in a warm, inviting smile. There isn't a note of fear or doubt carried on her soft voice. She radiates confidence and joy, and it makes my stomach do a kickflip.

"Something to settle your nerves?" I ask, resting my ass against the bar.

My sudden interruption makes Melina jump.

"My dad's." Her plump lips part with a giggle from the sudden fright. "I'm not one for intoxicants before business."

I drink in her snow-white skin. It carries the perfection of her innocence and youth. Long golden locks cascade down her shoulders, nestling beautifully into a loose ponytail down her back. But it's Melina's bright baby blue eyes that hold my attention the longest.

"And how do you know I'm here on business?" I crook a brow.

As much as I want to keep my attention on her inviting eyes, I can't stop it from drifting down her neck and collarbones and finally resting right on the V of her bow-tie dress, where her braless bosom spills cleavage out the top.

"The mean look on your face, for one," she snickers, between her own inspection of me. Her eyes drift up and down my frame, then lengthwise, before finally settling on my face. To avoid unnecessary awkwardness, I meet her gaze. "And two, the only people I've seen so far are Westerners stumbling through the club. Seeing a local can only mean it's time to get started."

"Very perceptive."

"Which makes you Malik. Our facilitator and host for the duration of our stay here." The way she says my name makes every drop of blood in my body thump into my cock with such intensity I almost collapse.

"Yes, Mr. Omar Ali has asked me to make introductions. Test the waters, as it were. But mostly, I suppose, he wants me to ensure I haven't made a mistake." I won't lie to these people, not with what I've orchestrated. A bonding of our houses for wealth and power. Honesty is the least I can offer with what's being negotiated. "But one look at you is enough to tell me I haven't."

Melina's smile shifts into a sheepish grin, and she leans in close before she speaks again. "The waters, you say? I'll have you know they're soaking wet."

She's teasing me, and it's driving me fucking wild. Every word, every damned action she makes, has my cock knocking desperately at my zipper. Eager to break free and split her in two right over this fucking bar counter.

"What's the matter, Malik? Cat got your tongue?" she whispers before gliding back in her seat and getting comfortable against the backrest.

Devious little minx. And damn brave, to boot. Flirting with me while her soon-to-be-husband sits upstairs awaiting her arrival.

“There’s only one way for me to be sure about that.” I manage to speak without choking on my words. Melina Remington hasn’t even done anything, and she has me flustered. Is that a good sign or bad? “I can’t have you lying to me.”

“Do what you must, but I can assure you’ll be very satisfied with the result.” Melina’s eyes tilt into a hooded gaze, and her porcelain white teeth sink into her lower lip.

“Teasing me isn’t going to end the way you think it might, Melina.” Confidence lines my words, but my body betrays it. Instead of staring at her square and sticking to my reason for being here, my eyes drift down her body once more.

Her words tickle a special part of my brain. A long-forgotten, deep recess where happiness and lust coincide. If she isn’t careful, it might just send me overboard.

“Who says I’m trying to reach any end?” She giggles and kicks one leg over her knee. “Maybe I’m having some fun before I have to give myself to your boss’ son.”

Those words sting. ‘Terrible mistake’ doesn’t even cut it. I set this whole thing in motion, and now I’m gonna have to sit on the sidelines and watch the only woman who’s piqued my interest disappear right in front of me.

Fuck.

The barman brings her order and sets it down before I have a chance to respond. Against my better judgment, I find my eyes dropping to Melina’s thighs as she gathers her drinks. I’m desperate for a glance at what waits beneath. With how our meet has started, why not sink deeper into depravity?

“My eyes are up here, big boy,” Melina says, but her actions don’t imitate her words.

She could’ve stood upright without moving her legs, but instead, one knee parts from the other slowly. Every inch exposes more skin up her thigh, and with it, my breathing becomes sporadic and uncontrollable. Until finally, her legs split in full, and I’m staring straight into white silken panties.

I have to force myself to swallow a mouthful of drool before it dribbles down my chin.

“You might want to pick your jaw up off the floor,” she coos as she hoists herself out of the chair. “My dad’s waiting for us.”

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MELINA

What the hell was that?

A new level of crazy, even for me. That's what.

I walk with rose-pink cheeks through a noisy, crowded club, narrowly avoiding dancers as I trot. I can't help but feel it's his fault. His golden eyes burning through my dress, begging for a glimpse. How he tried to hold his cool but fumbled in the most inconspicuous of ways.

And God, the sheer size of him is enough to drive any woman crazy. Taller than a door-frame and nearly as wide.

"Father will be glad you're finally here." I turn my head over one shoulder as I speak, only to find Malik lost to another haphazard inspection of my body, lingering particularly long on my ass. A little giggle escapes my lips.

I can't deny catching this monster's attention makes me feel incredible. One of my biggest fears about dropping everything back home and coming to a foreign land was finding out that none of them would be interested in me. And considering what Dad and I have agreed to, that wouldn't be good for business.

"Why's that?" Malik asks. He's moved on from attempts to avert his attention when I look at him, but I suppose I'm at fault for giving him this confidence. Why should he

feel ashamed staring at my ass when he's seen my panties?

"This place unsettles him." I sigh and turn my head back to the table where my father is seated. He's staring at the ceiling while chewing on a fat cigar.

"The hotel?"

Damn, he's handsome. His fiery eyes are enhanced by the mane of black hair brushing against his shoulders as he walks. His razor-sharp jaw, so strong it could cut through diamonds, is peppered with late-evening stubble that only serves to enhance his exquisite features. He's the perfect wet dream, dressed in a ten thousand dollar suit.

If only he could be mine.

And maybe that's why I'm going crazy and allowing myself to do naughty things in public places. After all, I'm getting married next week to a man I haven't even met.

"The country." I stop where I'm standing beside a table of laughing drunks. "We may all be playing this game together, Malik, but we hold a different decorum in our neck of the woods. Your boss is..."

"Barbaric," Malik finishes my sentence. I'd have trailed off and left it there had he not. "I understand your father's fears, but trust that nothing will happen to either of you while you're here. I vow it."

I have no reason to believe him, but somehow I do. "Then, let's get this dirty business out of the way."

We take the last few steps to Dad.

“Mr. Remington, it’s a pleasure to meet you,” Malik says while Dad greedily snatches the whiskey from my hands.

“Likewise.” Dad takes a sip before extending a hand to Malik. They shake while he speaks. “You must be the Deity of Death.”

Malik shakes his head with a chuckle. “I haven’t heard that name in a long time. I see you’ve done some digging.”

“Yes. My daughter’s safety in this negotiation is paramount, Mr. Amine. I’ve done a lot more than just digging.” Dad’s response makes me smile, and it must be contagious, with how Malik’s lips are turned high to the sky.

“I’ll tell you what I told your daughter; your safety has my personal guarantee. I admit, it’s a breath of fresh air to see a father care so deeply for his child, but it raises questions.” Malik scans my dad from head to toe in a similar fashion as he did with me. Only this time, his attention doesn’t linger anywhere in particular once his observations are made.

“Ask it then.” Dad shrugs, sucking down his whiskey in one big gulp.

“Our arrangement, offering your daughter’s hand to Mr. Ali’s son. Why do it if you fear for her well-being?” Malik asks.

“Because it wasn’t my father’s decision,” I answer before Dad gets a chance to. “Someday, my father will step down, and his empire will fall on my shoulders. How better to learn the intricacies of our family business than throwing myself in the deep end?”

“You don’t cease to impress me, Melina.”

“Trust me.” I wink. “You haven’t seen anything yet.”

Malik crosses his arms over his chest and places a flat palm over his mouth. Maybe he doesn’t want to be seen smiling this much, but I can’t help myself. The butterflies flutter by every time I see one on his face.

And after a moment of composure, Dad staring at us awkwardly, Malik speaks again. “Are we ready to get this show on the road?”

But even as he says those words, his eyes sink, and his face sours.

Maybe I’m reading this wrong. Malik might just be a man interested in a woman. Any woman. And I’m just the one right in front of him.

Still, I can’t stop the feeling that we’re in for one hell of a ride.

MALIK

“Pretty swanky set up you’ve got here,” Henry says once we’re in the elevator up to the top floor. “Booze, whores, and gambling. What more can a man want? But isn’t it illegal? Can’t you guys get into serious shit?”

He’s in a better mood now that we’re moving. Perhaps the anticipation of his situation was worse than the reality.

“I’m sure you’ve experienced the accommodations wealth brings, Mr. Remington. A golden handshake can grease the wheels of even the most stringent laws. In honesty, it’s all for show anyway. Mr. Ali wanted you to feel comfortable. He ordered the hotel’s construction and offered cheap accommodation to fill the place with familiar faces.” I speak to him, but my attention is firmly on Melina.

Her deep blue eyes are glued to mine, hanging on every word I say as if something important is going to follow each damned syllable.

“All that for our little arrangement?” Melina crosses her arms under her breasts and props them up. With what she did in the club, I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s doing it to further taunt me.

Fuck. I can’t even sneak a peek with Henry staring directly at me.

“Little? We’re talking about a merger of two world-rattling organizations. No stops

are pulled to ensure the boss and his new business partners are satisfied.”

“And what if we’re not satisfied?” Melina crooks a brow. “I’ve only seen Nasir in pictures and videos. All of which could be doctored and altered to create an image of the ideal man.”

“Bridges are made to be crossed, and we’ll pass that one when we get to it,” I say.

I’m not going to delude myself into thinking this is a done deal. Melina has every right to fear the man she’s planning on marrying. But the thought of her displeasure in Nasir, while simultaneously finding interest in me, is delightful.

The elevator dings, and the doors slide open to a long, empty corridor. Forty rooms fully furnished and ready for guests, all locked up and off-limits to protect Omar Ali’s safety. What’s worse is the aisle of guards, one at every door, holding machine guns and looking mean.

“Oh, shit,” Henry mutters to himself.

“Don’t worry about them.” I lead the way down the hall.

We walk in silence, with only the occasional greeting from the men we pass.

“Are you ready?” I ask once we’ve crossed and stood before the great oak door leading into the conference room.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” Henry speaks first, fidgeting with the half-smoked cigar anxiously.

“And you, Melina?” Her response is the only one I care for.

“I am. And for what it’s worth, Malik, I’m more fond of the Pale Prophet than the Deity of Death. It has a much kinder ring to it.”

Another name lost to time, though from her lips, it brings a smile to my face.

“Let’s get this done then.” I push open the double door and step inside.

Omar Ali sits at the far end of an unnaturally long table with Nasir, his son, beside him. The boss’ fat face is buried in a manila folder while Nasir plays on his phone. Both their heads snap to the door as we enter.

“Mr. Remington,” Omar says, rising from his seat with an anguished sigh. Years of living greedy have lined his pockets, but it came at the expense of a lean physique and his health. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Nasir stands as well, though his attention is focused on Melina as she struts alongside her father to the table.

“And you, Mr. Ali,” Henry says, but there’s little confidence in his tone.

“She’s absolutely stunning.” Nasir is next to speak. His jaw’s practically dropped straight down to the lobby.

“Everything is in order. My short time spent with the Remingtons has given me all the answers I need.” Straight to business. I can’t stand the sight of these two gawking at Melina.

Every time their eyes move, I feel my blood start boiling. I’ve staked my claim on a woman I shouldn’t have, but that doesn’t detract from the feelings it brings.

“As I knew it would,” Omar responds.

The three men greet with handshakes before we all take a seat. Henry finds a place next to Nasir on the other side of the table. I pull out Melina's chair and tuck her in before falling into mine beside Omar.

She hasn't said a word since we entered the room, and I've got a feeling she isn't going to either. It's different now. These men are orchestrating her future, and she doesn't have a say in it. Melina's probably nervous, scared, and concerned about what may come next.

But don't worry, precious little thing, I'm going to help you release all your tension.

"Shall we get into it then?" Henry adjusts himself awkwardly in his chair.

I give everyone a moment to settle in before I make my move. With one hand under the table, I start inching it closer to Melina as inconspicuous as possible. She doesn't notice at first, perhaps believing it was an accidental graze.

"Please, Mr. Remington, it's our first meeting. Let's not sully it by diving straight into contracts and formalities." Omar waves a dismissive hand over the table.

"But it's why we're here, isn't it?" Of course, her first words after the greeting will exude confidence. Who am I kidding, thinking she's afraid? When I set up the deal, she was the one who accepted it.

But if I'm not doing this to settle her nerves, if only a little, I'll be doing it to test her theory from the bar. Soaking wet, and satisfyingly so? I'll be the judge of that.

My hand glides over Melina's knee, and her head immediately jolts toward me. The corner of my mouth cracks in a naughty smile. I start slow, with a gentle stroke of my thumb on whatever skin it's touching.

I miss Omar's response with how focused I am on my task. My fingers dance up her leg, and to my surprise, Melina doesn't try to stop me. Instead, I feel her legs part farther, allowing my hand free motion across her.

"And what about you, Malik?" Omar asks. I face him as my fingers glide between Melina's thighs. Warmth radiates between them, and it seems to transfer through my skin and straight to my aching manhood.

"What about me? My apologies, my mind was elsewhere." And it still is.

Omar chuckles. "Plotting your next big score already?"

"You don't know half of it." Only this one isn't monetary or a way to feed his empire. It's all for me and in the palm of my hands. Literally.

"Settle down, son, and enjoy the moment." Omar pats me on the shoulder.

Oh, I'm enjoying it, alright. Every damned second of Melina's squirming.

"But I want your thoughts, shall we dive straight into business and hold festivities later or reverse it?" Omar finishes.

"Why not a bit of both?" I answer.

Before either of the men can respond, the double doors swing open again, and a troop of servers enter with silver platters in tow. Some deliver a feast of various meats, vegetables, and sweet treats to the table, while others start preparing a makeshift bar on the far end of the room.

With their entrance, Melina finally gets her chance to speak. She leans in close and whispers in my ear. "What are you?—"

“Like I said in the bar, I’m going to have to put your theory to the test,” I cut her off before raising my hand higher up her thighs and straight against her pussy.

A nearly inaudible squeal of delight floods my ear, and it sends shivers of desire coursing through my body.

MELINA

A rmed, hulking monsters in every corner of the room. Mr. Omar Ali and Dad discussing my future as if I'm not even here. Nasir Ali staring me down from opposite the table while his tongue flicks over eager lips. And Malik Amine's hand between my legs.

Maybe I am in over my head on this one.

No matter my inner turmoil and attempts to remain calm and still, I can't deny the pleasure of his cool fingers against my feverish skin. My body gives in while my mind attempts to stay the course. Listen to what these titans whisper as I experience my first taste of another person's touch.

"A bit of both it is," Omar announces as the waiters finish delivering food and setting up the bar. One of the gunmen in the corner takes his position behind it, pouring champagne into skinny flutes.

"I must say, your photos barely do you any justice, Melina. Your beauty in person far exceeds any expectations," Nasir says. He leans over the table to a bowl of shredded meat and scoops a ladle full onto his plate.

"My thoughts exactly." Malik tilts his gaze in my direction. Every teasing word and gentle smile tickles my core and leaves a puddle in my panties. One he's about to traverse with those hungry fingers of his.

The edge of his hand brushes against my intimacy and sends a bolt of electricity coursing through my body. It pings every nerve, making my entire body spasm in euphoria, and I have to bite down on my inner cheek just to stifle the noises trying to escape. My heart beats so loudly that it's almost the only thing I can hear.

"Yes, yes, very pretty," Omar chimes in, snatching a chicken leg from a full roast.

Omar's compliments, and Nasir's too, for that matter, are meaningless. All I care about at this moment is Malik and whatever his hand is going to do next.

Omar takes a bite of his chicken leg and starts speaking between obnoxiously loud chewing. "Mr. Remington, the terms of our agreement have been laid out before you. Hesitation was of utmost importance from both our houses, and the floor is open to negotiations. Your daughter is a fine young lady, and your company would be of great value to our organization. What are your thoughts on the matter?"

All eyes turn to Dad. With everyone's attention divided, Malik makes his next move. His hand cups my pubic area, and a finger slots firmly against my clit. A sigh of exasperation followed by a loud swallow brings a sly grin to Malik's face.

No one notices. Good.

Or they just don't care. I have to remember this is a business transaction above all else. It's the first time I'm meeting my future husband and his father, so there are no feelings between us. They might just see any random outbursts as quirks relating to the situation.

And maybe it's the reason Malik is so bold. Finger fucking me in front of the most dangerous men in the whole damn country. Why be suspicious when you don't know the people at your table?

“Remington Oil operates on a global front,” Dad starts. His tone has shifted away from the nervous, timid man Malik met in the bar to the powerhouse of the industry he has become. I knew it would eventually, even if it meant losing me at a cost. “We’re a household name across many countries around the world. Hell, the King himself gave Remington Oil a seal of approval.”

He pauses to take a sip of champagne, no doubt using the time to formulate his thoughts. “You say the floor is open to negotiation, then I’ll take the opportunity. I’m sure you’ve heard the rumors floating about your company, Mr. Ali?—”

Omar scoffs and drops his chicken leg onto a heap of mashed potatoes. “If you’re trying to highroad me, Mr. Remington, I’d advise against it. You’re here, are you not? Dining with the man your media conveys as a vicious monster.”

My eyes nearly burst out of my skull at the direction the conversation took. Though he isn’t showing direct signs of anger, Omar’s tone has my heart thumping in my throat. We have men stationed across the hotel, but none of them are here, and none of them will survive the night if things go sour here.

But I don’t get the chance to lose myself to fear for long. Malik, who has been a statue since his last move, allows the perfectly placed finger to glide down my panties. The silk material gives him no resistance, and my increasing wetness only serves to help. Before I can get lost in my fears, he brings me back to sanity. Or is it lunacy? Getting my first taste of a man’s pleasure while casually discussing the horrors of our worlds.

“I won’t bullshit you, I believe every word the media says.” Dad stares Omar straight in the eyes. Nasir’s the only one still eating. “But I won’t lie and say I’m a saint. I wouldn’t be here if I kept everything above board, now would I?”

Malik’s finger that haphazardly slid across my pussy finds its way to the edge of my

panties. With a forceful tug, he pries the material away from my skin before the rough tips of his digits strike my smooth skin. A shiver courses through his body and transfers to mine.

“Then please continue,” Omar says, and the rage and tension burning in his eyes start slipping away.

“Melina’s safety is of utmost importance to me. I want assurances that nothing will happen to her when I leave,” Dad says plainly. “Alongside those, I want to know how you’re going to keep your name away from Remington Oil. You’ll reap the same rewards of wealth while I distribute your stock, but you will never have a say in the day-to-day operations of my company.”

“I like it when you’re feisty, Mr. Remington,” Malik says with a little chuckle. But even as the table turns to face him, Malik continues his escapade between my thighs. He twists his wrist in a quick, sharp motion, and before I have a moment to prepare myself, fingers glide over my wetness.

This time, I can’t stop my yelping as I clutch onto the armrests of my seat. I have to suck in slow deep breaths to steady myself while the three men turn their attention between Malik and me.

Is he doing it on purpose? Torturing me at the table as payback for my stunt at the bar? It should make me uncomfortable, but it doesn’t. Having all eyes on me while Malik tries to tease an orgasm out of me is disgustingly hot.

“Let me be the one to give you the assurance of Melina’s safety. A personal guarantee I’ll hand over in writing if you’d prefer. Though, I don’t suspect a paper trail is what you’re after,” Malik continues both with the conversation and traversing my pussy. I brace myself against the armrests, feeling his fingers dance. He applies pressure to my clit with the flat palm of his hand while the finger between my folds

slips lower. The tip of the digit, soaked from its exploration of my pussy, now knocking at my entrance. “And if Mr. Ali would allow, all deals will go through me. I’ll act as a middleman as a member of your company. A shadow figure who won’t appear at board meetings but will have a vote at the table. Decisions dictated by Mr. Ali, of course.”

Every muscle in my body is tense, and it all stems from the knot in my core. It’s his slow, methodical torture that’s the worst part. But something tells me it’s why he can’t stop grinning.

“Sounds fair to me.” Omar shrugs and reaches for the cutlery beside his plate.

That’s when it happens. Malik’s finger sinks into my hole. My wetness provides ample lubrication for it to go deeper and deeper without resistance. My eyes roll to the back of my head, and I throw it up to the ceiling so no one can see my face.

“And you, Mr. Remington?” Malik’s words are calm for someone knuckle deep inside me. He moves slowly to start, but every new prod is faster than the last until he’s practically slamming his fingers into me.

My whole body tightens into one big knot. A far better reaction than spasming and sputtering in my chair, I suppose. It doesn’t take long for the overwhelming sensations to reach their peak, and before I have a chance to react, the bundle of nerves in my belly releases with an intense explosion.

A deep, primal rumble emits from Malik’s chest at my satisfaction to his service as I fall limp in my chair. Turning my attention back down to the table, no one seems to pay me any attention. There’s no way I can reason why they haven’t noticed, but I’m glad everyone’s focused on Dad and his response.

“You’ve proven yourself mighty useful, Malik, so I’ll accept that offer,” Dad says

after a long moment of contemplation.

“Fantastic.” Malik slides his finger out of me and shoves it into his mouth. He sucks it clean of my liquids and licks his lips at the taste.

But it’s the sly smile he turns in my direction once it’s all said and done that sends me into another spiral.

“So, what do we have on offer? I’m starving,” Malik says without so much as an inkling of how he just rocked my world.

He starts dishing up a plate while I’m left in a gooey little puddle, hardly able to think, let alone fill a plate with food.

5

MALIK

I 've touched her. I've tasted her.

There's no way in hell I'm sharing her.

Hours pass while they eat and drink. The conversation has long ago devolved from negotiations on our arrangement to laughter and jokes. I don't partake in their festivities. The outcome of our chat put me in a difficult position. Melina Remington's protector during this fallacy of a marriage, but also the true middleman for two powerful organizations.

Everything is going exactly as planned.

But where I should be focusing on my new title, listening to what both Henry and Omar are saying, trying to secure my place further, I can't. My mind keeps wandering back to Melina. No matter how much I eat or drink, her taste lingers on my tongue. Burned straight onto my taste buds, desperate for more.

And I'm going to get it. She awoke something in me. A primal beast that slumbered so deep, I believed it died a long time ago on some battlefield while fighting someone else's war.

I've gotta say, it feels fucking fantastic to be back.

“During the week, we’ll come by and let the children have their formal introductions and encounters.” Omar’s words are slurred from the copious amount of liquor he’s consumed.

Henry’s demands didn’t change a thing. In fact, it seems that everyone at the table is looking at the future brightly. But it does put me on a timer. If I want to walk away from this with Melina at my side and a title of power, I’ll have to make it happen before next week’s wedding.

But that doesn’t worry me. I’ve always done my best work while fighting against a clock.

“Anytime, anywhere.” Henry’s barely sitting upright anymore. He’s slouched so low in his chair, I’m sure he’d be happy to sleep right in it.

The four stationed guards approach Omar as he hoists himself to his feet. He stumbles forward and starts to fall, but Nasir catches him before it happens.

“Alright, Father, time to go,” Nasir says. He hooks one of Omar’s arms over his shoulder, and they leave, escorted by the four soldiers.

“Let me walk you to your rooms.” I rise and help Melina out of her seat.

We haven’t spoken since I touched her, exchanging words for cheeky glances and naughty smiles. If nothing else, helping her come settles her nerves. Even while the boss and her father said rather terrible things to one another, she laughed as if they were old-time friends enjoying each other's company after years of absence.

“Why, aren’t you a gentleman?” she says as she stands. But with her tiny frame so close to me, I can’t get a grip on myself. My hands instinctively travel to her behind and squeeze her ass, but I release it before she turns to face me.

“Not in the slightest,” I say in a low whisper. “You’re lucky Henry hasn’t passed out completely. Otherwise, I’d be fucking you atop the meat, the salads, and the beer.”

Where the hell did that come from?

“Is that so?” She winks, but as she sidesteps past me, her hand runs a lap across my cock. It’s rock hard, and her exploration makes her suck in a sharp breath. “It drives you crazy, doesn’t it? But I know how to make it so much worse.”

Slow, sultry words dripping with lust. They force a growl to rip through my body, and I ball a tight fist at my side to keep me from doing exactly what I said I would.

“I don’t think that’s possible,” I admit. My aching cock is a testament to that. It hasn’t found a moment of rest since I set eyes on Melina.

Melina lifts herself onto her tip-toes and brings her mouth so close to my ear, her hot breath tickles my skin. “You’re the first man who’s ever touched me.” Her tongue strikes my earlobe, and she sucks it between her lips. “And if you’re lucky, you’ll be the first man to fuck me.”

She drops back down, and her breasts bounce with the motion.

My legs turn to jelly, and I nearly fall to my ass. She’s a virgin? Fuck. My fist clenches ever tighter against my palm until I feel nails digging into my flesh.

Steady on, Malik. The world is your oyster if you keep your head.

“But I think you should see Dad to bed. I want to go for a walk.” Melina starts walking to the door before I have a chance to react to any of it.

“I’d prefer seeing you both off.” I’m playing coy, but we both know where the night

is headed.

No way in hell I'm passing up this opportunity.

"Then you'll have to come find me, won't you?" she insists.

"Melina?" Henry grumbles from his chair. He's trying to get up but struggling at every step. I make my way over to him. "Have a good night. I love you."

"I love you too, Dad. Now, go get some rest," she orders, and Henry agrees with a flimsy nod of his head.

I help the drunken fool out of his chair and turn my head back to where Melina was a moment ago, but she's gone.

The hunt is on.

Like Nasir with Omar, I pull Henry's arm over my shoulder. He's a small man with a small frame, and I'm basically carrying him at this point.

"I like you," he says as his free hand collides with my chest. It isn't a hard slap but more one of fond if not drunken, affection.

"Mr. Remington, I'd advise you to hold your tongue. You don't know who's listening." Had it not been for my sudden interest in Melina, this would've been a dream come true. Intoxicated and trusting, I'd be able to bleed Henry dry for all the secrets he has on offer. Secrets the boss is counting on to twist this deal in his favor.

A fun night aside, this was always business.

"Understood," Henry says. "And for the love of God, dear boy, call me Henry."

You've done enough to deserve that much."

"Sure thing, Henry."

Omar's men still line the hall leading back to the elevator. However, sprinkled among the guards are a few of my own elite forces. Allies and soldiers I met during my time in the military. I filtered them in over the years to give myself an edge if anything ever went sour between Omar and me.

As we pass them, three men break away from their doors and join my escort of Henry Remington. Like Omar, I rarely move without my own protection, only I prefer to be more subtle about it.

Henry heeds my warning, but it doesn't stop him from mumbling nonsense the whole way back to his room. Had it been intelligible, I may have paid more attention to him. But the ramblings of a drunk man are often pointless at best.

We get him to his room, and I see to it that he's in bed safe and sound.

"Malik, before you go," Henry says, but his voice is clear now as if touching the pillow wiped away the night of boozing behind him.

By the way he struggles to kick his shoes off, I know it can't be true.

"Yes, Henry?" I stop at the door to listen.

"I don't care if you've lied through your teeth tonight, I know the game we play." Another moment of clarity. "But hold true to one promise you've made, alright?"

"And which one's that?"

“Take care of my daughter. Melina’s young, ambitious, but she’s naive. I don’t want her getting hurt by all this.” It warms my heart, as it had the first time we met, to see a father’s love shine so bright.

“You have my word. Melina will be my main priority.” I leave without another word. I will protect her, of this, he can be reassured, but I’ll do it with her wrapped around my cock.

6

MELINA

W here better to end the night than the place it began?

It's a lot to take in. The arrangement set to marry Nasir and join our empires as one. My dad worrying about everything and having to get blackout drunk just to settle his nerves. And Malik.

I understand my task and want to throw myself into it fully, but my heart wants something different. I've spent so little time with Malik, yet he's managed to rock my world completely. He isn't the first attractive man to approach me, yet he does it with such stoic confidence I can't help melting away and giving in to his every whim.

He's shaken me to the core, but with the massive slab of meat between his legs rock hard and ready, I believe I've done the same to him.

Try as I might to rationalize what happened, I can't. I keep drifting back to the point where he was inside me. The few glorious moments that sent me over the edge. It's why I'm here and not tucked away in bed.

As much as I want to throw myself at his feet, I can't. This is still uncharted territory. What if his affections aren't sincere? What if this is some plot orchestrated by his boss? Every box has to be checked before I allow myself to embrace Malik fully, and what better way than to make him look for me?

But that isn't true, either. Him seeking me out won't answer any of my questions. If he's here to pry for secrets, it would be in his best interest to find me.

So, why am I doing this? To create the illusion of mystery to a man my dad and I couldn't find any information on apart from his service in the military and a few nicknames people used to call him? Even that seems far-fetched.

Which leads back to 'the heart wants what the heart wants.' And right now, it just wants him buried balls deep inside of me.

"What do we have here?" A voice comes from behind me. An instant spike of fear shoots through my body. The club's empty and has been since I arrived. The only reason I'm in here is because Malik said this whole place was built for me and my dad.

Why not take advantage of the luxuries Omar Ali has so generously offered?

"Bar's closed," I say and spin around in my chair.

"Can't be closed if you're here," the guy says. He's quickly closing the distance between us with a shit-eating grin splashed across his face. "Come on, a girl as pretty as you shouldn't drink alone. This is a dangerous place. Didn't you see the guys with guns earlier?"

"I'd rather not. I should be going, anyway." The only dangerous thing I can see is the creep in front of me. And with the way he's slinking closer to me, I'm not getting any let me save the damsel in distress vibes from him.

"Come on," he presses on. "One drink. It's not gonna kill you."

By the sandals, short pants, and stained white t-shirt, this guy isn't part of Omar's

crew. His accent should've been a dead giveaway. An American tourist who's only here to make us feel comfortable.

How ironic. I'm in a strange land with dangerous people, and it's a western local who poses the greatest threat.

"I'd prefer to go..." I can't finish the sentence before a fire stokes in my heart. Fuck that. Why should I leave? Or feel unsafe in a tower dedicated to me? "Better yet, you should go."

"Feisty." He raises his hands in mock surrender, but his feet keep dragging him closer to me. "Let me grab a bottle or two, and I'll be on my way. How does that sound?"

He doesn't stop walking until he's an arm's length away from me. My first thought is to throw a punch and start running. My second is to reach into my purse and grab one of the myriad of tiny weapons I carry at all times. Pepper spray, the small stiletto dagger, or the cap gun would all suffice.

Yet, my body locks in place, and I find myself unable to move. His eyes drift up and down me, lingering on my breasts before finally making their way back to my eyes.

"Nice dress you're wearing." His hand raises from his side and inches closer to me. I watch it move, stuck like a deer in headlights.

Come on, Melina. This is your chance. Show them you can handle this.

I want nothing but to be a pillar of strength. Leveraging myself as a bargaining chip to unite Omar and my father. Stand tall among these titans and conquer the world at their side. How can I do any of that if I can't even handle a single creep who makes me feel uncomfortable?

What a joke.

“Don’t touch me.” Weak words escape my lips feebly. As I raise my gaze away from his hand and meet his eyes once more, Malik’s monolithic frame engulfs the American.

How did he get so close without making a sound?

“Are you deaf?” Malik’s voice booms through the empty club before his massive hand wraps around the other guy’s neck.

And I breathe a deep sigh of relief while the nerves the guy brought dissipate in an instant.

MALIK

“W oah, dude, relax,” the piece of shit says, trying to shake free from my grip. He shrinks against the crushing force my hand delivers.

“Who gave you permission to touch her?” I snarl. “Thievery has been known to take a few hands in these parts.”

I don’t take my eyes off Melina, scanning her face and body for any sign of true turmoil. My arrival seems to have set her mind at ease, though I suppose it’s bolstered by the three men behind me.

Her mouth falls agape at the word thievery. Perhaps not the best choice of words, seeing as you can’t own a person. But the way it shifts into a delighted grin tells me she’s happy with how I’m handling this.

“I didn’t know.” His hands raise and wrap around my wrist, doing everything in their power to break my grip. But a short, scrawny worm like him won’t make me budge.

“Did he hurt you, Melina?” I look her straight in the eyes, waiting for an answer. If I see even a hint of her trying to cover for him, I’ll make him suffer a fate far worse than death.

“I didn’t touch her. I swear.” His knees finally buckle as he blurts out an unwanted answer. I tighten my grip further to shut him up.

“He didn’t,” Melina answers.

“But you wanted to.” With a hard thrust back, I fling him towards the men who joined me. Two of them catch him and pull him to his feet.

I spin on my heels to face him.

“I wasn’t gonna.” Snot and tears dribble down his face. His fighting spirit has left now that he’s in the arms of giants compared to him. “Saw her in the bar, wanted a drink before bed, that’s all.”

“She told you to leave, and you didn’t listen.” Fury dictates my actions, and I deliver a thunderous slap across his right cheek. “Do you honestly think I’d believe you had no ill intent in mind?”

The man stares up at me, shell-shocked and scared for what may come next.

“I’ll go. I’m sorry. Don’t hurt?—”

Another slap silences him.

“No begging. You were given a chance and denied it. Now, you will suffer the consequences.” Carelessness is not a trait I often entertain. Records will show this man being at our hotel before disappearing in the middle of the night. It wouldn’t be the first time it’s happened under Omar, but it could cause unnecessary headaches in the future.

However, I’m not going to allow a man like this to be granted pardon for his sins. This is my territory, and there are monsters lurking in every shadow. I am one of them.

“Take him away,” I order.

They start by throwing him onto his back before two of the three deliver thunderous kicks to his midsection. He squeals and squirms, trying to defend against their blows, but his spirit falters quickly. When he falls limp, they grab his arms and drag him across the floor and out of the hotel.

“What should I tell the boss?” the third asks while collecting the American’s scattered belongings.

“Exactly what happened.” No use in denying the truth. Omar will have no quarrel with me for protecting his son’s future wife.

“Understood.” He salutes before leaving the club.

“Are you okay?” I ask, turning back to her. I’d rather hear the fear in her tone than see the pain in her eyes.

“I’m fine,” she says. She doesn’t sound rattled. “What are they going to do to him?”

“Don’t concern yourself with that.” There’s no need to dance on eggshells for Melina. She’s deeply rooted in her father’s organization and understands that this life is messy. But admitting that the American won’t see tomorrow morning might be a pill too hard to swallow.

Especially with what I’ve got planned for her.

“Then what should I concern myself with?” Melina clears her throat. Her deep blue oceans peer up at me through her lashes. “The big monster of a man stalking me through the hotel?”

“It’s too late for concern.” I slide a hand behind Melina’s neck and pull her body against mine. “You’ve already woken the beast, and he’s coming to collect.”

A soft moan escapes Melina’s lips as my second hand wraps around her body and settles in a cup over her ass. Squeezing it makes her groan, and the soft noise makes my dick jerk against her belly.

Enough of this. Calling it thievery was wrong. Melina isn’t mine yet, but she will be before the night is through. With the leverage of my hand around her neck, I pull Melina’s head towards mine. Our lips meet in an electrifying embrace.

“Where did that come from?” She giggles as she pulls away. I don’t let her get too far.

“It’s been the only thing on my mind since I met you.” It’s almost the truth, too. But fucking her brains out has taken its own share of real estate in my head.

“Then do it again.”

And like the good soldier I am, I do as instructed.

Unlike the first kiss, I throw myself into this one harder. No gentle start, allowing my tongue to bash through the barrier of her lips, and get inside her mouth.

It won’t be the first hole it tastes tonight, but savoring every step is important.

Her tiny frame against my enormous block of rod further fuels the flames burning through my body. If there was any holding back before, it’s gone now. I’ve strayed off the beaten path, and I’ve gotten lost somewhere in the lunacy that there may be a chance we walk away from this together.

And if that never comes to pass, I'm not going to miss my opportunity to claim her.
Married to Nasir or not, Melina Remington is mine.

MELINA

A ny thoughts, earnest or not, that Malik wanted to spend more time with me to gather information disappeared when the monster in him saved me from the creep. The way he wrapped a hand around my neck and pulled me into a breathtaking kiss to settle my nerves only enhanced my beliefs.

“Oh, my hero, how will I ever repay you for saving me?” I giggle as the silly words leave my lips. Any feelings of being unsettled or uncomfortable wash away with his second kiss, and gleeful excitement cuts straight to the surface.

I know where this is heading, and I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t excited. It’s the real reason I wanted him to find me after all—to finish what he started under that table.

“I can think of a few ways,” Malik’s eyes narrow as a naughty smile stretches across his lips. “You can take off your panties to start.”

My heart starts pounding like a drum in my chest, and my cheeks instantly start to burn red hot. But if it’s panties he wants, it’s panties he’ll get.

“Coming right up ... or right off.” I give him a wink and spin around on my heels. Why not give him a show while I deliver?

I lift my dress higher up my thighs, hooking it firmly around my waist. Turning to face him over my shoulder, I see his attention locked on the thin white fabric he’s

already become very familiar with.

Hooking my thumbs into the waistband, I start lowering them. But as I do, I bend forward to give him a great view of my ass. And the slack-jawed expression on his face is all I need. My panties fall to the floor, and while still bent, I collect them, squeezing my ass out as far as it can go.

He can see everything now, and his unblinking stare says he's loving every second of it.

"Here you go," I say as sultry as I can muster. The damp white material is draped over my palm while my free hand returns my dress to its original state.

Malik grabs it from my hands and, without thinking, presses it to his face. He inhales deeply, breathing in my scent. It inspires an animalistic roar that propels him forward and into another heated kiss.

He lifts my dress back over my ass while he guides me to the chair. Our mouths never break free from one another, but I allow my hands to start their exploration of Malik. From his broad shoulders, trailing his muscular arms, and sinking down his abdomen. Malik's a pure block of rock-hard muscle, and the feeling of it against my fingers makes my pussy tingle.

As he sits me down, I finally grab the slab of meat between his legs. It's tented so tight against his pants, I struggle to get a grip on it. But as I shift the material around and wrap my palm around him, my fingers can't touch the other side.

Oh, fuck, he's going to tear me in half. It's both terrifying and exciting.

Malik drops to his knees. Even down there, he's nearly as tall as me on the chair.

His hands never stop their exploration of my body. I can feel the heat from his burning fingertips through my dress as they caress my sides before finding their place, cupping my breasts.

He breaks our kiss with a soft groan. “I’m going to fucking destroy you,” he mutters, but it seems more to himself than me.

His pause doesn’t last long before his mouth finds flesh again. It starts at my neck, trails down my shoulders, and finishes its journey when he buries his face between my cleavage.

“Do it then,” I sputter. Any attempts at flirting or trying to carry any power in this situation have disappeared. Malik’s turning my brain to mush, twisting my wants and desires to one thing alone.

His tongue, his mouth, his hands, his cock.

Him in totality.

He snatches at the bow, holding my breasts in place, and with a hard tug, he pulls them free. His eyes lock and linger on my bosom, and his breathing turns from shallow eagerness to low grumbles of despair.

It’s a good thing I didn’t wear a bra tonight.

His tongue meets the pointy nub of my nipple before he takes it between his lips. The pressure and flicking make me erupt into an uncontrollable spasm. Squealing moans break from my lips. All the while, Malik’s golden eyes drink in every facial expression I make.

He starts sinking lower again. This time, as he moves his lips down my body, a hand

hooks under my knee, and he swings it over his shoulder. His free hand remains teasing and playing with my tits as he goes.

“I haven’t stopped thinking about this since the meeting,” Malik says between kisses against my belly.

“What’s that?” I manage to get out between shaky breaths.

“Your squirming body.” He collects my panties from his pants pocket. I didn’t even notice him putting it there. “Your squealing moans.” His tongue connects the bare skin above my pussy while his hand tickles its way up my body. “Your soaked cunt.” With the last statement, he smashes his mouth over my clit.

As my own opens to scream out in delight, Malik shoves the white satin panties into my mouth to mute my sounds.

It might be because he’s worried about the sound traveling through the hotel, but my guess is it’s one of his dirty fantasies. And right now, he could do anything he damn well pleases as long as he doesn’t stop the magic between my legs.

The tip of his tongue darts across my clit while his lips engulf it. Like with my nipple, he simultaneously creates pressure while hammering down on my sensitive nub. My body jerks and snaps, and a muted cacophony explodes through my gagged mouth.

The hand around my breast tugs at my nipple with the V of his index and middle finger while the other moves down my body and nestles between my soaking wet thighs.

From never experiencing an intimate touch to whatever the hell is happening tonight, I’m lost in some kind of lust-fueled dream. If this is a dream, though, I never want to wake up.

“You taste so fucking good,” Malik says before the long, flat pad of his tongue runs the length of my entire slit.

I try to speak, but the panties in my mouth only allow muffled moans.

As I cast my eyes down to Malik, the wicked smile on his face reaffirms my belief it was for him and not the noise.

He sinks back down and continues his work, tongue licking and prodding at every inch of my pussy. He presses his thumb over my engorged nub and starts rotating it in slow circles as his tongue bashes through my swollen lips and inside of me.

A thunderous bolt of electricity courses through my very being. It tightens every muscle in my body and sends my eyes to the back of my head.

“Look at me,” Malik demands between his vicious tongue fucking, and I have to fight against my body to obey his order. “I decided it the second I saw you.”

While he speaks, Malik lets his hand take over from his tongue. A single finger to start, but after a few short thrusts, another finds its way inside. I shoot forward at the sudden, overwhelming pressure filling my core, and my eyes drop down to them.

Malik goes in for another taste, and somehow the sight of him eating my pussy while his fingers slip in and out of it makes this even better.

“I’m going to make your virgin pussy orgasm,” he emits a low growling whisper. “But know this, Melina. You’re mine now. I’m going to be the one to break you, and when I do, you’re mine.”

I nod my head and mumble my acceptance through the material in my mouth. The intense, overwhelming sensations of everything Malik’s doing make my vision go

blurry. His words strike a note in my heart that sends another wave of heat to my cheeks.

When he breaks me? He already has. Even without fucking me, I've lost all interest in anyone and anything else. But hearing those words, hearing him claim me, sends me over the edge.

His mouth returns to my clit with the same fierce motion as before. But his fingers smashing in and out of me make an entirely new form of pleasure spike through my body. Every lick and thrust makes my muscles tighten as a warmth starts swelling in the pit right beneath my belly.

His masterful touch coaxes me closer to the brink of explosion, and while he works, Malik's eyes never break from mine. Though I can hardly control anything, I do my best to keep eye contact with him. It's what he asked for, right? To see my face glazed with pleasure as I?—

Oh fuck. I can't even get the thought out before my legs start rattling.

“Come for me,” Malik demands.

Those words force the coiled knot in my core to tighten like a spring, that final lick and a deep thrust of his fingers releasing a wave of pure ecstasy. I start rattling in my chair, clutching at fistfuls of his hair as I climax. My pussy gushes like a fountain, and Malik's there to lap up every drop my pussy provides like a dehydrated man who's traveled the desert without a drop of water.

When it's over, I crumble into a mass of motionless limbs on the bar chair. Spent, panting, and desperate for more.

“Did you enjoy yourself?” Malik asks, removing the panties from my mouth.

I nod. "But I'm going to enjoy what comes next even more."

Malik grins but offers me a hand to help me out of the chair. I take it, but instead of bending me over the bar like I expect him to, Malik starts fixing my outfit.

"What are you doing?" I fight his attempts to dress me, slapping at his hands and keeping my dress over my hips. "You can't stop now."

"It's harder than you might think," Malik groans but ignores my attempts to stop him and lowers my dress. "But I'm going to."

And after another long gawking at my breasts, he adjusts the straps until they're wrapped around my bosom again.

"But I want it?" I groan with a pout. "Why aren't you giving it to me?"

"Because I won't take your innocence in a dirty bar." He shoves my panties into his pocket. "Now, come. It's time for bed."

There's something awfully sweet about the way he said that. And while I appreciate the sentiment, Malik's chivalry won't help the aching in my loins. He walks me through an empty hotel up to my room with our hands locked together.

"I'll see you soon, Melina," he says as we get to the door.

"You're not coming in?" My last feeble attempt to keep the night going.

"I fear I won't be able to control myself if I do," he admits. "But don't worry. All in due time. You will be mine."

I cup his cheek and give him a tender kiss. "That's where you're mistaken. I'm

already yours.”

I step through the door and close it behind me, leaving him alone with that thought.

9

MALIK

Two Days Later

“A re you sure your snow-white skin can handle this much sun?” I ask, swallowing hard to kill my shaky breathing.

Melina is sprawled out on a sunbed, wearing a dark blue bikini with white tropical flowers over the breast cups and bikini bottoms. I’m quickly learning it doesn’t matter what she wears. A fancy evening dress made to attract attention, a bikini by the pool, an old, oversized shirt, or nothing at all.

My cock will always spring upright at the sight of her.

“I’m not, but it’s a lovely day, and I wasn’t going to spend it cooped up in my room.” Her attention is fixed so sternly on the horizon ahead, she hasn’t even noticed my arrival behind her. Not that it’s much of a view beyond the crystal clear pool. It’s sand as far as the eye can see, eventually blocked by dunes in the distance.

“Don’t you think I might get jealous with all these eyes gawking at you?” I say it flirtatiously, but it’s true. I only caught a few people staring while I walked over, but each one made my blood run hot.

“Who says this isn’t my way of getting back at you?” She snickers, lowering her wide-brimmed sunglasses to look at me.

“For what?” I raise a brow.

“Leaving me soaked and desperate, and then only showing up days later. I’m sure you’ve done your fair share of torturing for Omar, Malik, but I don’t take kindly to you doing it to me.” Like me, her words come out teasingly. She even throws in a wink for good measure.

Like me, her plump, pouting lips are a sign that it’s untrue.

“Yes, well?—”

She snickers at my attempts to rationalize it, but after I left her, even I couldn’t find any real reason as to why I did. The last few days have been torture. Dealing with meetings and bullshit for Omar, my mind continued to flood with thoughts of Melina. How I make her melt and crumble, the sweet nectar between her thighs, her admission of being mine.

“You’re cute when you’re struggling, you know that?” She gestures to a lounge beside her for me to sit.

“No one’s ever called me that before.” I accept the offer, but as I sit, her eyes immediately fall onto the folder in my hands.

“That’s because no one’s ever seen you the way I have,” she scoffs. “Now, what’s this? Dad didn’t tell me about any meetings set for today.”

“It’s because it’s not scheduled. It’s paperwork for us to discuss.” The mundane tasks of talking projections, quantities, and qualities would be far easier with Melina at my side. She’d give me something to drool over while I rambled on about sales figures and projections for Remington Oil, but I wouldn’t subject her to that torture.

“Thrilling.” Her head turns back to the sand.

She starts twirling a lock of hair between her fingers as the other starts sliding down her body. It finds a place between her legs, making slow, inconspicuous movements. Any onlookers wouldn’t even be able to tell she’s pleasuring herself.

“What are you doing?” I feel my pulse quickening, eyes glued to her mesmerizing motion and the soft moans breaking her silence.

“Enjoying myself,” she answers. “But I must ask since the pool is out of the way up to our rooms. How did you know where to find me, Malik?”

She glances over at me, nibbling her lower lip. Her nose crinkles from what I can only assume is mounting pleasure. I take a long pause, enjoying the moment before I speak.

“Because I’m watching you,” I finally answer.

“Naughty boy.” My answer doesn’t make her stop, even knowing that my men may very well be indulging in this voyeuristic delight.

“For your safety.” And whereas it might have been that to start, it quickly devolved into me wanting to know her every move.

“So it wasn’t to find me here? Sprawled out and half naked? That’s a pity.” With that, her hand moves away. “Doesn’t feel the same when it isn’t your fingers. You’ll have to come and take over.”

Fuck. She has a direct line to the pleasure receptors in my brain. She knows exactly what to do, what to say, to drive me nuts. But I fight off my urges, as overwhelming as they are. Had it been anyone else, I’d take her right here right now. But if the boss

somehow caught wind of anything happening here, there would be severe consequences.

“And I will, but first...” I tap the folder against my knee. “Henry’s waiting.”

“So bound by duty, it’s admirable. But don’t leave me waiting too long.” Melina lifts herself out of the sunbed and wraps a towel around her body. “Let me walk you up.”

“If you insist.” I stand, only to realize there’s a massive tent in my pants. I shove one hand into my pocket and grab onto it, doing my best to make it unnoticeable.

“So, tell me about yourself, Malik,” Melina says as we start to walk.

“There isn’t much to say.” Somewhat truthful, depending on exactly what she wants to know.

“Rubbish. I can’t believe you’ve been walking this world for what, thirty-five years, and there’s nothing you can tell me about.” She rolls her eyes. “You don’t have to play the cool, mysterious badass anymore. You’ve already won me over.”

“You know about my time in the service. Know that my life is dedicated to these oil fields. There isn’t much else to it. You’ll find, apart from my day job, I’m a pretty boring man,” I say.

“No family? No friends?” She almost sounds upset at the thought.

“Family life was hard, and it was easier to cut ties with them when I joined the military.” Born poor to lousy parents who didn’t want a child, growing up wasn’t easy. As soon as I was old enough to leave, I did and never looked back. But that isn’t a story for right now. Melina doesn’t need my baggage on her shoulders.

“Speaking of which, how did you go from a soldier to being Omar’s right hand?”

“Is this an interrogation?” Her prying questions make me chuckle. I said it from the start, I’ll never lie to these people with what I’m putting them through, but some things are better left in the past.

“No.” Her eyes widen, almost fearful of what she said. “I’m just curious. I’ll let you in on a little secret. You’re nearly impossible to find anything on. Apart from a few nicknames and service medals, my dad and I don’t know a thing about you.”

A secret I already knew. They’ve seen what I allowed them to see. But her admission bolsters my trust.

We enter the lobby, and I fall silent while we pass the guests. No way I’m talking about anything like this in front of liabilities. When we’re in the elevator heading to the V.I.P. suites, I finally answer.

“I was part of a special forces unit that dealt with internal attacks. Nasir was a soldier at the time, and he got himself into hot water with a terrorist organization.” I choose my words carefully so as not to give her anything to delve deeper into. My time in the force is best left a mystery. “After a two-day struggle, I managed to rescue him. His appreciation came a month later when he brought me to dinner with his father, who offered me a position as head of security.”

Her freckled cheeks raise in another brimming smile. “So you’re like a real-life hero?”

“Sort of.” I shrug it off. The things I had to do to save him were less than heroic. There’s more blood on these hands than I could ever wash off.

“And the Pale Prophet, where does that come from?” She changes her line of

questioning, noticing my lack of interest in it.

The elevator dings, and the doors slide open. We start walking to the rooms. Henry's is across the hall from Melina's.

"An unnatural ability to have a gun pointed at my head, yet the bullets still missed. So many have proclaimed divine intervention and God having a plan for me, but the truth is, I'm lucky as hell." Every time I hear her say one of the monikers bestowed on me, I can't help but smile. Some are so seemingly innocent and sweet, you'd think I was a good man.

But each name is a scar on my psyche. A curse and a burden I carry for all the years of suffering I've inflicted.

"You know, you are pretty lucky." Melina's giggle lifts my spirit. "You found me, didn't you?"

"If anything, you happening across my path is the closest I've ever come to divine intervention," I retort.

With a quick glance up and down the hall, I grab Melina's ass and pull her into me for a quick embrace. I needed to feel her body. Her lips against mine. And the soft, cooing moan as we part.

"I'll see you soon," I whisper before breaking away and getting to the boring side of business with Henry.

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10

MELINA

I 'm standing at my door, peering through the peephole at my dad's room. My heart's rattling in my chest, and the longer Malik takes to leave, the more anxious I'm starting to feel. Not for his safety. As cruel as he can be in a meeting, Dad's a big softy to people he's taken a liking to.

No, my nerves stem from what I'm about to do.

Dad's door opens, and both men step out of it with smiles on their faces. Malik seems particularly pleased with whatever they discussed. Their muffled words barely penetrate through the door, but with final handshakes, it's my time to strike.

Hoo boy, here goes nothing.

As soon as Dad's door shuts, I open mine. Malik hasn't managed to take two steps back to the elevator as I do.

His head turns in my direction, and his eyes nearly melt out of his skull. He stands locked in place for a moment, gawking at my body. I can't blame him since the only thing I'm wearing is a little green bow I bought from the general goods shop downstairs. I stuck it right above my pussy.

It's his, after all. Why not give it to him in some silly, ceremonious fashion?

On the off-chance anyone can hear us, I raise a finger in Malik's direction and beckon him toward me. He storms forward, and our bodies collide. He kicks the door shut with his heel while his boa-constrictor arms wrap around my body.

"I was hoping you'd do something like this," he whispers before his mouth smashes into mine.

My arms drift around his waist, and my hands cup his ass. We stumble back, locked in each other's arms, nearly tripping with every step. I consume his mouth, letting him guide me blindly through the hotel room until my knees finally buckle against the plush blanket of my bed.

I collapse onto it, trying to drag Malik down with me, but his hulking stature remains unmoving.

"I can't wait another minute, Malik. Thinking about that night, as wonderful as it was, has been torture. I want you. I need you. Take me, make me a woman, make me yours," the flurry of words spews out.

I planned witty quips and charming taunts, but Malik's reaction to my surprise knocked them clean out of my head. They would've all led to the same place, but my yearning desperation has taken control to expedite the process.

Malik sinks to one bent knee and grabs my feet by the ankles. He pulls me closer to him, kissing my shin and letting his lips trail up my smooth-shaven skin.

"You know exactly what to say to drive me crazy, don't you?" His hoarse voice is followed by primal grunts as he continues kissing up my leg. But Malik doesn't allow me an opportunity to respond.

As a kiss falls on my knee, Malik uses his leverage on my ankles to part my legs and

leave them sprawled out at his sides. My heart starts fluttering, and wispy breaths barely carry enough oxygen to my brain.

He discards his jacket and starts unbuttoning his shirt. He barely gets halfway before a deep roar tears from his chest, and he rips the last row of buttons clean off his shirt. He discards it atop his jacket.

“I like seeing you like this.” My voice is timid. I’m not scared, but this whole situation is so hot, so tense.

I’m about to lose my virginity to a monster, and it’s making me feel weak in the knees.

He grabs at the bow against my pubis and tosses it aside. He doesn’t want anything in the way of his inspection of my body. I can practically feel those golden eyes burning straight through my skin. Each glance, from my lips to my tits, makes his hefty frame shiver in gleeful delight.

And without warning, he drops his head between my thighs. His tongue strikes my pussy, but he doesn’t linger long. It glides over my clit, and Malik pulls himself onto the bed past my belly button. Malik crawls on top of me, between my breasts, as his hard bulge presses down against my pussy.

Oh fuck, it feels so good. Even through his pants, his head pokes and prods at my entrance. Like a homing missile locked on its target, Malik’s cock doesn’t need any guidance to reach its destination.

“Are you sure you’re ready for this?” Malik’s hot breath tickles my earlobe as he whispers his concerns.

“More than anything in the world,” I admit.

He might have been doing his gentlemanly duty, but I'd have let him take me in that club, break me over the bar, and make me his with more than just words.

Malik groans his acceptance huskily and twists his hips to rub his cock against my wetness. Every sensation he enacts makes my core pulse with need. So much so that my arms move without my mind's consent, sliding down the tiny gap between our bodies and working against his belt's buckle.

It breaks free without much coaxing.

Another gentle thrust of his groin sends another sharp spike of satisfaction ripping through my body. My back arches, and my lower half presses against his throbbing meat.

Malik shoves a fist into the bed and uses it to hold his body up. The extra room to work with gives my hands easier access to his pants button. I unhook it, lower the zip, and Malik does the rest.

He uses his free hand to shuffle both his trousers and underpants down. And I get my first glimpse of his massive cock. It's even more delicious than I could have imagined. So veiny, so swollen and thick with pleasure. The second his hand returns to the bed, I feel it brush against my lips. As he drops for another kiss, the head glides up my folds and applies pressure to my clit.

I lose myself to his kiss. To the feeling of the huge thing against my body. Just to all of it.

"I'll take it slow." Malik breaks our kiss to speak. He stares deep into my eyes as he cups my cheek. "You have full power. If it becomes too much, you tell me to stop."

I nod. I can't do anything else even if I wanted to.

He lifts himself onto his knees, grabbing the base of his staff with one hand while the other latches onto my breast. He guides the head toward my entrance, but his breathing becomes rapid and unsteady with every inch closer.

“Is it going to hurt?” The question comes out stammered.

Of course, it is. Every girl’s first time hurts, at least, that’s what I’ve been told. And with the heat Malik’s packing, it probably still would even if I was better versed in these sexual endeavors.

“It is, but the pain won’t last long. You’ll be riding the wave of ecstasy before you know it.”

The tip of his cock finds its destination, and Malik nearly collapses at the feeling. A low moan barrels out of his chest, and his grip on my breast tightens.

“You’re so fucking wet.” His attempts at being delicate crack with a raspy hiss.

“It’s your fault,” I tease.

With a gentle sway of his hips, it happens. His head breaches my barrier, and an instant arrow of pain bolts through my body. I can’t stop myself from crying out as my hands shoot forward and collide with Malik’s chest.

But he moves slowly, trying his best to ease me through the suffering and to the promised land. My hips buckle and jerk as he drives himself deeper. My nails dig into his flesh, clawing their way down, but he doesn’t make a sound.

“Are you okay, Melina? Is it too painful? Should I stop?” Malik whispers. Concern floods his beautiful eyes. No doubt a reaction to my own welling with tears.

“Don’t you dare,” I mewl.

Malik gets a firm grip on my hip with his free hand, holding me in place. “The worst part is almost behind us, but this is going to fucking suck.”

He pulls me towards him while he drives himself forward. An intense sensation of pressure mounts inside of me, alongside the feeling of being ripped in two. A choked scream claws its way out of my throat, but it’s quickly replaced by short, sharp breaths.

“Fuck,” he roars.

I parrot him, repeating it over and over, staring down at the vanishing act of his cock disappearing inside me.

Malik starts moving again. Slow thrusts to start, sliding his length out, then in. Five long strokes are all it takes for my body to adjust. Five more, and the pain dissipates to bliss.

But I can tell Malik’s holding back. Every muscle across his upper body is flexing. He’s squeezing into my waist, holding back from losing control. But as I get used to everything he has to offer, I don’t want him to. There’s an itch in my core, and only he can scratch it.

After one final slow thrust, I take Malik’s cheek in my hand. I stare him straight in the eyes as a giddy smile darts across my face.

“Do it, Malik. I’m ready.” Am I ready for him to go crazy? Who knows?

As expected, my announcement changes Malik’s labored expression to something fierce. His golden eyes burn with excitement, and his tense grip loosens. His second

hand gives my breast one last squeeze before it joins the other around my waist.

With his new leverage, Malik pulls me into his thrusts.

My anguished groans turn into haphazard moans and whimpers. Every sound I make seems to drive Malik closer to the edge. His rapid, intense motion turns my mind to mush.

A soothing heat starts to ebb through my body, and I feel the all-too-familiar spring start coiling in my core.

Malik drops on top of me, wrapping one hand around my neck and pulling me into a kiss. His hips never stop bucking while he takes this new position. He moans into my mouth, and I squeal into his as my orgasm peaks. As it comes, I feel my walls tighten around the soaked spear plunging into my depths.

He must feel it, too, because it doesn't take long for him to break our kiss and roar. "Ah, fuck, I'm gonna explode."

Our bodies writhe and tremble in unison as he releases his seed. Hot ropes splash against my inner walls as his body falls limp.

My limbs turn to jelly, and I can't move even if I want to. Panting for air, exhausted, and spent.

Malik still somehow manages to get up. He takes my face in both his hands and kisses me deeply. Passionately.

"You're mine, Melina," he says, with a severity I haven't seen from him yet, "and I'm never letting you go."

11

MALIK

A Few Days Later

In two days, Melina is set to marry Nasir, and I'm no closer to getting her out of it now than I was the day I claimed her. It doesn't help that my attention has been divided between my tasks. Every moment I don't have to be in front of Omar, I'm at her hotel and basking in her company.

Today, I don't have that luxury. The boss has an important mission for me, and I damn well hope it isn't going to send me away while I piece together this damned puzzle.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" My heart's like stone, but there's a pit in my gut. I've become cavalier in my desires for Melina, and it's not impossible he's somehow found out.

The lack of Nasir's presence and his guards enhances my fears. It's rare to have a completely isolated meeting, and usually, when it's him and me alone, someone has to die.

"Great, you're here. Have a seat, boy. We have much to talk about." He points to one of the chairs opposite him.

"Where's Nasir?" I sit.

“Spending time with his bride. He’s a funny boy, that one. I hand him the world in glittering gold, and he still drags his feet to make this deal go smoothly.” Omar sighs. Instant burning rage courses through my veins. Anger doesn’t come close to describing the feeling, but I bite my tongue to keep from saying something regrettable. “He missed both meets with the Remingtons in favor of doing who knows what.”

I smirk at the mention.

Don’t worry, old man. I filled the void and filled her womb on both occasions.

“It’s a marriage out of necessity, not love. Why bother feeding a lie?” I rarely take Nasir’s side on any matter, but seeing how this one involves my woman, I’m inclined to agree that he should stay as far away from Melina as possible.

“Because feeding the lie is the whole point of it. It’s why I’ve brought you here, Malik.” Omar slams his palms down on the table. “While Nasir was greasing Melina’s wheels, we were supposed to discuss what comes next. But with him slacking in his duty and you off killing Americans and disappearing when I need you, I’ve reached my wits’ end.”

Omar huffs deep lungfuls of air through his mouth, the sudden onset of rage knocking the wind straight out of his lungs. I cross a leg over my knee and press both hands into it.

This isn’t going to be good.

“What do you need me to do?” I ask like the loyal dog I am.

A thick plume of gray smoke hangs over the casino floor.

My meeting with Omar dragged late into the night, and every word he said made my guts do a kickflip. It's why I'm at the hotel instead of at home, thinking of a way to get Melina out of this mess. My word is my bond, and I promised to keep the Remingtons safe while they're here.

Henry and Nasir are laughing together in front of a blackjack table when I arrive. The sight of their false happiness makes my blood run cold.

Melina's off to the side, dolled up and pretty in a stunning silver sequined dress. Annoyed and unimpressed, she's lying cross-armed over the bar, sipping at whatever drink is in front of her.

I make my way to the table.

"There he is, the big man himself." Nasir's drunk. I can hear it on every slurred word. "I was just telling my new father here about you."

Henry bursts out into a fit of laughter at the word father.

"Go home. Now." I stare at Nasir straight in his beady eyes. His jolly demeanor cracks instantly.

"Did something happen?" He stutters on a few of the syllables, but his body is paralyzed.

Few people have seen my cruelty and lived to tell the tale of it. Nasir has, in the prime of my military career, and by my tone alone, he knows to take caution.

"Leave, Nasir. I won't say it again."

Nasir grabs his jacket and wallet and starts running for the door.

“What was that about?” Henry asks. His eyes focus on Nasir.

“Are you okay, Melina?” I ignore him for the moment.

“Fine. Why are you acting so strange?” She raises a brow. Even with the confusion of my outburst, Melina’s mood brightens with my presence. The uncomfortable pout she had when I got here is replaced by a warm smile. It’s almost enough to soothe my burning spirit.

Almost.

“Because Omar wants to kill you, Henry,” I say it bluntly because there’s no way to sugarcoat it.

“The fuck did you just say?” Henry roars.

“He plans to do it on Sunday after the wedding, once your daughter and your company are signed away. He wants to make you an example. Show the world that Omar Ali is a force to be reckoned with.” I have to hand it to Omar; his plan is brilliant. Play coy until the marriage is over before walking away with everything.

And if it weren’t for Melina, I’d have been the one to deliver the bullet.

Henry turns to wax in his chair. His limbs dangle at his sides, and I can practically hear his heart thumping.

“You can’t let that happen,” Melina says, a line of tears swelling in her eyelids.

“I won’t. It’s why I’m here. I know what I must do, but I need both of you to continue as normal.”

“As normal?” Hysterical laughter follows his sentence. “That piece of shit wants to kill me.”

“He won’t. You need to do what I say now, Henry. Everything is going to work out for the better, but I need a distraction.” I don’t want to throw Melina into the lion’s den, but right now, I must.

It’s the only way for her and I to share a brighter future.

MELINA

The lump in my throat hasn't gone away since Malik confessed Omar's plans. He promised our safety but told us to follow through with this ridiculous arrangement. I don't doubt him. He must have something up his sleeve. But I can't shake the overwhelming fear hanging over me like a thick, dark cloud.

Dad and I sit opposite Omar and Nasir at a massive dining table. He has guards stationed on every corner of the room, the same way he had them on our first meeting. But I recognize one of them, at least, I think I do. He's the guy who picked up the American's belongings after Malik swooped in to save the day.

"It makes me happy to hear you all had a wonderful time last night," Omar says, sliding a stack of papers to Dad. "Nasir hasn't stopped raving about you since he got home, Melina. You've left quite an impression on my boy."

He slaps Nasir's shoulder while he speaks. Nasir doesn't carry the same joyous tone as his father. His eyes keep shooting to the door as if he's expecting something to happen.

We've been here for an hour, maybe longer, and Malik hasn't arrived. We exchanged pleasantries, and where fear bit on my words, Dad somehow managed to keep a level head and pretend everything was okay.

What if something happened to Malik? Word got out that he confessed everything to

us, and they got to him during the night? It weighs on my mind every passing minute without his arrival.

“Booze and gambling can make any dark night a little brighter,” Dad says. He scans the pages and, after a short pause, continues, “It all looks to be in order. Everything we agreed on as discussed.”

“Were you expecting something different?” Omar strokes his pudgy chin.

“If it were me on the other side of the table, I’d probably throw a few extra clauses in. Hope they go by unnoticed,” Dad answers. I’m taken aback by how calm he is in the face of danger. No fumbling for words or stammering, he’s standing toe to toe against the man who wants him dead.

Omar laughs, and Nasir joins him. But their chortling comes to an abrupt end when the double doors on the far side of the room swing open with Malik behind it.

My heart swells, and my cheeks sting with how wide I start smiling.

Malik ducks through the frame and makes his way to the table. I expected an entourage of armed soldiers at his back to fend off whatever Omar might throw at him. But it’s him alone, walking straight into the viper’s nest.

Omar’s face instantly scrunches in fury.

“How dare you show your face here?” he spits, launching out of his chair with a sausage finger wagging in Malik’s direction. “Who do you think you are to make orders to my son?”

“He’s a coward who fled in combat and continues to flee at the first sign of threat,” Malik returns.

“Fled in combat?” Omar scoffs. “He was on the front lines. A hero to his country. He nearly died?—”

“At my hand.” Malik lifts a palm out to Omar. “He was a coward, a deserter, hunted by his own kind.”

“Is this true, Nasir?” Omar turns to his son.

Nasir can’t get a full sentence out, and it’s more than enough answer for Omar. He slaps the boy with a thunderous clap, but not another word is shared between them.

“Nasir’s alive because I willed it. Because he was a stepping stone to something greater. And where you’ve wasted my talent, Omar, it will flourish once you’re gone,” Malik finishes.

“Gone? You forget where you are, Malik,” Omar snorts. “Guards, show him what happens to those who oppose me.”

On Omar’s order, all four men point their guns at Malik. No one fires here, and I’m sure their threat is meant to get him out of the room.

“Ah, shit, you got me. Guess I’m losing my touch.” Malik raises his hands in surrender and starts walking backward to the door. Even in the face of death, his tone is mocking, and his lips are twisted in a devious grin.

“No, stop, don’t—” I finally find my words, and they come out in a thunderous yawp. I jump out of my seat and lift a pleading hand out to Omar.

He responds with the same sausage finger dangling in front of my eyes. “Sit down and shut your fucking mouth.”

My head snaps from Omar to Malik and back again. Dad's sitting around doing nothing. It's all too much for me to take.

"You're going to regret that," Malik growls. His hands fall back to his side, and though his eyes hold the same fury they had last night, the grin doesn't fade from his face.

"The Pale Prophet in all his might." Omar feigns being impressed. "How many bullets have you dodged, huh? How many do you think you still can?"

"Let's find out," Malik says with the slick coolness of an action hero.

And I'm left praying to whichever god will listen to get him out of this safely.

13

MALIK

I n the heart of danger, I thrive.

Tiny red dots dart across my suit jacket from laser pointers attached to assault rifles fixed on my chest. I feel no fear at their threat. I've been here before, a thousand times over, staring death square in the eye.

It's your time , he says, holding his bony hand to me.

But once again, I must decline. Until Melina is safe, I can't leave.

The terror in Melina's eyes wipes the smirk off my face. It's easy to forget she's the reason I feel so empowered now. She roused the beast that lay so dormant inside me for so long, and though I feel I'm in my element, I shouldn't be so carefree when her safety hangs in the balance. I'm not living for myself anymore; I'm doing it for her. I want to pull her into my arms, whisper everything will be okay and that this is exactly what I expected.

"You see, Omar, for years, I bit my tongue, acted on all your childish whims, and played the good little lap dog that could handle every problem." I walk behind Melina while I speak. When I get to her chair, I place my hands on her shoulders and stroke them gently with my thumbs. "But don't get it mistaken, I've been gunning for your seat since the day we met."

Melina takes my wrist in her hand, tilting her head up to me. Her deep blue eyes fill me with the confidence I need to finish this, no matter how hard it's going to be.

“You dare lay a hand on my son's wife?” Omar's voice booms through the dining hall.

“That piece of shit wouldn't know what to do with a woman like this. He's better off with his whores.” I smile at my own joke.

Every breath Omar takes is a raspy growl. His face has turned several shades darker with his ever-growing fury. But somehow, when he speaks, his voice is diplomatic. “You've come here with a chip on your shoulder, and you're parading through my walls like you own them already. Tell me what it is you think you're going to get out of this, Pale Prophet.”

The name doesn't have the same ring to it when Omar says it. Melina has tainted the Pale Prophet from being a warring battle cry to something beautiful.

“It's not what I think I'm going to get; it's what I'm taking.” I dip my chest over the backrest of the chair and press my lips against Melina's. It's gentle to start before my lustful desires kick in again, and my tongue bashes through the wall of her lips.

Even with her father right next to us, I can't stop myself from letting my hands sink down her chest and onto her tits—squeezing the two, soft mounds and feeling the all too familiar throbbing in my loins.

Melina giggles, clutching onto my wrists and pulling them away. It fills me with joy to see her laugh when, moments ago, she wanted to break down and cry.

Lord, this woman is perfect.

“It’s almost over. I promise,” I whisper as I return my attention to Omar.

“What the hell was that?” To my surprise, it’s Henry who speaks first.

I pat him on the shoulder. Now isn’t the time to explain what’s been happening right under his nose.

“Melina’s mine. Claimed and marked.” I return my attention to Omar and Nasir. “If you want her, you’ll have to get through me. And before you try, do remember who you’re dealing with.”

Laborious grunts of anger and frustration barrel through Omar’s chest. Nasir cowers in his chair, awkwardly creating distance between himself and his father, with his arms wrapped around his own chest.

“You picked the wrong time to fuck with me,” Omar hisses. “We were so close to having everything we could have dreamed of.”

“At the expense of the woman I love.”

Melina’s head snaps back up at me at my admission. It feels wrong to make an admission like that under circumstances like this, but I can’t lie to myself or her any longer. I couldn’t have guessed it would come to this on the night we met.

But the deep, lustful urges and a constant, lingering desperation that never vanished had to lead somewhere. And why not confess it now when I’m about to kill or be killed?

“Truly touching.” Sarcasm drips like poison from Omar’s mouth. “My dog fell in love with a glorified whor?—”

I don't let him finish the sentence.

In a flash, I reach for my pistol tucked behind my back and train it on his swollen forehead. He shuts his mouth mighty quick at the sight of the cold, hard steel.

"You speak to my woman like this?" My mockery and playfulness are replaced by a cold whisper.

Tension fills the void of silence while Omar's brain works at rapid speeds to come up with a way out of this mess.

"Why hasn't anyone shot him yet?" It's Nasir who calls the order. "Why are you standing here doing nothing?"

"Because they're not your men," I answer for my soldiers. "You blast through life thinking you're important because you're the boss' son. Offered ample opportunities to grow as a man and solidify your place in this world. But what have you done, Nasir?"

Omar leans so far back in his seat, the fat around his neck creates multiple new chins. Seeing fear in the eyes of one so powerful ignites the flames of pride in my heart.

"Don't do this, Malik," Nasir whimpers.

His pleas fall on deaf ears.

"Every man standing in this room accompanied me on the day we came for you, Nasir. If you didn't care about anyone but yourself, perhaps you would have been able to save his life." I turn my attention to Melina. "Cover your ears and shut your eyes."

She does, and though I didn't give him the same instruction, Henry does too.

"Malik, no, wa—" Nasir launches forward to try and stop me.

I squeeze the trigger twice, both bullets aimed directly at Omar's heart. He's dead before his body falls motionless.

Tears stream down Nasir's cheeks, and he drops beside his father's corpse.

"Your father's empire is mine now. Do you understand?" I don't threaten Nasir with the gun. I don't have to. "You're going to pack your shit, take Omar's bloated corpse, and fuck off. And if I see you again, Nasir, I'll do to you what I should have all those years ago."

Melina keeps her eyes and ears shut tight, even while I help her up from her seat. Henry is less concerned about seeing Omar dead.

"The bastard is dead," Henry Remington announces while I cradle Melina into my chest. He turns to me and sets a reassuring hand on my elbow. "Long live the king."

14

MELINA

Malik should terrify me. The way he strolled into danger with swagger and confidence and never once allowed his calm bearing to slip. Hell, he shot a man right in front of my eyes—even if they were shut tight the whole time.

Yet, he doesn't. I haven't felt threatened by him once, and today, he proved I never have to. He protected me with reckless disregard for what it meant for himself, even if his aim was to take over Omar's empire. Anything can come of this, regardless of all the best-laid plans, but the way he holds onto me and pulls me tighter to his side says he just doesn't give a damn.

"How long has this been going on?" Dad gestures between us, emphasizing whatever our budding relationship is.

I coil my legs over Malik's, and his hand instantly latches onto my bare calf. We're at his dining table, with stacks of papers, empty whiskey glasses, and the gun that ended it all sitting atop it.

"Since the night we met." Malik's eyes gaze deep into mine.

At his behest, we're in his home for the night. Everything we left at the hotel should be considered lost until the dust settles regarding Omar's death. Neither Dad nor I see any issue with it. He's doing as he promised and ensuring our safety.

“It would be wrong of me not to give you some praise, Henry,” Malik continues, but his attention never breaks from me. Not for an instant. “You’re an awful businessman, but I feel your talents lie in producing offspring.”

I burst out laughing. What a silly thing to say, though I don’t believe his jab was fully in jest. Dad has a laugh of his own, pouring another round of drinks for all three of us.

“Yeah, well, I’m used to dealing with empty suits that want papers signed. I bit off a little more than I could chew coming here,” Dad admits. His honesty lets me believe he trusts Malik.

“Wouldn’t it be prudent then to let me be your bulldog?”

Dad’s eyes nearly pop out of his head at Malik’s offer. “Why would you want to go and do something like that when you’ve just claimed an empire of your own?”

“Because bureaucracy bores me. I’m in control of oil; you’re in control of turning it into a product. Why not keep to the same arrangement, only I won’t be a middleman?” His hand slides up my leg and to my knee. Every inch closer to my intimate parts makes his chest rumble with excitement.

“Same deal, you say?” Dad sips his drink, eyes tilting to the ceiling while he contemplates the offer.

“Right down to the marriage,” Malik adds, but it’s directed straight at me. “If you’ll have me, of course.”

An actual proposal from a man I actually want to be with? My heart starts doing cartwheels in my chest, and I squeal in excitement.

“A thousand times, yes,” I screech, flinging my arms over his shoulders. The sudden motion sends Malik’s hand up my dress, and his knuckles graze the wet patch between my thighs.

I force my moan down so as not to make Dad uncomfortable, but Malik doesn’t hold back his howling. A wide smile explodes over his face, and he leans in to kiss me. I yield, even with my dad in the room.

How can I not? He’s offering us everything we wanted for Remington Oil while simultaneously fulfilling my childish dream of a perfect wedding.

As he pulls back, the smile never fades. Even as he returns to business with Dad. “I’ll remain a shadow on your board with voting interests. You’ll get the oil at a much fairer price. And in turn, you’ll be welcomed to the same services I offered Omar.”

Malik still hasn’t removed his hand from my dress. He starts moving it slowly, allowing his knuckles to grind against my clit, and though my breathing hastens, I fight back any urges to make a sound. There will be time for that later when Dad’s gone to bed.

“Let’s not pretend you’re going back to life as normal with our oil. The second you boarded your plane in London and traveled here, you knew a target was put on your back.” How does he do it? Talk like nothing is happening, while under the table, he’s giving in to his deepest desires?

I’m not even speaking, and I’m a mess, panting and twitching, while I try and hold an ounce of decorum.

“Fine. The deal as agreed,” Dad yields. “We all know I could use a bruiser in my corner.”

“And who better than the Deity of Death?” Malik chuckles.

“Then it’s settled. I’ll let you two talk about wedding preparations.” Dad sucks down his last swallow and gets up from the table.

“Night, Dad,” I say, right before Malik drives another thrust against my sensitive bud.

“Goodnight, love.” And with that, he walks off, whistling a happy tune that falls silent as his bedroom door shuts.

“So, are we going to talk about the wed?—”

“No fucking chance,” Malik cuts me off before flinging his mouth onto mine again.

15

MALIK

I can't control myself around her. Melina only has to breathe to send me into a wild frenzy. I'm almost jealous of her ability to control me this well. It's a skill that took me years to learn, and she isn't even trying to make it happen.

Parting from her lips, I trail kisses down her feverish skin, lingering on her neck. The sweet vanilla fragrance coating her skin drives me wild.

"Shouldn't we go somewhere private?" she says but takes no action to stop me.

"I can't wait that long," I blurt out between smothering myself against her flesh. My cock's rock hard, pressing at the zipper of my trousers and fighting to be set free. "I need you now."

"Then what are you waiting for?" Melina hooks her arm around my neck and pulls herself onto my lap. She tilts her head to the side, giving me even better access to what my hungry mouth craves.

Her hands instantly fall between our bodies and latch onto my aching erection. I'm so sensitive, even the slightest touch is enough to make me howl in delight.

My hands find their way up her body, and I hook my fingers in the neckline of her dress. One hard tug is enough to tear the top in two. Her tits spill out of the remnants with a satisfying jiggle inside her see-through red bra.

She looks down at her naked body and then back up at me. Naughty eyes glare through batted lashes while her teeth sink into her lower lip. She releases my cock with one hand, and the other finds its way to the back of my neck. With one hard tug, she forces my face between her tits. Melina doesn't have to ask; I'll obey her every whim.

"Yes, ma'am," I growl against her soft skin.

I start lapping and licking at any skin my tongue can touch—between her cleavage, over the squishy mountain, and onto the bra. Using the tip, I lash at her perky, pointy nipples, soaking the material with rivers of drool pouring from my mouth.

She moans and starts bucking her hips as if we were already fucking. But every bounce is enough for her hand, still clutching my girth to stroke it hard and fast.

Fuck me, if I'm not careful, I'm going to shoot my load into my boxers.

Better get inside of her first. I'm not going to waste my seed when it could be inside her womb instead.

I shove a hand under her ass and lift her into the air. She's so light, I barely feel like I'm carrying anything. But the sudden shift in position makes her yelp and giggle, with moans slipping in between my vicious tongue lashings.

"What are you doing?" she whispers, but I can't reply. My mind and my body are on two separate wavelengths.

Still hoisting her up, I let my free hand move across the table. A single motion that sends glasses and papers scattering and shattering across my dining room floor.

I rest Melina down gently, shoving my hands up her dress and clawing her panties

down her legs. They're soaked, and I shove them closer to my mouth for a lick. I love the taste of this woman. I'd have her cunt for breakfast, lunch, and dinner if I could. But not right now. My throbbing loins need to release the tension built up after a week of anguish.

Her thighs part slowly as I fiddle with my zipper and free my cock from its bonds. I won't strip naked, not right now, on the chance Henry comes waddling back down the hall. By the time I free it, Melina is spread wide, bare, and her fingers are already working the length of her slit.

Moans squeak from her lips while her deep blue ocean eyes stare directly at my shaft. I can't take this anymore.

I grab Melina by the thighs and slide her off the table. She falls onto her feet, the fingers she used to touch herself instantly wrap around the base of my cock.

"Can't make up your mind on how you want me?" she teases me, coating my veiny erection with her pussy juice.

"I couldn't, but now I have." I get a grip on Melina's upper arm and spin her around. She giggles as she spins. It doesn't stop, even as I bend over over the table, with her bare ass in the air.

It takes one step for my rod to glide between Melina's soaking thighs. And it's one stroke between them that nearly makes me fall flat on my ass.

"Shove it in me," Melina orders in a bratty tone. "Do it now. I want it. Give it to me."

But every sentence is followed by a giggle, her head snapping over a shoulder to stare at me.

“Your wish is my command.” Grabbing the base, I guide my muscle up her silky folds. My knees buckle with every motion until I reach her entrance.

I slide it up and down a few more times until I’m coated in her liquid. How I managed to control myself long enough to get lubricated is beyond me. With a deep breath to still my thumping heart, I bury myself inside of her. Right down to the fucking hilt.

Melina’s mouth parts in a massive O, and her eyes instantly shoot to the back of her skull. I latch onto her thighs for stability, fighting against my body's urges to fail and collapse.

As soon as I find my strength again, there’s no holding back. Every thrust is faster than the last, and it doesn’t take much for my balls to start tightening. I pin her to the table while erotic waves of pleasure bellow from her core. Squeaking moans, deep, humming groans, and the sound of my body colliding with her ass send me overboard. Her pussy tightens with every thrust, edging me ever closer to the final release.

“You feel so good inside me,” Melina pants between rapid breathing.

Melina starts bucking her ass into me, meeting me thrust for thrust. Her words hit my ear as her pussy clenches my cock from a blasting orgasm. It’s that feeling, right there, as her walls close in and suffocate my manhood, that always makes me lose control.

This time is no different.

Two more thrusts are all it takes before I empty myself into her. A thunderous war cry tears its way from my lips, and I collapse over her on the table. She shakes her ass against my cock, with a devilish giggle accompanying the motion.

How does she still have the energy after that?

She gives me time to come back down to earth from the great high she gave me and doesn't even seem to mind my massive weight crushing her down on the table. And when I do eventually flop off her, I drop straight to the floor, head on the ground, eyes to the ceiling.

She falls beside me and hooks my arm around her shoulder.

"So..." she starts as a finger finds the grooves of my pectorals, "did you mean it?"

"Did I mean what?" I'm struggling to catch my breath.

"When you said you love me?" Her eyes are glued to the side of my face.

"Of course, I meant it. I love you, Melina. I'm sure I have since the first second I saw you," I admit. I'll never lie to her, not about anything, and especially not this. "More than the sun, and the stars, and the moon."

"Well, you know what, you big softy?" She sounds so happy here in my arms. So serene and playful. And it warms my heart to hear it. "I love you. And we're gonna be married. And it's all gonna be great."

And with her by my side, everything always will be.

EPILOGUE

MALIK

Two Months Later

“Y ou didn’t invite anyone to this shindig?” Henry Remington asks while we stare over a crowd of well-dressed people and smiling faces. He has a hand on my shoulder, the way a father would his son when his boy did something worthy of praise.

“Didn’t have anyone to invite,” I answer, but the words don’t leave a hollow emptiness inside me.

Family, friends—they never had a place in my life until I met Melina. All they ever wanted was to hurt me, use me, or create obstacles to hinder my progression in life. Leaving them behind, even if it means not having anyone here on this joyous day, is for the best.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Henry says. “But it doesn’t matter, anyway. You’ve got us watching your back.”

Knowing Henry, he’d be the first to fire a round in it. Accidentally, of course, at the first sign of trouble.

“Thank you, Henry. It means a lot to hear that.” It seems like a sensible answer, even if I don’t mean it.

I've come to enjoy the old man's company. Leaving my home country and joining Melina in hers, I watched him step out of the shell he developed back home. And he wasn't lying, either. Henry Remington isn't the fear-filled man who stood against Omar Ali. When he's stuck in the boardroom with, as he called them, empty suits and pencil pushers, he's rather intimidating.

"You're part of the family now, so don't even mention it." He gives me a pat on the back. "Let me go see if everyone's ready. But you're doing great, big guy. Keep it up."

Without anyone of my own to bring, Henry asked cousins and uncles to stand as my best men. At least, that's what I understood them to be. These weddings under their god have always dumbfounded me.

But it was Melina's dream to have the full show. A large chapel, with white flowers, caged doves ready to be sent off and surrounded by her closest friends and family while she's handed to another man.

And what Melina wants, I make sure she gets.

The chattering crowd falls silent when Henry reaches the far end of the chapel, and all eyes from the horde ahead fall on me and the priest.

Before I have any chance to feel awkward, a pipe organ rings out the first note of Richard Wagner's Wedding March. It goes on a short while until Henry and Melina step into view.

Her snow-white dress glitters from the tiny gems running down the length. A long trail trails behind her with every step. Henry smiles at me while he leads her to the altar with slow, precise steps. And the crowd roars in admiration of my love.

But even in such an eloquent ensemble, I can't take my eyes off her chest. The tight top of her dress squeezes her breasts until they're nearly spilling out, no doubt due to the pregnancy making them swell.

Fuck, she's beautiful.

Henry brings her to my side before he joins the men behind me. The priest starts his sermon, but his words fall on deaf ears. I'm locked in a trance, glued to Melina's perfection. He has to tap me on the shoulder to snap me out of my daze when it's my turn to say my vows.

"Do you, Malik Amine, take Melina Remington to be your wife?" he asks.

"I do." It comes without hesitation.

So does Melina's, when it's her turn to answer.

"You may now kiss the bride."

And I kiss her all right. Lost in a haze of her enchanting smile, I can't pull myself away from her. It takes a chuckling Henry grabbing my arms and tugging me aside to break me from my trance.

"Calm down, fella. There's old folks around," he snickers.

But I ignore his words and take Melina's hands in mine. I bring one to my mouth and kiss across her finger, where a ring sits and will for the rest of time.

"You are the light of my life, Melina. You've given me so much, and I can never repay you. But I will love you until the end of days," I speak without care for who hears. My words turn Melina's cheeks a dark shade of pink, tears flooding her

eyelids.

“And I love you, my big, softy husband,” she teases and flings her arms around my shoulders.

I couldn’t dream of a better start to the rest of our lives.

MELINA

Seven Years Later

If someone told me this was where my life would end up the day I stepped onto Malik's soil, I'd call them crazy. After all these years, I'm still madly in love with Malik. We have two beautiful baby girls. My dad even managed to convince him to leave the old world behind him and move to my own country.

Part of me still believes it's because my dad wouldn't be able to go without seeing me. No matter his reasons, it makes my heart swell with love for everyone around me.

I step into Malik's office unannounced. He grumbles at the intrusion, opening his mouth to chew out whoever bothered him without warning.

"I told yo—Melina? What are you doing here?" Malik's stature shifts from stern and business-ready to the lovable giant he shows me in private. "I thought you were spending the day with the kids before we got some time alone for our anniversary."

"You remembered?" My smile grows so wide, it makes my cheeks hurt.

"Remembered? How could I forget? Seven years together is a big deal." Malik jumps out of his chair and kisses me hello as I round his desk.

Apart from a single tuft of graying hair on the side of his head, Malik hasn't aged a day. If anything, he's only grown another layer of dense muscle over his already

bulky frame.

“I thought I’d come to surprise you,” I finally answer his question. “Dad came over early, and he’s keeping an eye on the kids until you’re finished.”

“Wait a minute.” His eyes narrow. “Does that mean he’s joining us this evening?”

“I didn’t have the heart to say no to him. And the girls are excited. They spent all day making you cute little gifts,” I whine and give him the big puppy dog eyes he can never say no to.

“Fine, he can join, but you’ll have to make it up to me.” Malik places a hand on my skirt.

“Oh, I’m sure I can do that.” I slip off the edge of his desk and drop into his lap. “After tonight, we have the whole weekend to ourselves to do whatever would make this right.”

“All these years, and you still tickle my brain in unimaginable ways,” Malik says in a husky whisper.

He leans in to kiss my neck, nibbling gently up to my jaw before our mouths collide. And right on cue, I feel the first jerk of his ever-stiffening manhood.

“Slow down, tiger,” I whisper in his ear. “We still have to get through the building. You’ll make it much harder with this tent in your pants.”

“Fuck ‘em,” Malik groans. “Nothing stands between me and my woman.”

And he’s proven it time and time again. The man he killed to get closer to me. The fights in bars and nightclubs when someone tried touching me. And even cashiers at retail stores when I bought new shirts. Malik has defended me from the very

beginning, and he's never going to stop.

"You know I fall deeper in love with you every time you go and say something silly like that, right?" I press a gentle kiss on his forehead but get off his lap to stop him from losing control.

And oh, how my monster can lose control.

"I do," he says with charmed confidence. "But now you know how I feel every time I look at you."

The End

Thanks for reading!