



The Hand That Frays (The Butcher of Crows Hollow #3)

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Category: Suspense Thriller

Description: Lyla and Neo have reached a critical point in their relationship and in dealing with their shared trauma. Neo is struggling due to a case that hits too close to home, while Lyla is beginning to find some of the sanity she had before Neo Wade turned her world upside down. They share a strong bond through blood and a common desire for revenge, but will their connection endure the challenges of murder and marriage? Discover the answers in the thrilling final installment of the Butcher of Crows Hollow Series.

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CHAPTER ONE

NEO

Being on the run as a killer means you can't get used to anything. Everything is always new and thrilling. The one thing I have gotten used to, however, is the filthy, stupid girl that is on the run with me.

She's the exception to the rule. The one thing I don't leave without when I hear sirens. The reason I breathe.

Over the last year, we traveled the United States, killing for fun sometimes and other times killing with purpose. She's pulled me out of my shell and my motivation. So much so that I now lean into her brand of insanity. Following her direction and plans as if they were law.

Today, we move again.

"What's next on your tour of the States, stupid girl?" I ask, sinking my teeth into an apple. The juices fill my mouth, and I swallow as Lyla looks up from her MacBook screen and watches my Adam's apple bob.

Sometimes, I wonder if I didn't break her too much. Kick her into the dark a bit too far.

Other times, I know she's just the right amount of fucked-up and toss those notions out the window.

“A man in Kentucky molested his daughter, but the lack of evidence is getting the case thrown out.”

“Do you want to figure out if he truly did it?” I ask, leaning over the back of her chair.

She feels my presence like an animal feels that of a phantom, and she sits up straighter in her chair, making me grin.

“No. The implication alone is enough for me. Even if he didn’t do it, the evidence they found of abuse in the home means he’s risen to the top of my list.”

“Mm, I love it when you’re bloodthirsty.” I wrap my hand around her throat from behind.

She sighs and leans into me.

“I know, but we need to get on the road. I was rather messy last night, and in a town this small, we’re likely the only ones in this run-down shit-shack of a motel that raise any red flags.”

She’s right, even if I want to tell her otherwise. More than anything, I want to watch her red-painted lips wrap around my cock and slide down to its base. Listening to her gagging on my dick is my favorite pastime.

“Plus, we’re only a four-hour drive from where I need to be tonight,” she says.

She closes her MacBook, slides it into its case, and tosses it on the bed.

Grabbing her hair before she can make off to load the car, I yank her back to me, turning her around as I use my other hand to grab her pussy.

“Just promise me I get to fuck you today, and I’ll do your bidding,” I growl.

Her eyes light, pupils constricting under the haze of lust .

“I fucking promise,” she says, and the sinister smile she gives me has a wicked energy skimming through my spine.

“Then lead the way, stupid girl.”

After a five-hour drive, which included gassing the car and stopping for food, we’re sitting under the shadow of an oak tree across the street from Ed Johnson’s house. He was released only this morning.

Lyla is antsy in her seat, and I have just the thing to calm her down. Part of me knows she won’t simmer until she gets her fix of death.

“What are we waiting for?” I ask her.

She points, and I narrow my eyes, leaning forward as I perch my hands on the top of the steering wheel.

Two children are at the table in front of the window. They both look to be doing their homework, and Ed is in the kitchen, nursing a beer behind them.

“Ah,” I say. “Didn’t account for them?”

She nods. “I did. They only get supervised visitation right now. Part of his release terms. We’ll wait for the grandma to leave with them before we move in.”

Somewhere along the line, Lyla had taken my vigilante streak further than I ever could, becoming the voice of those who could no longer speak or fend for

themselves. I've always had a specific brand of blood I liked painting my skin with.

I drove us wherever—if it was newsworthy, and Lyla deemed it worth our time.

She's become quite the detective .

“So, we're on a stakeout?” I ask, settling back into the seat.

“We're on a stakeout.” She says it as if it's our first one.

We've been on hundreds at this point.

I close my eyes. “Mm. Tell me when I'm needed again, stupid love.”

I feel her slide across the car, settling her body over my lap before her lips find mine.
“You're needed.”

I grin against her kiss, encircling her moan with my tongue as she breathes into my mouth. My hands rise to her hips as she grinds over my hardness.

“Am I, then?”

“I always need you, Neo.”

“Stupid girl, I'll still need you when I'm six feet under.”

She chuckles. “What will you need me for, then?”

I shrug, gripping her hips firmly in my hands and watching her bloom as her head falls back and she moans.

“That. I’ll need you for that.”

“To moan for you? Neo Wade, do you want me to haunt you?”

I grasp her throat, tugging her back to my lips as I dust mine across hers ever so slightly, relishing in her speeding breaths.

“You already haunt me, stupid girl. With every fucking breath you take. Every moan. Every time that your pretty little cunt grips me tightly. You’ve haunted me from the moment you crawled across my floor at that godforsaken asylum.”

“Fuck, the things you say,” she grumbles, crashing her lips to mine.

The kiss turns heated, and it’s not long before I open the door .

“Get out,” I tell her, and she eyes me with a gleam of defiance, noting the tone of my voice before she complies.

I get out, pocketing my keys as I undo my jeans and let my cock hang free. “Get on your knees, stupid girl. Worship me like I’m your god.”

She falls to her knees, looking up at me as she licks the pre-cum from the head of me. “I don’t believe in God at this point, Neo.”

“Fuck,” I grit out, fisting her hair as I pause her torment. “Then worship me like you do the names on the pages of your notebook of death.”

“Book of the Dead.” Her lips turn rueful. “I like that.”

She looks like an Egyptian princess veiled in the surrounding night as I shove her onto my cock, spearing through her throat like a man out of control.

“Mmm,” she mumbles around me, and I arch forward, wanting to be as deeply rooted inside her as I fucking can.

“That’s a good girl. Suck your god’s cock like a good little whore.” My taunting words will only drive her higher.

On cue, she adds a hand, driving me wild.

“Goddamnit, stupid girl. Teeth, use your fucking teeth.”

She scrapes her teeth against my skin as she fucks me with her hand right behind them.

The bite of pain takes me to another plane as I grip her hair to the point of pain, hearing a delightful squeal from her.

This is what remains of the fiend who wants to maim Lyla Wade.

The beast that dwells beneath my skin is finally as obsessed with her as I am, and the only time he rears his head to punish her is in times of pleasure and only because he knows she likes it .

I haven’t gone soft, by any means, but for her... Fuck, I’d crawl across glass for her touch.

I’d use my dying breath to call her stupid girl just one more time to watch her eyes light.

“Fuck, Lyla, you’d better...” she doubles down, teeth sinking into my cock, and I lose myself, thrusting forward and coming down her skilled throat as she swallows each pulse like a thirsty little whore.

She wipes her mouth when she's cleaned me thoroughly, standing and cupping my face.

I growl, using her hair to turn her around, slamming the front of her body into the car as I come up behind her like a predator.

I pull down her pants, if only to see my name branded on her silky skin.

I slap the brand. "You made me come too quickly. You know I hate that."

"Guilty," she squeaks as I press her face into the cold metal of the car with one hand, using the other to reach around and rub over her clit.

She's so fucking wet.

"My filthy little love, you've wet yourself."

"Seems that I have," she breathes out.

I grin, nuzzling my face into her hair like a man deranged as I inhale her scent, cock filling with blood all over again.

"Fuck, your velvet cunt is so perfect." My fingers tease her clit before moving home to their true destination.

"Neo, please," she begs, and I answer by sliding two fingers inside her.

"Ahh," she whimpers, pressing back into me with trust and need.

Fuck, I am so addicted to this woman. All when I knew no one in the world would ever match my energy, or ever understand me for who I am at my center.

“You never listen to me,” I whisper in her ear, fucking in and out of her fervently, reveling in how she bucks on my hand greedily.

“Because I’m a stupid girl,” she groans.

“Are you? Sometimes, I think you play me like I’m your fiddle.”

“Neo, shit, so close, Neo...” She’s riding my hand like she didn’t come only hours before arriving here when I couldn’t help but finger her while I drove. Her screams kept my mind busy as the highway spread before us like a monotone song on repeat.

“Maybe I shouldn’t let you come. Maybe you need to learn a lesson.”

“Please, no. Let me come, love.”

Ahh, the magic word. The one she rarely uses for me, but the one I’m weak to. It’s my kryptonite coming from her lips.

“Not fair,” I grumble into her ear, nipping the shell with my teeth as she shatters, screams buried by my own as her walls ripple around my fingers delicately, and I imagine myself inside her.

“Tell me, stupid girl, how are we supposed to gain anything if we’re not paying attention to the house?” I ask her when she turns and bares her perfect center to me, lifting a leg for easier access.

When I slide inside her, she grips me like a vise made only for me, and my forehead meets hers as our fevered breaths become a fragrance all their own, a psychotic mix of pheromones and restless energy.

“I’m paying attention to what matters,” she says, and my lips slam against hers,

gobbling up every little moan, every little flutter around my cock.

“You’re what matters in my world, stupid man,” she says against my lips.

I let out a dark chuckle. “And you’ll always be what matters in my world, love.”

The night drawls on, and we lose ourselves in one another twice more before we return to our stakeout of Edward Johnson.

When the grandma finally leaves with the kids in tow, Lyla’s fast asleep on my lap.

The lights in the house go out as I let my stupid love sleep.

After all, the hand of death needs to be steady, not weary.

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CHAPTER TWO

LYLA

While Ed snivels, I don't believe him. The alcohol scenting his breath reveals who he truly is. Even while his children were in his home, vying for attention after their supposedly innocent father got released from nearly a year in jail, he drowned himself in libations instead of paying them any mind.

That is the answer to my questions.

Though I no longer need them.

I only love to toy with them and make them think they will live.

I can't help it. The desperation in them makes me giddy. It makes me wet.

The woman I was years ago is long gone. She's buried under at least a ton of trauma and old baggage I don't peek at. Not when my newfound bloodlust fills a void in me.

I never thought I could be this woman. Now, I'm unhinged and unstable. However, I know I'll always have my tether to reality in Neo.

His hand is on my shoulder, causing me to shiver as I look down at where I've tied Ed Johnson to his dining room table.

He's drawn across it and at my mercy. It's quickly becoming my MO.

“What do you think, stupid girl?”

“I think he’s going to die,” I say loud enough to pop Ed’s illusion of hope like a bubble hitting a solid object.

He screams, and I march forward, stuffing a wad of paper towels into his mouth.

I turn to Neo as I un-sheath my knife, and he grins. “I fucking love the way your eyes light during a kill.”

I lick my lips, trying not to get caught in an obsession with him when I’m supposed to be working.

“Stay focused,” I snap, and he licks his lips.

My eyes drag down his body, landing on his hard cock. My mouth waters.

“I’m trying, but you know I can’t focus when I’m tired,” he groans.

Neo stayed awake while I napped to ensure we were secure in front of Ed’s house.

I stride closer, stopping before him and looking at his beautiful, rugged face. “I know, baby. When I’m done with Ed, I’ll find you somewhere to sleep, alright? This shouldn’t take long. I don’t feel like dragging it out tonight.”

I run the tip of my blade over his hardness, twisting a bit at the tip of him through his jeans.

He hisses, panting as his eyes grow heady. “Fuck, stupid girl. Hurry.”

His needy energy leaks into me, and I turn on Ed Johnson and stalk closer.

Ed continues his screaming as I climb on the table and straddle his stomach .

A disgruntled snarl comes from Neo, and I grin.

“Hear that, Ed? I don’t think he’s too keen on me touching you.”

Tears wash out the man’s eyes, trickling down into his ears.

“Don’t worry. He won’t hurt you.” I lean down, whispering into his ear, “It’s me you should worry about, Ed. See, I have a knack for sensing the truth of things. And I know you’re fucking lying.”

He sobs as I sit back straight over his stomach, placing my blade over his throat.

I watch the last beats of his heart with my deranged eyes as I press firmly, dragging it from ear to ear.

“That’s why they’re calling you the Ripper, love,” Neo says, leaning over Ed’s head.

Ed gurgles, thrashing against his restraints as I look down and watch the life drain from his putrid eyes.

“They know nothing,” I say, twisting my blade over Ed’s cheek.

“I didn’t say they were smart; I only said that’s why they’re giving you a name.”

My eyes flick up to Neo’s, and I catch the Butcher looking back at me.

“Stupid. Fucking. Girl. You’re more than I ever thought you’d be.”

I lick my lips and realize I’m covered in arterial spray.

I smile, knowing Ed's blood coats my teeth.

"Am I?"

He growls like a feral animal. "Come here."

He straightens, still standing near the head of the table.

I crawl over Ed's body, my knees straddling his head as I listen to the Butcher's command.

His hand slides down the front of my pants, and I sit back a bit to give him space to work. My ass smashes into Ed's face as I arch.

"You're so fucking perfect that it makes me want to kill you myself."

"And wouldn't that be fitting?" I breathe. "The Butcher ending his creation."

He leans over as his fingers slide inside me. "I did create you, didn't I?"

I moan incoherently as the adrenaline left in my system from killing entwines with the heat he's creating with his fingers.

"You did," I breathe, barely able to get it out as he grinds the heel of his palm into my clit, working me higher.

His kiss seers my lips as I part for him, flicking my tongue against his as we fight for dominance with our mouths.

"Do you regret it?" I ask him breathlessly, body undulating on his hand as he brings me to climax just as quickly as he does any other time.

He scoffs in disgust. “Never.”

“Neo,” I beg, fisting his dark hair in my hand as I feel orgasm tangling low in my belly.

“More,” he grinds out, tone pleading.

I scream through the climax, feeling revitalized afterward.

Centered.

He helps me off the table and wipes my blade clean on his pants, handing it back to me as he unbinds Ed and packs up our restraints.

“Any last things you want to do before we leave?” Neo asks, and I return to reality as I’d been thinking of my life had he not created me .

Would I still be in Crows Hollow, a broken and tired nurse? Would I be working overtime tonight and sipping an energy drink instead of orgasming over the dead body of a child molester?

One can never tell.

“Lyla?” Neo snaps his fingers. “Anything else we need to do?”

I nod, stepping toward the curtains and closing them so that any passerby can’t find Ed lying on the dining room table in the front window.

He has a meeting with a reporter for Channel 4 tomorrow. An entire film crew will find him spread out and gutted, the word guilty etched into his chest—thanks to Neo and his branding skills.

“That’s all,” I say, removing my gloves and tossing them in my bag for disposal.

“Then let’s find somewhere to sleep, stupid love. I’m exhausted.”

We sneak out the back and over two streets to where we parked, the thrill of killing gone from our systems as bone-deep exhaustion seeps through us in its place.

Motel Five was the only thing with vacancy anywhere close to Ed’s house, and Neo secured us a room with cash as I waited outside in the car, covered in blood.

Once we were inside, we cleaned up and crashed.

Hard.

The nightstand clock says it’s eleven a.m. when I roll out of bed and head to the bathroom to pee .

After I completed my morning routine, I used the coffee machine from our luggage to make two cups of coffee.

Like always, Neo takes his coffee into his morning shower, and I turn the television on to see the breaking news.

However, this morning, my thrill is overshadowed by a national breaking story. There’s no mention of Ed Johnson and the American Ripper slitting his throat in the night.

No.

The headlines on every channel are something I never expected to see.

Anne Hatt, a woman who was imprisoned around five years ago for the heinous crime of poisoning her children over the length of ten or more years, is being set free.

I remember this story from the news. It had the world gripped when they found her guilty. Everyone couldn't understand how she could do the things she did to her children.

Her blonde hair whips in the wind as she ducks her head to avoid reporters on her way out of the prison in gray sweatpants and a white t-shirt.

"Astounding," the reporter says, and I turn the television up.

"If you're just tuning in, let's get you up to speed." A man standing in front of the prison holds an umbrella in one hand and a microphone in the other. "In a sick turn of events, the court overturned the guilty verdict of Anne Hatt. The once-convicted mother of four was found guilty, as you'll remember, nearly six years ago for the maltreatment of her children. Two of those children have since come forward, saying they were coerced by law enforcement. The courts overturned the initial ruling because of these new accusations. However, this case could go back to court."

Fuck. To drag those children through that hell again, when they're grown and have families now, would be pure hell.

The feed breaks up, and the studio reporter returns to the screen. "Sorry, I think we've lost David. Our team is going to see if we can get him back on the line," she says, her thick London accent coming through the television speakers louder than David's.

I turn it down a bit, still riveted.

"David is outside of HMP Low Newton, giving us coveted footage of Anne Hatt, who

has been released and loaded into a caravan to head for London, where she has a home with her husband, Carl Hatt. We're going to go to a commercial while we try to get David back on the line, and we'll be right back," the anchor says, and I release a breath.

I turn to get my mug of coffee off the nightstand and eye Neo, who is still staring at the television, where an ad for deodorant now plays on the screen.

"Neo?"

He doesn't rouse from whatever thoughts he's floating in. For a moment, I realize I'm not looking at the Neo I know. I'm looking at the Neo I fell for.

His eyes are feral and darkening around their edges as he stands naked in the bathroom's fissure. His muscles are on full display, and as his mind works over whatever tedious task it's mulling, every sinew is dense and flexing.

I lick my lips as the Butcher crawls to the forefront of Neo's psyche.

"Neo!" I shout again, and he startles, wild eyes snapping toward me. "Are you alright? "

"I—No, I'm not." He turns and slams the bathroom door shut, and I'm left on the edge of the bed as David returns to the screen and begins speaking again.

I'm torn between watching the story unfold and going to Neo. I know he's going to need a moment, however. He always does when he gets like this.

Though I've never witnessed him look so demented before.

"So, do we think the courts will re-try Mrs. Hatt's case?" the anchor in London asks

David, who's now standing in pounding rain and battling to keep his umbrella above him.

I drown him out as the words "Child Abuser Walks Free" scrawl across the bottom of the screen, and my brain hones in on them.

Everything I know about Neo comes rushing back into my deranged brain.

How his mother had abused him, and it's how his motivation for killing built.

Anne Hatt poisoned her children for years before one of them confided in a counselor, unraveling the abuse and getting the authorities involved.

It took them two years to get to trial, all while the children sat in limbo. The MPS couldn't figure out if Carl had any involvement or knew about the abuse of his three children, so the children were placed under a care order and placed in London's version of the foster system for their safety.

I know this triggered Neo.

What I don't know is how hard it's going to be to get him back.

I slide off the bed and shut off the television .

Before I turn the knob, I close my eyes and steel my nerves.

Pushing inside, I find him standing deathly still at the edge of the fifties-style pink tub, a sick grin on his face.

"Neo?"

“Stupid girl?”

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CHAPTER THREE

NEO

“That it?” Sean asks, handing me the manilla envelope as he stands from his desk chair.

Opening it, I make sure everything’s there.

Passports. New I.D.s. Sean even made new Social Security cards for Lyla and me. There are also visas. Permanent ones. He did well.

“No. This is it.” I give him the envelope with his cash and tip him a nod before turning and leaving.

The drive back to the hotel isn’t far, but Lyla will be livid with me when I get there. Then again, she might be so revved up that things get interesting before we leave for our red-eye flight.

I grin as I throw the car in drive and speed toward the run-down motel we found on the side of the interstate.

She will be confused and wonder why we’re deviating from our plans here in the States, but I think it’s time for me to take the reins back. It’s time to show my stupid girl who’s in charge.

I made her, not the other way around.

While it's been fun watching her bathe in blood and wade in darkness all these years, it's my fucking turn.

I haven't felt the urge to maim in so long that I thought myself broken for a bit, broken by the very woman that I can't quit.

Half of me even gave over to the idea. Because who would I be without my stupid girl?

I can't kill her.

I've tried.

A sickness in me feeds off her presence and her very existence.

So, I thought I'd have to resign to being by her side while she killed. While she carried out the justice of others.

Sometimes, she killed for fun, which I didn't mind.

My crazy love is wild and free, and I love to revel in her insanity while my cock thrusts through her tight, warm...

You're getting carried away!

I shake my head free of the thoughts warring in it and adjust my dick as I enter the parking lot and find the empty spot in front of our room.

Room 147.

Where my Lyla is waiting for me, and where I will see how far she's willing to go to

stay beside me.

When I saw Anne Hatt on the news, a switch flipped.

I needed her blood to coat my skin.

I wanted to hear her gurgled cries of agony as much as I wanted to watch the light go out in her eyes.

A thrill raced through me at the idea, and I found the first connection I could in this podunk town to get fake papers and booked Lyla and me a ticket to London, England.

I open the door and drop the manilla folder on the bed .

I don't have to look for Lyla; I know where she is.

Stepping into the bathroom, I flick the light on.

She winces, her eyes covered in running mascara—now dried—looking up at me.

“Mmm, you look fucking beautiful,” I tell her.

She's half-standing, half-hanging from the shower rod, cuffs biting into her wrists.

Stepping into her, I run my fingers over the marks the metal is creating, my breathing growing erratic as I hear her whimper at my touch.

“Neo, where did you go?” she asks.

I detect fear in her voice and close my eyes, letting the feel of its fingers rake through my broken psyche. I love it when she's afraid, especially if it's me she's fearful of.

Not that my fractured girl fears much anymore.

“I had something to do,” I tell her vaguely.

Her brows furrow. “You had something to do that I couldn’t be a part of?”

Anger rises at her questioning me, and I snarl, snapping my teeth, only missing her nose by a few inches.

She straightens, her cuffs clanging against the metal shower rod above.

“I don’t need to take you with me all the time, stupid girl. One does need a chance to miss their vices.”

Her pupils dilate at my calling her my addiction, but I don’t let her pull me into her delusional world with her. If I allow her to drag me into her bubble of delusion, I won’t want to come back out.

I’ll stay here with her all day and miss the flight and change my plans if it means I get to watch her ass cheek with my name branded on it bounce as I fuck her hard and deep.

“Why do you look worried, stupid girl?” I ask her .

Her unease is painted on her beautiful eyes like words on the page of a book.

She thinks I’ve had my fill of her.

She thinks I’m going to kill her.

Even when she knows I’m obsessed with her.

If I could become the air she breathes to know how it feels to be inside of her lungs, I'd fucking do it.

Yet, this stupid girl thinks her time with me is ending.

Part of me wants to prod at the notion. Let her think it's real.

"I'm not worried," she says, her voice shaking.

I grin, leaning in.

She shifts, standing as straight as she can against the tub's edge.

"Liar," I accuse, my tone sounding foreign, even to me.

She pants, trying to keep her composure but failing. "I'm not lying."

"You think I'm going to kill you."

My words float between us like a discarded and dirty plastic bottle on the ocean's surface.

"Are you going to kill me, madman?" she breathes, teasing into my space as her nose touches mine.

I growl, flicking my tongue against her closed lips.

They part, and a moan escapes.

"I am a madman. Do you know why?" I ask, grabbing her throat into my hand quicker than a Cobra's strike.

This time, her moan is loud and guttural. I like that when she cries out for me, it seems to come from her soul.

“No. Tell me,” she manages.

“Because you made me so. I was a killer before you, Lyla. But you made me mad. You took me deeper into the depths of insanity with how you made me love you, how you forced me into obsession with you. You’re the reason I don’t want to kill because I don’t want to do anything more than bury myself inside you and never come back out. If you’re darkness, Lyla, I want you to swallow me fucking whole.”

My admission quickens the speed of her attempts at breathing.

“Neo,” she pleads, pressing her thick thighs together at my words.

“Does that make you wet for me? Is your pussy flooded at the idea you’ve broken a killer?”

Her eyes widen when I cut off her air completely.

“I’m not going to kill you, Lyla. I’m just going to make you want to be dead.”

I let her throat go and step back, watching her with a heated gaze as she sucks in air, her eyes panicked.

Her fear is like fuel to me, and as I watch her realize that the Neo Wade she knew in that asylum is alive and well inside me, it energizes my cataclysmic soul. Fire is ignited in my belly as I storm forward and release her cuffs.

She drops to her knees, rubbing her wrists as she looks up at me from beneath damp, dark lashes.

“At my feet, right where I fucking like you. Good.”

“Take my cock out,” I tell her, and she hastily moves to listen.

She undoes my jeans, smoothly tugging the zipper down before she pulls me out of my boxers. I’m so hard for her, making it difficult to manage.

What does she expect when she knows how much I love her fear?

Once it’s out, her hands slide over my shaft as she licks her lips.

She opens her mouth to take me inside, and I stop her.

“Did I tell you that you could have my cock? Did I give you permission?”

Her eyes flick up, and there it is again.

“God, Lyla.” I rush her, toppling her backward off of her knees. She catches herself on her hands that splay out behind her, but her head leans over the tub’s edge.

I grab both sides of her face, pressing the back of her head into the ledge, and she fights to adjust with her neck.

“I’m going to fuck this pretty mouth of yours. You’d best hold on, lest I snap your delicate little neck while I do so.”

It’s all the warning I give her as I angle my cock with one hand before sliding it into her mouth and down her throat.

The angle is fucking divine, and her teeth scrape the skin slightly, and the feel of the pain makes my eyes nearly cross.

She scrambles to shove her body up onto her hands that press against the floor.

It would be so fucking easy to end her.

“I could kill you like this,” I tell her as my cock slides past her gag reflex, and it flickers over the head in greeting.

She moans around me, and it feeds some sick part of me.

“I could come down your dirty fucking throat and then end it all. One quick turn of your head, stupid girl, and it would be all over. ”

Her eyes roll back in her head as if she’s idolizing the idea.

My cock slides deep into her throat and muffles a scream as I hold onto both sides of her face, pressing with all my weight against her head that lays awkwardly on the edge of the tub.

“You look like my little fuck toy, you know that?” I manage through gritted teeth.

Her mouth feels so good that I barely get the words out.

Another languid moan releases around my cock, stroking it as I fuck her faster, harder.

Moving my right hand from her cheek, I pinch her nose shut, cutting off her air.

“You can breathe when I come, stupid girl.”

She tightens her lips around me. Likely in hopes that it’ll quicken my release.

I smirk. “Which do you think will happen first, my orgasm or your death?”

My left hand sinks into her hair, fisting it.

She looks like a masterpiece beneath me as she grapples with her hands for purchase on anything to keep her pretty neck from snapping against the tub and my weight fucking down at her from above.

“Fuck, stupid love. That’s it, suck me fucking dry. You dirty little whore!” I erupt in her mouth, hearing her gags as she tries to swallow with her nose plugged like music to my ears.

I don’t let her nose go until the last minute.

Stepping back, I pull out of her mouth as she collapses to the floor, heaving and gasping like a fish that’s accidentally found the shore.

I crouch, cock still hard and out of my pants, cum still leaking out. Cocking my head, I watch her revive before me. Reanimated like a spirit called to a Ouija board.

“Sometimes I forget how perfect you are,” I whisper.

I know she’s heard me when her eyes dance up to mine, and she tries to lift off the floor using the tub.

I shake my head, standing as I run my hand over my cock and back away from her.

“Ah, ah, ah, stupid girl. You know I want you to crawl.”

CHAPTER FOUR

LYLA

I don't know what's gotten into Neo as I crawl toward him across the bathroom floor. I love it, however. The taste of his cum is fresh on my tastebuds as I try my damndest not to buckle to the floor.

“Eyes down. Don’t fucking look at me,” he says, and the degrading way he says it has me inwardly mewling.

The way this man can turn vile on a dime, yet make me feel so fucking loved the next second keeps me on the edge of my seat.

It’s the only way that I want to live.

I cast my eyes to the floor as I crawl toward him. Every move I make has him backing up.

Soon, we’re on the dingy carpet in the motel room.

He slowly removes his shoes, pants, and boxers, and I fight to keep my eyes trained downward.

“Good girl,” he praises, and my body heats like it’s on fire from the inside, burning outward.

I'm on all fours, and I've stopped altogether because I'm between his feet, but he hasn't given me any direction yet.

"Look at me, whore," he snarls, and my pussy throbs for attention as I do as I'm told.

He leans back on the bed, stroking his hand up and down his length as he teases me with what I can't have.

"We're going on a trip, stupid girl. While we're on that trip, you'll behave like the good girl I know you can be. You'll keep your weapons stowed and your sanity in check—as much as possible."

My eyes watch him jack his cock, mesmerized utterly.

My teeth sink into my bottom lip.

"Stupid girl," he shouts, and I snap to attention, my eyes locking onto his.

"Sir?" I ask.

"Did you hear what I said to you?"

I hastily nod. "I did, sir."

His answering grin fills me with white-hot heat. I love to push the envelope with him; I'll admit that. But what I love most is being his good girl.

The one he praises after he degrades. The one who gets rewards for crawling on her bloody knees to him. The one who kills for him on command.

My fascination with being his stupid girl has no rhyme or reason. Even the brightest

psychologists wouldn't be able to riddle out our love.

It's wild and hot—obsessive and ravaging.

Sometimes, it feels downright illegal.

Well, most of it is.

“Come here,” he says, and I use his knees to lift myself off the floor. Crawling over him, I straddle his body.

I'm still fully clothed in my leggings and sweatshirt I had on before Neo went berserk and cuffed me to the shower curtain rod.

“Are you going to be my good girl?”

I nod. “I am.”

He lets his cock go, working to stay partially sitting as his rippled abs tighten and flex as his hands grab the waistline of my leggings and rip them clean down the middle.

My bare pussy comes in contact with the cold air of the room, and I hiss.

He cups it with one hand. “If you don't behave while we're gone, Lyla, I don't know what I'll do.”

“Where are we going?” I breathe, even though my brain already knows where we're headed.

Something about that news report had triggered my madman, and the Neo I became obsessed with back in the asylum emerged and reared his psychotic head.

“We’re going on our honeymoon.”

I don’t have time to reply.

He flips me over, lining himself up before he thrusts inside me in one fluid movement.

“Neo!”

“We can’t go on a honeymoon, Neo. We’re not married,” I whisper into his ear as he drops over me. His weight presses into me, nearly taking my breath away while he fucks me hard and fast.

“Your soul has been married to mine since the day you were born, stupid girl,” he whispers, his lips crashing down on mine in a frenzy.

I sigh as I seep into him, letting him fuck away all the worry and ache in my muscles.

I thought he was going to leave me here earlier. I cried until I nearly made myself sick, thinking he wasn’t coming back for me.

That the other shoe had finally dropped.

Something I’m always worried about with him. He likely worries the same thing about me .

We’re both known to act erratically when prodded; it’s what makes us...us.

“I don’t have a ring,” I manage as I feel my belly burn low, an orgasm building slowly.

“You have my name cut into your fucking body. Do you need a ring?”

I’m speechless, mainly because of how my impending climax is rapidly approaching.

Neo takes my nonanswer as an answer, however. He sinks his face into my neck, lifting one leg to thrust into me even deeper.

“I’ll give you whatever you want; just be mine. Be my stupid little wife.”

His words shatter me, and my eyes speckle with light as I come in answer.

He bites my neck, dragging my climax out, and I groan.

“I’ll take that as a yes, stupid girl.”

Words. I can’t form words.

He pulls back, and a tear beads in my eye. Even though I don’t let it fall, Neo sees it and allows the barest hint of a smile to curl his beautiful lips upward.

“Yes,” I breathe.

It’s hours later when we’re married by a real priest in a beautiful church, as Neo holds him at gunpoint. I don’t know where he got the license or the idea he wanted to marry me in his head, but I leave with a new last name and a priest’s blood on my skin after the ceremony is complete.

We get into the car, and Neo pulls us onto the highway as I slide over his lap. He wraps one arm around my waist as his other hand holds the steering wheel.

My white dress is covered in blood, not that I should’ve worn white. However, it’s

the very picture of Neo's and my relationship, and I find it fitting.

"Stupid wife, what are you up to?" I reach between us and work him out of his slacks.

He dressed up so nicely for the ceremony. He almost looked respectable.

"I think I like it when you call me that," I tell him, finding my bare entrance with his cock as I sit down on him, letting his girth stretch me wide as he hits the gas a bit abruptly.

I laugh. "Hold us steady, madman," I whisper, nipping his ear as I lift and feel him slide inside me.

"Fuck, you feel good, husband."

He growls as I rise and fall on his dick like the leaves on a tree in a stiff wind.

"You're going to kill us both," he tells me, taking his eyes off the road as he kisses my lips.

My tongue parts his, flicking against his answering tongue as I use his shoulders for leverage.

He feels so good, and the thrill of barreling down the road while his cock is buried deep inside me, all while I can't see what's before us, has my cunt greedy.

"I might. At least we'll go out together," I tell him, and something haunting passes through his eyes.

Changing the pace, I pull my pussy backward, tugging his dick at an angle with it before I grind back, sinking him back inside me .

“More,” he snarls, and it has a thrilling buzz ambling through my veins.

“More?” I ask.

His other hand comes from behind my back and wraps around my throat. “More!”

“Yes, sir,” I breathe, blood filling with the drug that is Neo Wade.

I reach down, moving the thick layers of the tulle fabric my thigh-high wedding dress is made of, finding his base.

I grip him in my hand as I tug backward and slide forward, all the while moving my hand in front of my pussy.

“That’s so good. So fucking good, don’t stop, stupid girl.”

I can’t. I’m going to come so hard that I might crash us. I don’t know if he’s got us on the road anymore, but I know we’re going at a snail’s pace down the highway as I feel my orgasm priming my body.

My nipples pebble beneath my dress, and I arch backward, letting my hair fall over my back.

My pace increases as I feel so good that I can’t think about anything but coming.

I know the orgasm is going to be overwhelming, and for a split second, I worry I shouldn’t have done this while we were driving.

“Goddamnit, stupid girl, don’t you fucking stop!”

“Neo. Oh, shi—” I come the moment I feel the car leave the pavement and bump

along the side of the road, our shocks not absorbing impacts beneath us as Neo shouts my name and thrusts up as he comes.

Fuck!" he breathes, shoving me off him and getting back onto the road smoothly. He looks in the rearview mirror to see if we gained any unwanted attention, his cock sticking out of his pants and leaking cum. I grin, chewing my bottom lip as I feel his hot cum seep from my pussy.

"Satisfied, stupid wife?" he asks, grinning at me as he stuffs himself back in his ruined slacks.

I shake my head. "Never. But it'll bide."

He motions for me to come to him, and I lean over the middle console as I do as I'm told.

He retakes my lips, disregarding the road as he swerves and a car honks at him.

He pays them no mind as he pulls back and looks into my eyes.

It's a look that tells me all he can't, and I kiss the tip of his nose.

"I love you, too."

I sit back down, feeling his cum leak from me and into the wedding dress I married him in over an hour ago as I smile and watch the signs flick by on the interstate.

"Are we going to the airport? We can't fly," I tell him, my nerves perking up at the signs for the airport that Neo exits beside.

"We can fly, and we will. How will we get to London otherwise?"

Part of me has faith he has a plan for us to board a plane, but the other part of me wonders if he plans to kill everyone and abscond with a plane.

Either way, I settle back into my seat and keep silent.

I'd follow Neo Wade over a fucking cliff, so who am I to question where we're going next?

Because I know, at the very least, I'm going.

Two hours and a change of clothes later, we're through security and waiting to board the next red-eye to Heathrow Airport in London, England .

I entwine my hand with Neo's as he settles in for the wait.

"Ready for our honeymoon, stupid love?"

I nod.

If our honeymoon is anything like our life together so far, it's going to be a wild fucking ride.

And it's going to be bloody.

This stupid girl is ready.

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CHAPTER FIVE

NEO

The car drops us off near the Hilton London Hyde Park, a grand hotel. It's near beautiful parks, gardens, and many easily accessible sights and attractions.

The woman I'm after lives in Mayfair, conveniently located only two miles away. While this trip is disguised as a honeymoon, my stupid girl knows we're here to work.

There's a giddy energy to her that usually keeps my veins buzzing, but today, that energy is missing. I check in while she hangs back, looking at the chandeliers and grandeur above her.

She was restless and quiet on the plane ride, which took far too long. A man like me shouldn't be cooped up for that length of time. It makes my brain itch.

She's throwing me off, and I don't like it.

I'm sure it's only because I've taken the reins back when my little psychopath loves to break free. Not here.

I need her to behave here, which she had agreed to.

As I push the elevator button, I realize that the problem might be me. I've grown used to my rare gem of a woman—now wife. Lyla's behavior is a rarity, which surely has

me on edge.

I wonder if her new calm demeanor is because I asked her to behave.

The card slides into the lock, which lights green. I push into the suite and hold the door for Lyla as she pulls her rolling bag behind her and steps inside.

“This is beautiful,” she says with an air of whimsy that I haven’t heard since we stepped foot in Crows Hollow again when Kage Davis was loose.

“It is. I thought you’d like it, stupid girl.”

She grins at me before leaving her bag at the end of the bed and entering the bathroom. She squeals when she sees the tub's size.

I plan to use that tub later. However, I want to understand Lyla’s behavior on the trip here.

“Stupid girl, come here,” I say, tossing my two bags onto the bed. One is full of clothing, the other full of things that I’m lucky to have gotten past security.

“Yes?” she asks; a buzzing energy in her tone skates up my legs and caresses the underside of my balls.

“Something’s wrong with you,” I say, running the back of my finger down her cheek.

She shakes her head, but her pupils constrict and give her away.

“What has you on edge?”

“I’m not on...”

My face hardens. She knows I hate lies.

She licks her lips, and I envision sucking her tongue into my mouth later. I need it like air, but I also need to know why she's acting irregularly.

I can't work when she's not content.

I hate I can't, but it's a fact .

We're one now.

The idea sinks through my brain and causes a needling tingle. It takes everything in me not to shiver.

"I'm just worried about being here. It's unfamiliar territory. We don't know our way around, and I don't want to..."

She's worried about getting caught killing Anne Hatt. She's not here to do anything, however.

"Stupid girl, you're here on your honeymoon. You're not here to worry."

Her eyes narrow. "But we also have a job to do, right? I know that you're here to kill?—"

I silence her by covering her mouth with my hand. "I am here to kill Anne Hatt, stupid wife. You're here to enjoy yourself and to be my perfect little fuck toy."

Her breathing grows ragged behind my hand, and I smirk.

"There's my girl. Don't worry. Worrying gets you in trouble. Worrying gets you

dead.”

Her tongue darts out and licks my palm that still covers her mouth.

I pull my hand back.

“Fine. I won’t worry. What are we going to do first?”

“First, I’m going to wash you. Then I’m going to fuck you senseless in that massive tub in there.”

She claps her hands, bouncing up and down.

Yes, this version of Lyla is what I need to feel whole.

“Get undressed and be in the shower by the time I get in there,” I tell her, turning to remove things out of my pockets to do the same.

“Yes, sir,” she replies breathlessly.

I shake my head when I walk into the bathroom and see her naked but not in the shower .

She’s kneeling beside the running shower, grinning at me.

“Didn’t I tell you to be in the shower?”

She’s prodding at me, and because it’s our honeymoon, I’ll play along.

Were it any other time, her disobedience wouldn’t be a fucking game. Her answering smirk tells me she knows it, too.

“Oh, did you?” she asks, feigning confusion. “I knew I was forgetting some part of your order.”

I step close to her, looming as I look down at her.

From here, I can see her perfect, perky nipples and the sinfully dark look in her eyes as she bites her lower lip.

“You always need direction.” I shake my head.

She runs her hands up the front of my bare legs, making my cock twitch in answer to her touch.

“Will you tire of directing me, husband?”

The term grates through my gray matter, making my body feel so fucking alive.

I reach down and fist her hair in both hands, guiding her mouth to my cock as I shove inside it with one thrust.

“Never!”

The tub is only filled with a few inches of water, and I’m on its edge. Lyla’s beautiful, branded ass is arched perfectly as I use the globes of it to push and pull her on my cock.

Her face dances dangerously close to the water in the bottom as she grapples on her forearms, not to slide away from my cock.

“Put your face in the water. I’ll tell you when you can breathe,” I tell her, hissing when she listens quickly.

I came down her throat earlier before ever getting into the shower. Then, as we showered, I made her come with my tongue thrusting inside her cunt, and we called for room service.

We're both jetlagged like a motherfucker, but there was no way in fuck I wasn't making good on my threat to fuck her in this tub.

Bubbles sound as she struggles below the water, and I slap her ass and allow her air.

She gasps, coming up for air like a surfacing monster. "Fuck, harder," she breathes, and I slap her ass again, tugging her down on my cock harder at the same time.

"Goddamnit, you shouldn't feel this fucking good," I grit out.

My hands travel her curves as she claps her ass cheeks and dances her cunt over my cock.

"Tell me how good I feel," she breathes.

"You feel..." I hiss as she quickens her pace. "You feel like the first sip of coffee in the morning."

"Fuck, that's good," she whines, her arms moving backward for a better purchase as she fucks me with everything she has.

My hands travel over her ass cheeks and down her sides, gripping her supple, soft flesh there.

"Face under the water, stupid girl. Don't come back until this pretty cunt is coming for me," I tell her, shoving my nails into her sides as she moans.

Following my command, she drops her face into the water as we work together to reach our goal .

I dig my nails in further on either side of her ribcage before I drag them back towards me. They sink into her flesh and embed her DNA beneath them.

I want every fucking part of her to be a part of me.

I want her as close as I can get her.

Her scream is gurgled under the water as I feel her pussy dance around me.

She comes, not lifting her head as she forgets about air and only focuses on her mission to finish coming.

“Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck,” I groan as I spill inside her, using her ass to move her body on me once more, as she’s gone lax.

It takes a minute to realize she’s not moving, and I roll my eyes, lift her out of the water, and lay her on her back.

My dick hardens all over again as I listen to her chest.

Not finding a pulse, I see the spot on the end of her breastbone to place my hands and begin compressions.

I don’t think she meant to drown this time. I think she was too caught up in the feeling of me inside her, and that makes my stomach giddy as fuck.

She was so enraptured she forgot to breathe. What other man can say that about his wife?

None.

She sputters water from her lungs, and I turn her over.

Her gasping makes my cock stiffen.

Death has that effect on me.

She's on her side as I slip onto mine behind her, finding her asshole with the tip of my leaking cock.

My hand slides over her hip as she's still coughing, finding her clit through her swollen lips.

"Let me in, stupid girl. I want to fuck your ass," I moan.

She lifts a leg, opening herself to me as I angle correctly, gaining headway as my cock fights its way inside her tight asshole.

"Fuck," I hiss.

"Neo." She covers my hand with hers, moving my fingers over her clit rougher than I'd been doing.

"Good fucking girl," I praise, already feeling the itch of a second orgasm coming on behind the one I just had.

"More," she breathes, her voice ragged from her coughing fit. "Please, more."

I find her entrance with my fingers, using my leftover cum as a lubricant. At least, what's not already dripped into her ass and around my cock that's thrusting shallowly

into her ass.

I shove two fingers inside her. “Rub your clit. I won’t last. I never do with you.”

I always want her to come first, and usually, she does. The way she feels tonight, however, has me fighting, spilling in her ass like a teenager fucking his first hole.

With my other hand, I snake under her head and wrap it around her throat.

She just danced so close to death most wouldn’t want to risk it.

Not me, however.

I want her constantly on the edge of life when I fuck her. I want her to know who holds the power.

As I skim my lips over her ear, only the tip of my dick fucks into her ass, and she arches her back to accommodate more of me inside of her.

“I want you to come all over my fingers so I can fill your ass full, stupid girl. Even though you disobeyed me earlier, I want you to go to bed with this pussy so fucking raw that you can’t sleep through its throbbing,” I taunt, nipping the edge of her ear .

She moans, her walls fluttering around my fingers at my words.

“Yes, there you go. Be my good fucking girl and come all over my fingers. Your ass feels too good, wife...”

She erupts like a volcano around my fingers, taking me with her as I shove forward and let my cock empty in her ass.

When I pull out, I lift her ass cheek.

“Push it out. I want to see my cum leak out of your ass.”

Madness is unfurled inside me when she listens. She opens her ass and lets my cum seep out of her.

It runs over her other cheek and slides to the floor, making a little puddle.

I grind forward with my hips, running the head of me through the mess.

Swiping my fingers through some of my cum, I rub it over her brand.

The unhinged way I behave used to worry me. Not with her, however.

Because as I work my cum into my name on her ass, she’s moaning and arching into my touch.

While I might be a fucked-up man, I never have to worry about anything I do when I’m with her.

It’s why I can’t ever be without her.

Even if she still might worry that I want to kill her.

Fear is a wonderful motivator, though.

Let her worry.

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CHAPTER SIX

LYLA

Breakfast this morning was a delicious spread of pastry and coffee at a cafe we walked to. Now, we're wandering through the British Museum, hand in hand.

It's the most normal I've felt since I met Neo, and I don't know if I like it. I know there's an underlying reason we're here in London.

I even know her name.

I also know why her story triggered Neo to get us papers to leave the country, but I'm ignoring all of that for the way it feels to be not only his stupid girl but his wife.

It's something I never thought I'd be to him. I resigned to the fact we had something unconventional a long time ago.

Right from the get-go.

We stop in front of a painting of a naked woman. She's voluptuous and splayed on a chaise lounge with fruits and vegetables surrounding her. Her face is wistful, and her posture is leisurely.

"She looks so at peace with the world, right?" I ask Neo, turning to look up at where he's examining the painting with his head cocked to the side.

“That’s what you see? I think she looks as if she’s been forced to pose.”

I turn back, looking at her from a different angle, with a more critical eye.

The subtle way the crook of her lips turns downward is telling, and Neo’s picking it up makes me realize how much of a predator he is.

And now he’s in a new hunting ground.

It doesn’t trickle fear through me, though.

My stomach warms as a wrinkle of adoration carves out a pit in the lining.

Neo drops my hand, turning towards me to lean down and brush his lips against my ear.

I wore my hair in a little updo today. I know he loves it, exposing me to his playful teeth that nip the shell of my ear.

“Would you pose for me, stupid girl?”

I bristle with a gasp as his tongue flicks into my ear, causing a shiver to encase my spine and grip firmly.

“Neo.”

“You would, wouldn’t you? You would spread this beautiful body out for me.”

“What would you do to me?”

“Paint you.”

I feel that Neo Wade likely doesn't use a brush when he paints.

"How?" I ask him.

He looks around, assessing the room as he whispers, "With the sharpest blade imaginable—one so keen it would tear your flesh open before you even felt the pain. Then, I'd take my brush and use your lifeblood to varnish this beguiling flesh. You'd be my canvas and my paint, stupid girl."

My breathing is erratic, and my thighs are pressing together. My panties soak up the wetness his words coax as I turn my face into his.

The entire time he taunted me, he was watching the room, making sure I was the only one acutely aware of his massive cock pressing into my hip.

"You're a tease, husband."

His eyes turn feral on a dime as his lip curls up, and he bares his teeth. "I never knew one word could cause such a bodily reaction."

I grin. "Want me to repeat it?"

He bites his lower lip, his gaze raking over my face. Searching.

But for what?

"If you repeat it, I'll find a dark corner in this museum and fuck you senseless. Fuck you until you can't move, and they'll mistake you as part of the collection."

I lean forward, kissing him softly, as I hear a commotion near the entrance to the museum.

Neo tries to turn my face back as I swing around to see what's happening.

There are reporters everywhere as a couple moves through the museum arm in arm.

A flash of blonde hair and sunglasses catches my attention as my heart thrums.

"Is that..." I whisper, turning around fully to watch Anne Hatt and her husband move through the crowd like any other day.

As if she hadn't only been released a week ago.

Why is she already in public?

To prove she's innocent? To show face ?

As I assess their body language, I see her husband is the only one who looks apprehensive.

"Steady. Tell me what you see," Neo whispers.

His little tests are usually fun. This one has too much weight for its importance.

There's a gnawing anger clawing my stomach, and I'm not used to the feeling. It's directly related to how my husband lured me here as if he knew Anne would show up.

He knew his prey would be in the open and wanted to stalk her.

I grit my teeth, trying to tamp the anger. "She's uncomfortable. Not only does she not want to be here, but she's been forced."

Neo hums in my ear in agreement. “And who forced her?”

I run my eyes over them as Anne’s husband stops them at a display of a turn-of-the-century sculpture that Neo and I had looked at a few moments ago.

Her husband’s hand is gripping her arm enough that I catch a wince of pain flicker across Anne’s face. She hides it well, but not well enough for the trained eye.

“He’s forced her out of hiding,” I whisper.

“He has. Why would he do that?”

I cock my head, rolling my mind over the puzzle of the Hatts.

“He wants her in the public eye,” Neo adds. “But why?”

“His ego is tied to her strength somehow,” I whisper, looking at how the man’s holding himself. His chin is jutting further into the air, the more his wife shakes. “Even when it’s contrived, her braving the media’s scrutiny is almost...” I look the man up and down, catching something I bet no media worker is noticing: his hard cock. “Getting off on it. He thinks her innocent, and he’s turned on by the frenzy caused by her case?”

“Is that your answer? Or are you asking me, stupid girl?”

I swallow. For once, I’m not sure. The way Anne is shaking and the way her husband is behaving confuses my usually keen eye.

The Hatts don’t wander through the museum for much longer. Neo and I tail them as they look at a few more displays and then leave, the media going with them.

My anger with Neo and this entire situation is giving me the shakes, and I follow him out as he watches the Hatts get into a blacked-out SUV and head home.

I glimpse Mr. Hatt as he looks out of the window. Something dark in his eyes catches my attention, and I turn my head as my surroundings pause.

I have the distinct feeling there's something familiar living in the man.

The car speeds away, and the spell is broken. I turn to Neo, grappling with how to tell him I don't think Anne is our target, but he's already deep into doing something on his phone.

"I know you're mad at me, stupid girl. You'll have to get over that, however. We have work to do—as you just saw."

I open my mouth to say I'm not angry with him, but I know he'll taste my lie as soon as it's out of my mouth, so I close it.

For the first time, I'm pissed at Neo. It's not rational. I knew we were coming here for this, and I knew he'd need to follow through to sate the urge to kill.

But there's some deep, visceral part of me that subconsciously wanted this to be our honeymoon and only our honeymoon.

Which is irrational, being who we are.

The Butcher and his wife honeymooning in London to kill a high-profile target seems on par for us, but I can't explain this nagging feeling in my gut that wants to rage over the fact I don't have all of Neo's attention.

And I fucking hate it.

The Hatts live in a massive home in Mayfair, which gives the outward vibe that only the wealthy live here. Carl Hatt is an investment banker; by the looks of it, he's very good at his job.

The delicious smell of the fish and chips we'd gotten as a takeaway from a restaurant on the way here wafts up as I open the bag.

I open the side of the vinegar, squirting some on the fish, and I use my plastic fork to dig into my food.

Neo has been silent since we left the museum. He's engrossed in this case already.

"You need to eat," I tell him, looking up as a light flickers in the upstairs window.

Their bedroom, most likely.

"I knew how to eat before I married you, stupid wife. I'm certain I can still handle it myself," he grumbles as he scrolls on his phone.

"Mmm, I'm sure you can, husband," I prod. "I only worry about you, is all. "

He snarls, tossing his phone on the dash as he slams his hands into the steering wheel.

I don't bristle, but my pussy does, wetting my panties at his show of anger.

This is the side of me that's always been his and been the Butcher's.

I slide my food onto the dash, shifting to my right side, where he's leaning back against the headrest.

Being on this side of the car as the passenger is awkward and disorienting.

“What’s going on?” I whisper, grabbing his chin and turning his face towards me.

His eyes flare as I crawl over his lap. “Tell me.” I lick over the seam of his lips.

“I don’t know that she’s guilty. I know you don’t care about things like that, but there’s too much circumstantial evidence pointing to her non-guilt.”

He’s got the biggest heart for a man of his caliber. I don’t know how I haven’t noticed it before.

“The children were poisoned?”

He nods. “That’s the only sure thing about this case. The children’s bloodwork was riddled with household cleaners and medicines in high doses. Whatever you can think of, it was on their tox screen.”

I nearly gasp at the idea. Knowing that Neo dealt with the same thing that these children had cinches my heart.

“Your mother...” I swallow, unable to finish my question.

“My mother slipped cleaners into my food. When that didn’t make me ill, she’d give me medicines in high doses. She wanted to take care of me but also wanted me incapacitated.”

If she weren’t already dead, I’d fucking kill her myself .

“So we know they were poisoned, and surely they didn’t do it to themselves. We find out who it was and right the wrong.”

Neo weighs my words. “It’ll be much more work than I expected, stupid wife.”

His hand wraps around my throat, flexing a bit as he watches my eyes flash with arousal.

“I don’t mind hard work. After all, I’m married to the Butcher of Crows Hollow. That in itself is a job, is it not?”

A rare smile curls his sinful lips as he grabs my sides, causing me to squeal and wiggle on his hardening dick beneath me. “Are you saying it’s difficult to be with me, love?”

The term melts my insides, and I lean forward and hover my lips close to his.

“Never, husband.”

His hands grip my hips, and I grind on his length.

“That’s what I thought,” he gets out.

His hands rise, curling some of my fallen hair around my ears as he tugs my face back to look at me.

“This could get very bloody,” he tells me.

As if he’s forgotten how I spread myself in a pool of his victim’s blood back in the asylum. How I fucked myself with her blood as he watched me from the couch.

How I rode his hand over a man’s dead body only a week ago.

I smile. “God, I hope so,” I tell him.

His lips crash to mine in an onslaught of tongue flicks and panted breaths.

“Tell me you’ll cover me in red and fuck me raw when this is over,” I whisper, ragged breathing fanning over his lips as I press my forehead into his.

“Stupid girl, I’ll string her up and bleed her dry as I use this cunt like my personal playground. Only if you’re my good girl, though.”

“How do you want me to behave?” I whimper out as he covers my pussy with his hand and squeezes.

“You be my stupid girl and listen to everything I tell you. Then you’ll reap all the rewards the Butcher offers.”

I moan as my head falls back, and my body arches into Neo’s tight grasp on my cunt.

“Fuck, you’re going to look so goddamned good in her blood.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

LYLA

With my multiple screens set up, I search the internet for anything I can find on Anne Hatt's trial. There's so much to sift through, so I put certain things about her and the prosecution on one screen and articles about the kids and husband on the other. It's easier to go through with it organized, and it's not long before I find one on Carl Hatt that I find intriguing.

"What is it?" Neo asks, looking up from where he's sharpening our blades.

"I don't know. It's a profile of Carl from before the trial, a description of who Carl Hatt is, and there's not much information that the media could find on him. He's an investment banker, has no record, and stays under the radar. The crazy thing is it says he has no friends who could be interviewed for this article and that he's rarely seen outside of work."

"Well, that's not so interesting. Loads of people are recluses, Lyla. Look at us."

I eye him. "That's my point."

His eyes light with understanding. "You think he's like us? Do you think he's the one who poisoned the children?"

I can see in his eyes that he doesn't want Carl to be the one we go after—not when he's not finished proverbially punishing his mother for what he went through as a

child through his victims.

“I don’t know, but I’m just noting it as odd.”

“What about the kids? It says they changed their stories, and it’s what got her released, right?” he asks, moving on to taking our guns apart and cleaning them.

He does it when he’s antsy and needs something to do. I swear we have the cleanest weapons in the world.

“That’s what the court documents say, yes. She came up for appeal, and the kids testified they thought their mother was innocent and believed she should be set free. They said law enforcement forced their confessions, and there’s now an investigation into those accusations. The third and oldest kid refused to come to court and somehow got an excusal, but the record was redacted, so I can’t read it.”

“Maybe they’re our in, then.”

I nod. “Maybe. You can’t torment some poor girl because you want answers, Neo.”

He scoffs. “I know that, Lyla. You forget, I always made sure who I was going to kill was guilty beforehand.”

I try not to take it as a stab at me and how I operate, especially when he’s the one who made me this way.

“Well, it says she works in a bar in central London. Bar Termini. Maybe we go there and try to speak with her?”

“Maybe we do.” He stands, cleaning up all our weapons and putting them back where they go before leaning over me at the small hotel desk. “And maybe we’ll have a few

drinks and lunch, too. ”

When he kisses me, everything melts away. All the worry that’s been tangling a web in my brain for the last few days.

His tongue takes over the kiss, and I turn my face to deepen it, groaning when he grips the back of my head tight.

He breaks from my lips, looking me up and down with his dark, restless eyes. “Fuck, you’re always so perfect.”

I’d beg to differ, but I love when he says shit like that to me. It makes me feel... loved.

Bar Termini looks like something out of another era, though many things in London do. Neo holds my hand as he leads us to the bar, where the bartender shines a glass behind it.

She looks like the only images released about Cecily Hatt, Anne’s eldest daughter.

“What’ll it be?” she asks us, not even stopping to look over.

“We’re here to speak to you, actually,” Neo says.

Cecily rolls her eyes. “Take your fucking recorder and get out of here. I’m not talking,” she says, slamming the glass on the shelf next to the others.

“We’re not reporters,” Neo tells her, dropping my hand and walking around the bar.

“Sure,” she says, placing her hands on her hips. She turns and pins Neo with a glare that makes her look like a damaged little girl.

Her emotions are raw and on her sleeves, whether she knows it or not. People like us can see them as if she's wearing her memories and scars every day as a display of her pain .

“We're here to talk to you about your father,” he tells her, his voice changing.

That's the thing about psychopaths: we're charming. We know when to turn it on, too.

“My father?”

“Mmm,” Neo says. “I met him the other day. Well, I saw him, I should say. Something about him felt familiar. People like me can sense when they're around a kindred spirit.”

Her hands shake on the bar as she steps forward and eyes Neo.

“I don't know what role your mother had in your abuse, Cecily, but I bet your father was at the helm, steering the ship.”

“What the fuck does it matter now? She's free, and he's...” Cecily swallows.

“He's what?” Neo asks her, prodding.

He's so close that it's making my stomach giddy.

“Tell me.”

“Why?” Cecily says, but I know he's got her. Tears are streaming down her cheeks.

When someone gets close to a truth burning a hole in your chest, it's easy to let go of

it—to let that other person take on the burden of the thing you’ve been withholding.

Neo leans over the bar. “Because I’m a man who makes men like him go away, Cecily.”

Cecily looks at me, her eyes full of tears and her chest rising and falling at the idea of a world where her father isn’t a part of it.

I give her a slight nod.

“I can’t talk about it here,” she answers, never dropping my eyes.

“Then, we can meet you somewhere,” Neo tells her, and she turns back to face him.

He writes on a coaster and slides it over to her. “Get in touch when you’re off work. We’ll meet you.”

She sniffles and grabs the coaster.

Neo grabs her wrist, squeezing. “People like your parents shouldn’t have children. I’m sorry for what you’ve been through.”

“I’m not alone, though. I see it in you, too. The way I feel... You’re like me,” she says, tugging away from Neo and heading behind the bar.

Neo walks back over to me, tossing his arm over my shoulder. “Let’s get some lunch, stupid girl. I have a feeling tonight is going to be a difficult one.”

My heart thrums at how he’d been with Cecily and let her see him.

Not in jealousy but in awe.

Sometimes, Neo opens up and gives rare glimpses of the man he could've been without what his mother and the world did to him.

They failed him.

But I won't.

After lunch, Neo and I get a text from Cecily to meet her at a park after dark.

Battersea Park.

"She said to meet her by the fountain," Neo says.

He's been a bit off since our encounter in the pub earlier in the day, and I don't blame him .

If I'm honest, I'm a bit off myself.

It's as if bits of the me before him are creeping back in. Like I'm awakening from the psychosis that my life has become over the last couple of years.

We don't have to wait long before Cecily emerges from a dark corner of the walk before us. The sound of the fountain behind us lulls me into complacency as she approaches.

Her blonde hair is up, strands curling around her ears, and her hands are stuffed deep into her pockets.

She stops before us, and Neo doesn't move. He says nothing, only stares at her.

He's giving her space to say her piece, I realize.

“I didn’t realize we were being poisoned for the longest time. I still have trouble looking at my siblings because... Well, because I’m the oldest. I’m supposed to protect them.”

Pain stabs through my heart, reviving a side of me I thought long dead.

“I started putting it together when I was around fifteen. We’d only get sick and get terrible stomach aches on days Dad cooked breakfast. He’d watch us, too. Stare at us over the rim of his coffee cup to ensure we ate every morsel of food.”

“Did he take care of you afterward?” I ask. That’s a thing amongst people with Munchausen by proxy. They make others ill, usually those helpless in their care, to nurse them back to health.

She shakes her head, and Neo stiffens beside me.

“She did.”

I cock my head. “They were both in on this together?”

Cecily sniffs, turning her face to look far off as if digging for the memories of an old forbidden chest .

“I think so, but I’ll likely never know the truth. It was like some sick game. She couldn’t have any more babies. She had a bad birth with my little brother, and she had to have an emergency hysterectomy. It left her... different. She was always happiest when she had a baby in her arms, Dad used to say.”

Cecily’s thick London accent seems even broader with all the emotion she’s trying to choke back.

“She couldn’t have more of us, so Dad made her feel useful and loved. After all, who do you want when you’re feeling ill?” she asks, tossing the question at Neo, sensing a kindred spirit in him.

“Your mother,” he replies, not missing a beat.

She scoffs, anger coiling her face. “I still can’t believe it. I went to the school counselor and voiced my suspicions. I never thought they’d be true. I couldn’t wrap my mind around the notion that my parents could be so vile.”

“But they had been,” Neo says absently.

Cecily nods. “You’re going to end this? They can’t be allowed to worm their way back into our lives. They have grandchildren now. They’ll do it again. Both of them are so sick and fucking twisted.”

The rage inside my stomach for this girl, the little girl she used to be, is overflowing inside me. Rage is good, but it can also make you sloppy.

Neo taught me that after Kage Davis took me, raped me.

My anger on the subsequent few kills was unfathomable, consuming.

I feel more myself with the intensity slithering through me, however.

Neo stands, and I do the same .

Cecily backs up a few paces, knowing she’s in the presence of someone she should fear.

Her childhood disillusioned her with the world.

“I’m going to end them both. They won’t hurt you or your siblings again.”

“Can I ask something?” I ask Cecily, sensing she’s ready to turn and run.

She gives a curt nod.

“Why did your brother and sister recant their testimonies?”

She sighs, and it’s shaky. “I don’t know. They were young, and I knew it was risky for them to testify, but I never thought they’d change their statements.”

I nod. Still, something in my gut is gnawing at me, clawing for attention when this seems like an open-and-closed case.

Cecily makes her way back through the darkness, and Neo and I remain silent, both lost in our minds for a beat.

“When do you want to do this?” he asks me.

I’m gaping, grappling with what to say in reply. “So, you’re going through with this?”

He tosses his arm in the direction Cecily made off in. “I told her as much, stupid girl. Were you not listening? How unlike you.”

I roll my eyes. “I heard you, but you don’t worry that it’s too easy? Too convenient. Her story was... I don’t know if there’s something we’re missing.”

Neo stands taller, looking down at me with eyes that say he won’t be questioned. “I’ve already given much more time to this than I should’ve.”

“But what if they’re innocent?” I ask. It’s a stupid question because I didn’t look into some people I’ve killed recently, but it slipped out either way .

Neo snarls and wraps his hand around my throat, nearly lifting me off the ground with his grip. “What’s gotten into you?”

“Nothing,” I manage, gripping his hand around my neck.

“You always want to kill. You’re always bloodthirsty. What has changed?”

“I just...” When I stutter, he tightens his grip on me.

“You just what? I’m growing tired of this game.”

“Something in my gut says there’s more to this than meets the eye. We’re in another country; this is unfamiliar territory. Let’s tread lightly.”

He seems to weigh my words for a moment before he eases me back onto my feet and releases my throat.

“We’ll do this both ways. We still prepare for the kill, but we stay alert.”

I nod, gripping my neck as he leans down and takes my lips with a fevered kiss that feels as powerful as a lightning storm.

I live in a dangerous world with a dangerous man at my side, and I think I’m only just realizing it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEO

Hanging back, I tug my hat down lower over my face. I blend into the darkness surrounding me. Not that it matters. Carl Hatt is unaware, anyhow. He hasn't felt my looming presence in the slightest. He hasn't looked back even once—ignorant little prick.

Lyla is back at the hotel, finding whatever she can on the couple as I follow Carl around town. So far, he's gone to work as usual, even with everything in his life. He's headed home now, but he stopped for two drinks before heading into a taxi.

I note that.

Why would he need liquid courage before going home?

Shouldn't he be thankful his wife is home?

If my wife were just getting back from a stint in lock-up for five years, I'd be buried so deep in her cunt that I couldn't see the fucking sunshine.

Though, if my wife were in lock-up, I'd most likely burn the fucking place to its foundations to get her back. No one touches what belongs to me.

Even the fucking government.

My gut tightens when he steps out of the taxi in front of his ridiculous-sized mansion and storms up the stairs.

Are any of his grandchildren in there? Are any of his children in there?

Part of me wants to burst through the front doors and shoot him between the eyes before strangling his wife and watching the light die in her eyes.

She's the physical, breathing embodiment of what I went through as a child.

She might as well be my mother.

"Eat your fucking food, Neo. I swear to all that's holy!" Mom shouts.

She's shaking and sweating, and I don't know why my eating stresses her out so badly.

"Mom, it tastes bad!" I whine.

She lifts her hand as if she's going to backhand me, and I wince, closing my eyes tightly to prepare for the blow.

When it doesn't come, I inch open my lids.

She's got her eyes closed and tapping on her forehead, counting to ten aloud repeatedly.

"Mom?" I whisper.

She gets like this, and sometimes I wonder if she will return to me.

I look at the food before me. It's a Hamburger Helper—the one from the red box that tastes like a cheeseburger. It's usually my favorite, but it smells lemony and doesn't taste very good tonight.

It's as if my tastebuds are warning me not to eat whatever she laced inside it. But she can't mean to poison me. I'm her son.

She keeps tapping and counting as I grapple with what to do.

If I eat, she'll calm down.

But if I eat, I'll be sick .

I know it.

“Don't worry, Mom. I'll eat it,” I tell her, reaching for her with my small hand.

I plug my nose and down my food when she doesn't settle.

An hour later, when I'm retching over the toilet, she rubs the back of my neck to comfort me.

“You're always such a good boy, Neo. You did so well with your dinner.”

I groan as another wave of sickness overwhelms me.

Mom hushes my cries, her hand softly rubbing my back as if she wasn't the hand that fed me the poison.

“Shh, my love. It'll be alright; Mama's here,” she tells me, and a strange shiver goes down my spine and stops at my toes.

Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of, I think.

I shake out of the memory and shiver. That was the first time that I realized my mother was the reason I was always sick.

I was eight.

No eight-year-old should go through the things I did.

I know I'm a fucked-up man because of my past, and I'm no better than she is with the hurt I cause, but I do it because of her.

I do it to save those who can't save themselves.

When I hear a scream around the back of the residence, I rush from my hiding spot across the street without thinking. Scaling the wrought-iron gate, I'm in the backyard quickly, only to find Anne Hatt bent over the table on the stone back porch, Carl behind her.

He's pounding into her body as he chokes her with what looks to be her pants. Tears spill down Mrs. Hatt's face, and I cock my head as I watch the exchange .

There's a girl in front of me, peeking around the house's edge. She doesn't feel my presence, which is off-putting. A saner person would. However, I have gotten stealthier in my years of killing.

"Rub her clit, Father. She always likes it when you do that," the girl whispers, and I startle.

My body remains rigid and confused about what I'm looking at.

It's so brutal how he fucks her, and the harder Carl drives inside his wife, the more breathless the girl becomes as she watches.

The longer I watch, the more I wonder if Carl knows she's lurking somewhere in the shadows.

Why would a daughter want to watch her parents fuck?

My gut is churning with the realization that my stupid wife was correct in her assumption.

Something more profound and much darker is going on in the Hatt house.

And I can't help but be curious to discover what it is.

I text Lyla that I'm headed back to the hotel, and she replies that she needs to discuss her findings with me.

Nothing you can find will trump what I've just witnessed, love.

At least, I hope not.

When I get back to the hotel, Lyla is on the bed. She doesn't have to tell me something's wrong for me to know it.

I sit beside her, letting the images I just witnessed boggle my mind a moment longer before I relay them to her.

"What did you find?" I ask her, needing her to go first.

"To be honest with you, I don't know. The middle daughter, Ada, had sealed the

records I broke into. After I read them, however, I didn't know what I was truly looking at."

Is Ada the one I saw?

"Alright, well, tell me what you found."

She stands and moves to her setup, many screens hooked to her laptop. My stupid girl has become such a pretty little hacker.

"So I hit a dead end when I found out she has sealed juvenile records and health records, but then I reached out to an online hacker friend I've made recently on the dark web, and she helped me get into them."

I try not to let the words dark web and hacker make my cock hard because we'll never sort this out if I let myself fall into the allure of my stupid little wife tonight.

"And?" I stand, strolling over to loom over the back of her chair.

"And... she's fucking insane. Literally. She was initially hospitalized for the ongoing illnesses in a regular hospital, but obviously, whichever parent was dosing her stopped, and she got better. Then, two years later, she was locked away in a mental institution for sexually assaulting a schoolmate."

"All of this wasn't brought up in Anne's trial? Surely this would discredit her as a witness, even to such a heinous crime," I add.

"Yes, but it was brought up by the defense of the children. The solicitor claimed that because of the maltreatment and poisoning of the children, Ada developed a mental illness. The solicitor tied it back to the chemicals Anne added to Ada's food."

“It could happen,” I mumble.

“Yeah, with the amount of things found on the children’s tox screen, it’s feasible to think her mental illness is related to what her parents did to her all those years.”

“Are there instances after abuse where the child then becomes a sexual predator?” I ask, knowing my answer is glaringly obvious.

On cue, Lyla scoffs. “Every predator known in any right has some childhood trauma. Yourself included, not that your drive is sexual.”

“The long-term effects on the body and psyche from Munchausen by proxy are vast and different case by case, but there is a mental health link to the trauma the child suffers. Why do you ask? That was very pointed.” Lyla turns around in her seat.

“I was following Carl. While I was lurking across the street, I heard a scream. Unthinking, I bounded over the fence and around the back of the house. Carl was fucking Anne over a table on the back porch, but a young girl was watching. She was lurking at the house’s edge, whispering little things she wanted her father to do to her mother.” I swallow.

I’m a fucking serial killer, and what I saw intrigued and scared the fucking shit out of me. Well, it disturbed me more than it scared me, but still.

“She was, what?” Lyla prods.

“She was giving them directions as they fucked. Obviously from afar, but it was just... disturbing.”

Lyla’s eyes go wide, her lip curling in disgust.

“Her own parents?”

I nod. “She called him father. Do you think it was Ada?”

“Something is wrong with this family, and this case doesn’t sit well with me.”

“Me either.”

What I came to do was to end the woman who ruined her children, but what I’m finding out the longer that I’m here is that the poor woman looks to be the victim in this case.

Of what, I’m uncertain.

“What the hell do we do?” Lyla asks.

“Dig into more records,” I say. “Find out if Ada is their biological daughter and try to find a photo of her. I’m going to ramp up surveillance on them.”

“We should just kill the entire lot of them and then enjoy our honeymoon,” Lyla mutters, turning back to her many screens.

I smirk, loving that she’s goading me with her sassy mouth, even if it’s unknowingly.

I hunch over her back, lips skimming her ear. “Are you not having fun, stupid wife?”

Her fingers stop short over her keys where they’d been typing. “Of course, it’s just...”

My hand comes down between her breasts, smoothing along the plains of her tight shirt as I slip it under the waistband of her leggings.

“It’s just, what?” I coax, fingers spreading her pussy lips before rubbing over her clit.

She exhales with a whimper. “It’s just this family is fifty shades of fucked-up, and I’d rather be laid up with you inside me all day long while we order room service.”

I chuckle against her neck as she elongates it to give me space to play. “Is that right, love? ”

It’s something I never call her, but I love to be called. She moans, her bottom inching forward on the chair and her legs falling open like a door with a broken latch on a breezy day.

My fingers slip inside her lithe body, her cunt gripping around me in little flutters as I crook them upward against her inner walls.

“Yes,” she breathes.

“We’re going to sort this out. We’re going to end whatever bullshit is going on in that family, and then we’re going to fuck in the blood of our kill.”

“I thought you said...” she chokes on another moan as I increase the pace of my fingers inside her.

“I know what I said, stupid girl. I don’t need fucking reminding. But what is the Butcher without his bloodthirsty girl beside him?”

Her reminder that I told her this job was mine was an oversight on my part. As much as I wanted to remind her who the fuck I was when I started down this rabbit hole, she reminded me of who I’d become before I could even begin.

I’m the Butcher of Crows Hollow still, sure.

But I'm also the stupid man who fell for his nurse. A stupid man who fell in love with her as she crawled to him, his pills on her tongue, his madness becoming entangled with her own.

I can't do this without her, and I'm unafraid she now knows that.

"Will you help me, stupid girl?" I ask her.

Her hands grip either side of the chair like a vise as she rides my fingers, coaxing her orgasm closer.

"I'll do whatever you want me to, Neo. You know that!" she breathes, barely getting the words out before she groans, her body nearing the climax it seeks.

I grin against her cheek, letting my tongue dart out and slip up her cheek as she lolls her head back into my shoulder.

"Scream my fucking name when you come. Let all of London know the Butcher and his wife are here to bathe their streets in red," I taunt.

And when she comes, she does just that.

What I saw tonight was disturbing, even to me, but I'm balanced once more by the screams of my wife and the knowledge that we'll end this shit together.

Then, we'll stroll the streets of London as if we're only tourists taking in the sights.

The plan comes together inside me, and my blood fizzles with thrill.

"Get on the bed, stupid wife. I haven't had my dinner, and I'm fucking starving."

Her hazy eyes roll over toward me as she shakily heeds my command.

In a world where the Hatts exist, I'm sure fucking glad Lyla does, too.

Or I'd lose my fucking mind.

More so than I already have, that is.

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CHAPTER NINE

LYLA

“This is such a bad idea,” I repeat as I rifle through the file cabinet, looking for the last name Hatt.

Neo looks over from his own file cabinet with a slick grin on his face. “What, you don’t enjoy being back in the asylum, stupid girl? I thought you’d feel more at home here.”

I purse my lips. “If either of us felt at home here, love, it would be you.”

That earns me a snarl, and I grin, revitalized by the banter between him and me.

Another few moments go by, and then Neo lifts a file out. “Got it.”

Closing the drawer before me, I sidle up next to him, shining my flashlight down as he opens the file.

There’s a photo in the top left corner of it.

“Is that her?” I ask him.

He nods absently. “She’s younger here, but yes, that’s her.”

I replay what he said he witnessed in my head, confused as to why she would be so

comfortable watching her parents in such a manner. I can't figure it out for the life of me.

I know people have their kinks, but...

"It says here she was admitted by her mother," he reads.

"Patient presents with sexual deviance that began as a fixation with sexual gratification through hiding and watching parents during intercourse. The patient doesn't deny fixation when questioned and even seems prideful of her fascination. Parents were interviewed, and I found no evidence of the parents' involvement in the obsession. Further brain studies were recommended," Neo reads aloud in a hushed whisper.

"What the fuck?!"

He flicks his eyes over toward me. "There are many people in the world who have a sexual deviance, but this is..."

"You think this is from the poison they'd been feeding her?"

Neo shrugs.

"Well," I start, licking my lips, "when was she released? Why was she released?"

Neo flips toward the end, skimming his finger over the last words before Ada's release.

"Says here the mother came and got her."

"The same person who checked her in suddenly decided the child was fine and came

to get her? That makes no sense.”

“It does if you look at the date. The counselor was told on January 23rd, 2019. She was released into her mother’s care on January 24th, 2019. ”

“She knew the cops were coming. Which of them told the counselor?”

“Cecily,” Neo recounts, closing the file and putting it back. They’ll never know we were here unless the lingering presence of Neo Wade leaves a ghost behind to torment the place.

Which I could see happening.

“So they probably leaned on Cecily. She must’ve told them she told the counselor, and they were worried about how it would look with a daughter in the psych ward when the cops did eventually come.”

Neo sighs. “I’m surprised they didn’t kill the counselor. Most individuals with their kind of fucked-up mentality would do anything to preserve their lifestyle. Especially when they lose that gratification of caregiving if they’re found guilty and locked away.”

“Ada, is how old now?” I ask him as we sneak out of the window, which we jimmied open.

He holds me by my hips as he softly places me on the ground.

“She’s twenty.”

“The question now becomes who’s the victim in all of this,” I tell him as we skirt the fence line to find the hole we left behind for ourselves.

“I think it’s obvious, though you are my stupid girl, aren’t you?”

I crawl through the hole after Neo, popping up and dusting myself off with a scowl.

“It’s not as cut and dry as you think, Neo.”

“Why isn’t it?” he asks, turning on me now that we’re tucked away inside the tree line of a thickly wooded area.

My breathing hitches at the crazed look in his eyes. “Do you know something I don’t? Were you not presented with the same evidence?”

Being on him with this case, as he calls it, doing things his way instead of mine, has been thrilling. He integrates himself to find the actual guilt in the case before striking like a snake toying with its dinner until he smells weakness.

But I’ve enjoyed most the feral look in his eye while he hunts. The Butcher is alive and well beneath his wicked flesh, and I love watching him reemerge.

He’s been letting me shine for years, cleaning my blade after the bloodthirst is quenched and fucking me raw when it’s not.

Now it’s his time to rekindle his love for vengeance. His time to tamp that steadfast pang to maim. Until it rears its head once again.

“I asked you a fucking question, stupid girl.” He backs me into the rough exterior of a tree, and I dig my nails into the craggy bark.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t hear you. It’s deafening in here.” I tap my temple as his hand cloaks my throat, his darkness almost palpable through the thrumming pulse inside.

He squeezes, and the edges of my vision blur as I smile.

“Were you given evidence I was not?”

I shake my head. “No, sir,” I whisper.

He growls.

He loves it when I submit to him, even the slightest bit.

“Then what makes you say this case isn’t cut and dry?”

“The fact that my gut is twinged with a feeling I can’t shake,” I get out as he gives me the space to do so, his hand opening to allow me to breathe.

His brows furrow. “And you trust this gut of yours?”

A wicked simper curls my lip upward. “It led me to you, madman. It told me to bend over that couch and open myself to you like a flower. To let you fuck that beautiful cock into me as deep as you could get it. To crawl to you until my knees were bloody.”

His face dips toward mine, his forehead pressing into my own. “You know how to reel me back, don’t you? You see the deranged, dark side of me, and your pretty fucking words are the lure you pull me back in with.”

I lean forward as much as I can against his hold on my neck, trying my damndest to kiss him. “Please,” I beg.

My core is aching, and my knees are warbling. A spine-curling shiver makes its way through me as he acts as if he’s going to kiss me, and then he pulls back.

“Bad girls don’t get what they want,” he teases, licking the seam of my lips, only to tighten his hand on my throat.

My body answers with panic flooding it as I thrash against him.

He stays steady, the need to kill floating on the surface of his eyes as he stares at me while I struggle.

There he is.

My Butcher.

“When I let you go, I want you to kneel at my feet. I want that pretty mouth of yours open and ready to take my cock inside it. No more words. No more bullshit. You suck your husband’s cock like a good little whore, or I’ll leave you in these woods to fucking rot.”

His words liven something in me. Lunacy swirls in my mind, and my body only drums harder at the idea that he’d kill me and leave me for the scavengers.

This sick part of me is his creation, and I can’t bring myself to hate it.

Even when I should.

He lets go of my throat, and I fight to breathe .

My knees quiver as I drop to them.

The forest floor is wet and cold, but I ignore the feeling against my flushed body as the wetness seeps into the knees of my jeans.

Opening my mouth as I grapple for air through my nose, I look up at my husband.

He steps into me, his hand coming down and grazing my face.

“You’ll always be my stupid girl, headstrong. But when you submit to me...” He inhales a shaky breath that wavers even more on his exhale. “When you fall to your knees at my feet like a whore, my whore, it’s fucking enchanting; mind-boggling.”

His praise and pretty words rake my flesh as if they have sharp nails on the ends of their fingers, and I shake against them.

Letting my face go, he pulls his cock out of his jeans and strokes it in front of my face a few times. With one hand, he leans against the tree at my back; with the other, he strokes his beautiful length as it drips pre-cum from the head.

“You want some of what your husband offers?” he teases.

I nod, licking my lips as my mouth waters at the thought of his musky flavor rolling over my tastebuds.

“Your words!” he snarls down at me.

“I do. I want to taste your cum on my tongue. I want to suck you until it’s leaking down my throat because my mouth is so full,” I whisper raggedly.

He groans, stroking himself harder.

I lean forward, and he shakes his head. “Ah, ah, ah. Did I say that you could have my cock, stupid girl? ”

“No, sir,” I whimper, knowing he wants to hear me admit my wrongdoing.

“No, I didn’t. You know why?”

His hand gets faster over his cock, tugging harder, working it over like he’s going to fuck himself instead of letting me have a drop of his sinful cum.

“Why?” I whisper, watching the show he’s giving me.

“Because you haven’t asked.”

“May I have...” I start, and he growls, backing away from me.

He backs to another tree across a beaten path where people have worn down the scrub.

His cock bobs free as he grabs it once more, furiously tugging as his hips jut forward.

“Beg. Fucking beg for this cock!”

“Please, Neo. I want your cock to fill my mouth so bad I can’t think. Please, let me suck you. Fill my mouth with your cum.”

Even through the darkness veiling us, the shine of the arousal in his eyes is bright.

“Crawl to me.”

He hasn’t stopped jacking himself, and I’m worried that he’s saving none of it for me, so I get on all fours, the cold of the ground seeping through me and giving me a rope to stay rooted in reality with.

He moans, and I crawl faster.

When I’m at his feet once more, he wastes no time fisting his hand in my hair and

bending his knees to shove his cock in my mouth.

The head of him slams into the back of my throat, and I gag almost instantly.

The sound fuels him, and he batters the reflex repeatedly to hear me gagging on him like he's the conductor and my throat is his orchestra.

“Good fucking girl. You take my cock so fucking good down your throat.”

His praise bathes me in a warm blanket of love that tingles through my veins. I slip him past my gag reflex, letting my throat constrict over him in wavering muscles, twitching as he hisses.

“Always my perfect little slut,” he moans.

I whimper against him, overwhelmed by the arousal coursing through my body.

“You’re going to make your husband come so hard that you might drown. Are you ready?” he asks, his voice frantic as he feels his orgasm building.

I moan in answer to him, knowing my throat vibrates at the tip of him where he's still sliding deeply down the space as my muscles try like hell to evict him.

“Fuck, stupid girl, here it comes.”

I look up at him, catching the moment he lets go of the facade of the Butcher and becomes the Neo I know and love.

His mouth drops open, and his eyes blow wide, and a shout of ecstasy slips free as his cum sluices down my throat and cuts off my air.

The longer he spurts, the more I gag to swallow.

When he pulls out of my throat, tears are trailing down my face, and my pussy is soaking my panties.

The dark veil of his personality returns in abundance as Neo slaps me across the face with his cock, a smear of cum trailing in its wake.

“You’re so fucking perfect.”

I beam up at him as he crouches before me, his cock still hard and bobbing out of his jeans .

“Take your pants off and get on all fours so I can fuck you.”

A shaky breath expels as I see a darkness wavering in his eyes I’ve not yet witnessed.

This case is doing something to my husband, and I’m not sure I’ll survive it.

CHAPTER TEN

NEO

She stands and removes her pants before dropping on all fours and arching her perfect fucking ass into the air. As she waggles it back and forth like a taunting little whore, her pussy and asshole go on full display in little peek-a-boo moments.

Dropping to my knees behind her, I grip her hips firmly.

She hisses at the feel of pain against the cold of her flesh.

It's freezing here at night, and my stupid little love feels the weather more than I'd realized.

Her flesh feels like the cold hilt of a blade in my hand, and I give it another taunting squeeze.

"Neo," she breathes, and my cock twitches in answer.

Already, she's gobbled my cum down like a thirsty little whore. Despite that, my body aches to give her more. To mark more of her.

I run my hand over my name on her ass and grin.

My fingers find her entrance as I stare at my brand on her body, feeling the moment that pre-cum beads at the tip of me all over again.

She moans as I sink two fingers inside her.

“So fucking wet for me,” I hiss as her heat envelopes me, sucks me inside her body like its sole mission is to please me. To warm me.

“Always,” she manages, rocking on my fingers as she gets wetter around them.

There’s a feral need in me tonight—one that won’t be sated with just fucking her.

It could be the surrounding woods or the fact that she and I are on a case together—my case.

She’s working it beside me as I’ve done so many before, and she’s been my good fucking girl the entire time.

She’s moaning unbidden, letting every creature in the woods tonight know what it feels like to ride a killer’s fingers.

“Don’t you fucking come,” I tell her, not ready for the pleasure of her first orgasm to be over.

Every single one is a gift, but that first one...

The first one makes her primal with need, and I need that.

I can use that.

She pulls her pussy off my fingers, breathing through the climax she just ruined with an angry groan.

Lifting my soaked fingers to my lips, I suck her flavor off as my other hand slaps the

brand on her ass. “Good girl.”

She’s panting through the ache in her body when I shove her forward into the moss and leaves. The ground is wet and cold, and she hisses against the feel as I crowd over her back, skimming her ear with my lips.

“I’m going to fuck you on the floor of this forest like a goddamned animal. You’re going to leave here with my cum leaking from your body as evidence of the beast you wandered across in the dark,” I whisper, dragging the tip of my cock over her heated entrance.

She’s gripping leaves to remain sane, but she and I know it’s a lie. She’s as fucking deranged as I am.

And I love it.

She’s cocked one leg up, giving me easy access to my favorite fucking hole to sink into, and I do so slowly and easily.

“Neo, fuck...” she groans.

My eyes roll back as her cunt grips onto me tightly.

Too tight.

I won’t fucking last.

I pull out, and she cries out.

The sound reverberates off the trees of the forest.

“You’re too fucking good,” I whisper against her neck, sinking my teeth into the flesh of it and turning her scream into something that could be mistaken as fear.

The illusion of said fear races delusion in my veins, and I sink my teeth deeper as I slam my cock into her.

She presses into the ground, flattening herself so I can fuck her as intensely as this position will allow.

Fuck, she’s too good.

Even though I degrade her, she knows it.

She fucking knows it.

It’s her weapon against me, and she’s adept at wielding it with expert marksmanship.

“Lyla,” I whisper, losing myself in the feel of her gripping me, milking me.

“Please, please, let me come,” she begs, and pride beams beneath the layer of hedonistic arousal, slamming my veins .

“Come for me, take me with you,” I plead, lost in her as I always am.

From the time she wakes until she curls up in my arms at night, I’m lost in the universe that is Lyla fucking Wade.

She screams through her orgasm, her body quivering beneath mine, her cunt trembling around me like an earthquake.

“Fuckkkk,” I drawl out as my orgasm chases hers.

My eyes nearly cross as I erupt inside of her, gripping the back of her head to stay steady, sinking my teeth into her shoulder through her thin jacket as I feel her come once more around me.

When we're done, I roll onto my back beside her.

She giggles and rolls onto her back, letting her legs fall open.

I roll on my side, slapping her bare pussy. "Careful, stupid wife. I might fuck this pretty pussy again if you leave the option open."

She moans and lets her legs fall all the way lax.

My cum dips from her entrance, and it's the most entrancing thing I've ever witnessed. My fingers gather some of it and slide toward her asshole with it as a lubricant.

When I shove them inside, and she answers with a languid moan, I know I'm going to be in this forest until dawn. Fucking my stupid girl until the buzz leaves us or our bodies break.

Whichever comes first.

"Alright," I say, toweling off my hair as I watch Lyla sit at the table with her coffee. "What do we know?"

Lyla sighs. "We know Ada has extensive mental health issues. She's sexually aroused by watching not only other couples fuck, but her parents. While I agree we need to keep her sexual deviance in mind, we both know where issues like these stem from."

I slip into sweatpants, tugging them over my boxers as my greedy wife eyes me,

running her hungry eyes over my body as I grin at her.

Tossing the towel onto the bed, I close the distance between us, looming over the side of her chair. She still holds her coffee with two hands, something she does to warm her hands. She bites her lower lip as her eyes flutter up toward me.

“How will we ever get work done if you won’t behave?”

“I am behaving, husband.”

I lean down, hovering in her space, in her aura.

Fuck, it’s intoxicating.

“Your eyes weren’t, stupid girl.”

She shrugs. “Can’t help those. They have a mind of their own.”

I lean into her, inhaling her scent before capturing her lips. It’s been mere hours since I fucked her senselessly on the forest floor beyond the asylum we broke into for Ada’s records, and it seems the buzzing between us is still as alive as the first time I encountered my stupid girl in another asylum—one across the pond.

“This will be a family affair, then?” I ask her, pulling away from her as I watch the results of my kiss. Lyla opens her eyes and exhales shakily.

If I were to shove my hand down beneath the T-shirt she’s wearing, I know I’d find her wet. She’s always drenched for me.

“What do you mean?” she asks.

I drop into a chair across from her. “We’ll need to do this when Ada and her parents are together. If we’re going to sort this out.”

“I don’t know why we have to,” Lyla says, and my eyes snap to her, my brows furrowing.

She realizes what she’s said and purses her lips together, leaning forward to set her coffee far away from the papers splayed on the table so they won’t get ruined if it spills over. “I just mean?—”

I cut her off. “You just mean that if you were in charge, there’d be blood running through the streets of London already,” I finish for her.

She tries to hide a rueful smirk that tugs her pouty fucking lips up at their corners and fails. “I wouldn’t have put it so eloquently, but yes. That’s the gist of it.”

I rub my temples as I growl. “Stupid girl, this is my process. I have to know justice has been served. I don’t know what makes me this way. It’s just who I am.”

When I open my eyes to look at her, she’s gone.

I bristle as her lips graze the shell of my ear. “And I love you for who you are,” she says, and her words simmer an already boiling attraction for her over the sides of the pot it’s in within me.

Even though I have trouble expressing my feelings toward Lyla, I love to hear her express hers.

“What’s your next move, Butcher?” she whispers, tongue darting out, its tip curving along the edge of my ear.

I don't fight the shiver or the groan it coaxes. "We're going to break in. Watch them. Stalk them. We're going to get every bit of information that we can."

She pulls her tongue back in her mouth, leaning over my shoulder to look at me. "What?!"

An unholy grin plays on my lips. "You didn't study the Butcher that extensively, then? For weeks before I killed them, I hid in their home. Watching. Waiting. Seeing that I was right about them as they went about their days, completely oblivious to my existence, was thrilling."

"What if they catch us?" she asks, and fear traipses across her blue irises.

I lift my hand, cupping her face. "What if they do?"

"They could call the cops."

"They could."

"I... I don't understand."

"You will."

"Oh, it's thrilling to you to wonder if the next door they open is the one you're hidden behind. I don't know that I enjoy being found out because I hid in someone's closet, Neo."

I drift my lips over hers. "You know nothing until you try it once, Lyla."

My hand curls around her throat, anchoring to her like she's my reality. "Besides," I breathe against her parted lips. "I want to fuck you where they could find me."

Her lids get heavier. “That’s risky.”

I slide my hand from over her throat, my thumb skimming her bottom lip that crinkles with the pressure. “Everything in life is a game of risk, Lyla. Especially in our world.”

The table slides back as Lyla tosses a leg over me and straddles my lap. My cock is hard for her as if it knew all along I was near the siren that would call it to action .

“Tell me what you’ll do to me while they’re unaware,” she pleads, her pupils blown, scarfing up every inch of my face.

I grin. “We should get some sleep...”

She leans her forehead against mine, and it’s as if a switch is flipped inside me—one she controls. The delusion she and I dwell within is esoteric to only us. Only we can weave through the tangled threads of our love and understand what brought us here.

“I’ll tell you if you get on your knees like my good little whore.”

She doesn’t hesitate, and it’s one thing I’m fascinated with about her. She’s obedient. Loyal.

She gets on her knees between my splayed thighs, eyes grazing over the length of my hard cock in my sweats.

“What I’ll do to you when they’re unaware, stupid girl, can’t be put into words. If it could, I wouldn’t try. I’m much more of a visual teacher, and I know you learn better hands-on.”

“Then why make me kneel?” she asks headily.

I lean over, tipping her chin up with my fingers. “Because you questioned the Butcher, Lyla. One shouldn’t taunt a monster unless they want to be bitten.”

She whimpers as I stand and reach for a knife on the table she used earlier to peel an apple, with it firmly in hand, I back away from her, knocking the chair over in my wake.

“Take off your clothes, get on the bed, and get on all fours. Do so in a timely fashion, too. I don’t have patience for your insolence tonight.”

Fear builds in her eyes, and it’s just the thing I need before I tuck behind her and go to sleep.

A game.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LYLA

I try not to waggle my ass back and forth too much. While I love to toy with Neo and his dark sensibilities, I know it's not wise to goad him.

“When we got here, I told you I was in charge of this case, right?” Neo asks, and I hear his blade unsheathe from his leather holster. A sound I've heard a hundred times over.

Music to my fucked-up ears.

“Stupid girl, I'm not in the fucking mood for your games.”

“Yes, you did,” I answer, complying with the demand in his tone.

“Well, then, why do you need to question my authority at every turn?” he asks.

The pinch of his blade's tip causes me to hiss and shift on my hands and knees. When he leans over me to teasingly lick the edges of my ear, he presses the blade in harder. I don't know if he's drawn blood or not.

I don't care .

My body is still sore from how savagely he fucked me in the woods beyond the asylum earlier. Still, a bottomless quiver in my veins causes adrenaline and dopamine

to flood my nervous system and liven my core all over again. As his blade threatens to split the flesh open, I grow wetter.

“Tell me, stupid love. Is the reason you push my buttons because you like to be punished? Or is it the need to dominate me?” he whispers, and I bite my bottom lip to fight a whimper.

I can’t help the consuming shiver that races down the highway of my spine, and it drives the tip of his blade to pierce the skin where he has it pressing against my hip.

I moan, and he flicks his eyes down toward the drops of blood that bead as he hisses. “Fuck, Lyla. This is the part of you that has always entranced me. You bleed so fucking pretty for me.”

“Neo,” I breathe, the overwhelming sensation of hormones and delirium making me shaky on my hands and knees.

“Where they scream when I cut them, plead with me for their pitiful lives, you hand yours over to me like you don’t care to live. It’s fucking intoxicating,” he growls, nipping the lobe of my ear.

My eyes close, my mouth dropping open to let an exhale spill out.

“I’ve watched you die for me more than a few times, stupid girl, and killed you myself. Nothing is more mind-blowing, however, than watching you like this and hearing your cries of pleasure. Watching you toe the line of hell, knowing the Devil is salivating to have you down there with him. Because you, my stupid, stupid girl, are awe-inspiring. You’re the stuff of fucking legends. You’re the kind of woman they write books about—ones where men fall on their knees to worship you.”

His words have my breathing ragged, and I know my pupils are blown wide as I try,

and fail, at fixing my gaze on something solid near the covered window across from the bed. Anything solid.

A tether.

An anchor.

“But you’re not theirs, are you? You’re the Butcher’s girl.”

“I’m all yours.”

He moans, turning my face with his blade and briefly capturing my lips with his. “If you know who you belong to, why do you misbehave?”

I whimper as he disappears behind me, trying to turn to see what he’s going to do with the weapon in his hand.

“Eyes front. I didn’t permit you to look at me!”

I snap to attention, fear racing my skin like a chilly wind, causing goosebumps to well in its wake.

Something cold drips between my ass cheeks, and my breathing grows erratic.

I want to watch him.

I want to see the madness stretching and growing in his eyes.

“Though I don’t think you’ll ever behave as I wish. I’ll enjoy reprimanding you for your misbehaviors. I find I’m addicted to it, stupid girl.”

“Neo, please,” I beg, not knowing what I’m praying for.

“Lay on your front and spread your ass cheeks.”

His command is curt, and his tone gives me no room to argue .

I lie down, reaching back to spread my ass cheeks apart as I was told to.

When the cold, bulbous end of the nineteen-inch knife Neo loves to carry grazes my asshole, I nearly leap off the bed. He’d told me it was a blade manufactured since the 1800s and told me its name. But all I know is that the rounded end of the hilt is far larger than the tiny puckered hole he is rubbing it against.

“I’m going to fuck this hole with my knife, and then I’m going to fuck it with my cock. And I don’t want to hear a peep from you; in fact...” he trails off as I hear the sound of him removing his belt from the pants he’d tossed aside.

My suspicion is confirmed when his belt wraps around my throat, and he takes the tail to hold from behind.

“You look fucking beautiful on a leash, stupid girl. Maybe I’ll get you one.”

I moan the best I can as he teases the rounded end of the hilt in and out of my ass until it finally pops inside easily.

The stretch burns, but I internalize the pain and keep my lips sealed. It’ll only intensify my pleasure if I can keep quiet.

Neo shoves it deeper and deeper, and it’s not long until he’s fucking me with the hilt, burying it inside my ass as I lift my hips the best I can to get it deeper.

My pussy throbs along with my pulse, empty and greedy.

Neo is true to his word, though.

I know he's going to give me just what he threatened.

While he holds the belt behind me, he doesn't tug it too tight, so I can still breathe. I almost wish he would pull it taut, as I've practically cried out his name a few times .

"Greedy little whore, you're so desperate to come that you're riding my blade?"

I don't know if I'm allowed to answer, so I keep silent in obedience and lift my knees, digging them into the bed so he can fuck me harder. Deeper.

"Fuck, Lyla."

When the hilt of the knife pulls out, Neo wastes no time to shove his cock inside my ass.

The stretch and burn return tenfold because of his size, and I must stop a scream from ripping free.

Now, he loses himself, forgetting about the pressure on the belt and tugging it tight for leverage.

My head snaps back, bopping as he fucks my ass hard and fast.

"You're going to remember this the next time you think about disobeying me, stupid girl."

He's not talking to me, he's inflating his sexual ego, and as I come apart at the seams,

I don't fucking mind a bit.

My pussy gushes as I come, muscles in my asshole quivering around his cock as I hear him grunting.

He's trying to last.

The edges of my vision are blurring, and speckles of light fill them as the belt cuts off my air and circulation.

By the time Neo takes the tip of his blade and slashes it across my ass cheek, my vision is tunneling.

It doesn't stop me from coming again, though.

"Fuck, stupid girl. Take all my cum up your ass. Good... girl... fuck," he sputters, as his cum spills into my ass, causing a slight sting as it fills me.

He quickly loosens the belt and flips me over, devouring my mouth with his, his cock still leaking cum as it slides through my swollen pussy lips.

"Fuck," he says, tipping my chin back and looking at the ligature mark around my neck. "If I could keep you looking like this..."

"You can," I whisper, unable to find my voice.

He narrows his eyes at me in question.

"I belong to you, Butcher. You can mark me in any way you want to."

He smirks. "Maybe I'll collar you," he jokes.

But my breathing hitches, and he notices the change.

He notices everything.

It's one facet of him I'm obsessed with.

“Oh, would my stupid girl like to be collared?”

I bite my bottom lip, nodding. For a flash, I'm the nurse who's crawling to him with his pills on my tongue all over again—nervous to admit my fetishes and fantasies.

“You know I love to give you whatever you want, wife.”

I silently whimper as he kisses me again. This time, though, it's long and drawn out. Sweet.

“We're going to need to put some stitches in your ass cheek,” Neo says, smirking as I realize I've been lying here bleeding through the hotel sheets.

When we leave, they'll wonder what happened here.

But they'll clean the mattress and wipe the evidence right under the rug.

“We'd better get to it, then. We have a long day ahead of us tomorrow,” I say with a yawn.

“Flip over. I'll get my kit.”

I do so and don't fight my heavy lids as they close.

Tomorrow, we have to go back to the reality of the case. Tonight, however, we're just

the Butcher and his stupid girl, fucking to the point of pain.

And blood.

The house is massive.

If there was any doubt that the Hatts were well off before, it's gone now that I'm lurking in the dark behind Neo.

No one's home yet, but Neo doesn't want to draw attention to the house by having the light on. It gives our little stalking session an ambiance, I'll admit.

"Let's check the bedroom," Neo calls over his shoulder, and I nod even though he can't see me.

For an hour, we shift through belongings. Even meticulously check Carl's desk.

We're about to give up when my small flashlight beam finds the words 'Ada's punishments' scrawled on the tab of a folder in the bottom right drawer of the desk.

"Neo," I whisper, looking up at him where he's closing the small closet to my right.

"Got something?"

I open the folder, finding the first words that read: first time using toilet cleaner in food. Ada refused to eat more than a few bites; I will update the results.

Tears well in my eyes as I look back at Neo and nod.

The sounds of people entering the dwelling filter through the open door, and Neo turns to me and inclines his head toward my light. I click it off, soundlessly closing

the drawer before following him down the hall and into the nearly empty closet in the first-floor guest room.

Since my time at the asylum with Neo, I haven't felt things like fear and sadness. This, however, has my chest burning with emotion so strong that it's hard to swallow past.

Because the man pressing up against my back as I stare at the back of the door through the dark space of the closet has the same past as these children have—as Ada has.

My heart is breaking to bits as tears race down my face.

My hand grips the folder tight, causing a burn on my forearm as I envision Neo's mother standing over him, scolding him, forcing him to eat food laced with poison.

Anger engulfs me like the walls I've been keeping around my heart and soul, the ones I erected in that fucking asylum when I crawled across the floor to Neo, have broken. The dam's wall perforates, thin streams of water mixed with my rage spilling through as the fractures open up more significantly to let even more through until the entire wall crumbles and my body shakes.

"Stupid girl, it's going to be alright," Neo whispers against my ear, his hands splaying against my stomach as his steadiness calms the quakes.

"This is... we have to save her. I don't care if she's as fucked-up as we are, Neo."

I know he hears the tears in my voice. Neo Wade has a penetrating perception that doesn't miss a detail. Ever.

"The way you saved me?" he asks.

It stops my pulse from pounding so loud as I turn in his arms and try to find his eyes in the dark closet.

“I didn’t save you, Neo.”

“Didn’t you?” His forehead presses against mine, and we both simply breathe as the moment drawls on between us. “You allow me to be myself, even with all she did to me. Even though she turned me into the Butcher, you loved me. You crawled to me. You bled for me. If there’s a way to save the damned, Lyla Wade will do it,” he finishes, and fresh tears trek down my cheeks at his words.

I hope his words ring true.

Because no one deserves to live how the Hatt children or Neo Wade have.

“Open the folder and turn on the light,” Neo whispers, giving me space to do so by backing away from me.

Even though I’ve read all I needed to, I do as I’m told, because the Butcher’s girl is and always will be one thing.

Obedient to her maker.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NEO

Lyla reads from the folder in a hushed whisper, and there's a sense of urgency in the way she's breathing as she does so. She'd cried for the little bit she read before I tugged her into this closet, and I knew some of the tears were for me. For the little boy who resonates with the things on the pages of this folder. The boy who grew into a psychopath bent on revenge, even after his mother's blood splattered his skin nearly twenty years ago.

As much as my mother's psyche was broken and the reason for her maltreatment, she created my tattered psyche.

She made me in her image.

Much like I did Lyla.

She's shaking when I fist her hair and turn her around, tugging her closer. Her back hits my chest, and I lean over her shoulder.

I open my mouth against her ear to taunt her back to reality.

The door to the room opens, and the sounds of someone entering and then closing it have me halting.

The edges of the wooden barrier light up as someone flicks the light above the bed.

“I don’t know why you have to fuck with her like that, Ada. You know she’s not like you.”

It’s Carl Hatt’s voice.

“She’s a weak fucking whore. I don’t know how she’s my mother.”

Ada Hatt.

Lyla shakes in my hold, shifting as I hear her hand grip the folder tighter.

I snake an arm around her center so she doesn’t get any bright ideas, holding her to me as I whisper, “Hold.”

They don’t know that we’re here. This could be the golden opportunity we’ve been looking for to glean information about what the fuck is going on in this household.

“She’s your mother. I watched you come out of her.”

Carl’s words send a sickening shiver up my spine. It’s all I can do to steel myself against the answering quake in my muscles.

They beg to be free of the feeling, but I can’t move.

I’ll alert Lyla to my distress, which will only worsen hers.

“And did you know then?” Ada asks her father, her voice dipped in something lecherous.

Carl laughs, and it’s full of loathing. “Did I know then that I’d be madly in love with my daughter and sneaking around my own house to sink my cock in her body? No,

Ada. I don't think I did."

"You say it like you're disgusted by me. Like you're disgusted by us. "

"It's only nature. To be disgusted by what you're doing against the social norm?"

This is disturbing, and part of me is realizing that Lyla was fucking right on the money with her gut feeling that something else was going on here.

We're killers, her and me. Yet, the things we're listening to Ada and Carl say have us both inching back toward the back of the closet as if we can disappear through its wall.

"Society doesn't know what they're missing," Ada says.

"It's not like I had a fucking choice, either," Carl all but whispers.

I barely catch it.

Lyla stiffens against me before leaning her ear against the door.

The fucking minx.

"Oh, you're going to go on about that again, are you?" Ada spits back.

"No. I'm sorry. It was a low blow. I'm just... a lot is going on lately, Ada. Can you blame me for feeling as I do? Your mother getting out of lock-up was unforeseen, and now our life has been flipped on its head."

A shuffle of movement has me reaching for Lyla, only to fling her behind me if this closet opens.

She keeps her ear firmly pressed to the door, however.

“Well, you can blame Jack for that, can’t you? If the little shit wouldn’t have recanted his testimony and then Cecily with her refusal to recertify her statement. What did you think was going to happen?”

“I know, love. But I can’t protect you if the truth ever comes out. If she ever talks...” Carl’s words are cut off, and I can see why.

I’m thankful for Lyla’s ear pressed against the door.

Through the edge of the door, I watch as Ada steps into Carl, looking up at him with her hands on his chest like two lovers would embrace one another. His demeanor changes, and I wonder if Ada realizes he doesn’t want her touching him.

Even so, he leans down and presses his lips to his daughter’s.

Ada takes the contact deeper, and Carl gets stiffer.

When Ada breaks the kiss, there’s a nauseating feeling floating through the room, and everyone, including my Lyla, might be unable to suss it out. But I know exactly what it is.

I’ve just met my next victim.

And she’s formidable.

Lyla and I remain in the closet for hours after Carl and Ada clear out, only to ensure that they’re gone before we leave the residence.

Neither of us speaks until we’re back in the hotel room.

Lyla sits on the edge of the bed, dropping the file we took from Carl's office next to her.

I'm pacing before her as my mind tries to work over the truth of what's going on.

"He's her father, right?" I ask her.

"Yeah... I mean, I think so."

"Biologically?"

She stands, sidestepping me to get to her computer. She shakes her Apple mouse and then works her fingers over the keys .

"Shit," she mutters under her breath, and it stops me in my tracks.

"He's not their father."

"Their? Did he father any of the three?"

Lyla turns in the chair. "Jack. He's only Jack's father, the youngest son. Cecily's father isn't listed, and Ada's father is listed as one," she turns back to read the name on the screen again, "Edward Dashall."

"He said he was in the room when she was born. He called her his daughter," I remind her.

She shrugs. "I mean, he could've been in the room. Carl and Anne were married six months before Ada's birth. She was likely already pregnant with Ada, and Carl assumed responsibility for the girl."

“Do we think she knows?” I ask her.

She shrugs. “We’d have to tie the girl up and question her to find out what’s running through her sick head.”

I don’t immediately toss the idea out as I mull over all the information.

I thought London would be a fun, easy trip away for Lyla and me. We’d come here, vacation, fuck like rabbits, kill Anne Hatt, and go home.

It seems, however, that this case is one more entangled than I’ve ever worked.

Half of me wants to walk away and leave the Hatts to their depraved lives. The other half of me has Cecily’s tear-filled eyes floating through my mind and wants to kill the three of them, Carl, Ada, and Anne, and be done with it.

Give the fucking girl some peace.

“I don’t know how we missed it,” Lyla says. “I missed it, more like.”

“Stupid girl, these people are more fucked up than even you and me, don’t beat yourself up about it. We’ll get to the root of it. Is there any more in Carl’s journaling to tell us where along the line Ada became his lover?”

Lyla wanders over and grabs the file, sitting on the edge of the bed. She opens it and begins sifting through paper after paper.

“Maybe...” she finally says.

I sit beside her on the end of the bed, looking over her shoulder.

Ada walked in on me today. When I turned around from dosing the children's food, she stood at the door's threshold. I don't know what she saw. She acted as if nothing was amiss, but what if she saw me? She's such a strange little girl. I don't know if she'll tell, but I know she suspects something is happening because she asked me once why all the kids are always sick.

It's not as if I do it for Anne. I don't know if Anne even realizes I'm why her children need her so much. Some days, it feels like I'm doing my wife a disservice because she looks so tired and browbeaten. But she's the one who said once they're grown, none of them will need her. She worried they wouldn't think she was a good mum, but how can they not now? She's always beside them, nursing them back to health and taking them to the doctor when I slip too much chemical in their food.

I'm allowing her loving side to shine through.

She'll thank me one day .

"What the fuck?" Lyla whispers.

"Anne knows now, obviously," I tell her as she flips the page.

"Well, yeah. She served fucking time for this man's delusion."

We keep reading, and the next page is more disturbing.

She said it was only the one time. Since Ada caught me with the cleaner last week, she's been acting strange. She came into my home office the other night and solicited me for sex. She said she wouldn't tell her mum what she saw me doing if I touched her and made her ache go away.

I did.

But now, she's holding it over my head like an anvil she's waiting to drop on me at any moment.

I can't have Anne knowing what I've been doing. She loves the kids too much.

She'd be devastated.

She wouldn't understand.

She'd have me arrested.

The more I do for Ada, the more I lick her virgin pussy, the more I want to sink my cock in her.

I'm becoming as deluded as she is.

More so than I was before.

I have to get her help.

I have to get her out of this house.

"So, he pushed Anne to commit her?" I ask Lyla .

"Seems like it. Anne's signature was required for the intake forms."

"So, Carl kept his portion of the fucked-up situation going on with Ada to himself and outed her as a peeping Tom, then."

"Probably. Kept himself out of it."

I nod toward the file, and Lyla turns to the last entry.

They know.

The world knows that I've been poisoning the kids. Cecily told on me, and there's no going back now.

By the grace of God, they think Anne is the one doing it. She doesn't realize it's me. She won't let herself believe it.

She thinks it's Ada.

Even so, she got the little psycho out of the institution, so Ada's instability doesn't look bad on us while we're under investigation.

Anne convinces herself that because there's insufficient evidence to prove the children have been poisoned, this would all go away.

I don't think she realizes how long I've been at this.

All for her.

Ada's very nature is likely a symptom of my work.

The fucking bitch cornered me last night, too. Spewing vile words at me and empty threats. Empty because she'll no more confess to knowing it's me than she will stop lusting after me.

I gave her what she wanted and gained her silence.

I fucked her tight little pussy so hard that I nearly passed out afterward.

She called me father when she came, and my sick soul purred at her obedience.

Now, the only thing I have to face is the likelihood that my wife will go down for my crimes. In all my attempts to keep her happy and caring for her children, now she will be ripped away from them.

But there's nothing I can do about it.

Men like me don't last in lock-up.

Anne's the strongest woman I know.

She'll be fine.

It will all be okay.

"It's the last paper," Lyla whispers, closing the folder.

"I'm surprised he let these survive and didn't shred them. The ignorance of some people astounds me."

"Carl is our target," she says, and finally, something shifts in my chest as the objective becomes clear in my mind's eye.

Even if it doesn't sate my perfect need to kill someone who looks and behaves like my mother, it will fulfill the urge for blood.

"What do we do about Ada?" Lyla asks.

I shake my head, my mind trying to puzzle all this shit together .

It's so tangled, however.

"She knew her brother and sister were being poisoned and used it to gain something for herself," she says.

"She survived, though. No matter how she did it. Sometimes, survival isn't pretty, stupid love."

Lyla looks at Ada's picture pulled up on the screens across from us and nods absently.

"Carl Hatt," she murmurs.

"Carl Hatt," I confirm.

"Feels good to have a name."

"Indeed."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LYLA

O ur plan to kill Carl Hatt is in motion. Friday night while Anne is away at her mother's house, per the note on the fridge reminding Carl of her trip. Her mother lives in Slough, which gives us plenty of time to get in and out, and it also offers Anne an alibi for when the investigation ensues after she comes home to Carl's lifeless body.

Neo and I are free to do as we please for the next few nights.

Honeymoon, in full effect, as he called it.

Though he'd given me plenty of options for which historic sites that we could tour and what five-star restaurants he'd take me to, I'd chosen to go to the movies.

It's mundane, but it's something he and I haven't done, something normal.

None of the reasons we're here in London are normal. Lately, I long to feel like the Lyla I was before I crawled to a madman with his anti-psychotics on my tongue.

When the car stops, and Neo helps me out of the back seat, I take in the building's outer shell.

It looks old.

Neo pays the driver and taps the top of the car to see him off as I turn around and grin.

“Why have we come all this way? Is there something special about this particular theatre?” I ask him as he slides his hand into mine, entwining our fingers together.

He shrugs. “It’s been open since 1911, and it was rated at the top of the list when I Googled.”

I laugh, and he narrows his gaze.

Stifling the laugh with a hand over my face, I clear my throat. “I’m sorry. I thought you were going to go into specific detail. Something other than it was on Google.”

“Well, I’m sorry to have disappointed.”

We buy tickets for some film about a biker gang, but we don’t care about the movie itself. I want the experience.

Neo chooses seats in the very front row.

“How are we supposed to watch it without getting a headache?” I ask him.

“We’re not watching this movie,” he says, sipping his drink as he settles in and taps his lap.

I lift my brows.

“Sit, stupid girl. Don’t be shy.”

Looking around, I find only a handful of people in the theatre with us, and they’re

rows away from where we are.

Because who the hell would want to sit this close?

I drop my cup into the cup holder beside his left hand, easing myself onto his lap.

His massive, tattooed hands come around me, tugging my dress up over my hips as he pulls me flush with his chest.

“Put your feet on either side of my thighs.”

I’m breathless as I listen.

The position is awkward and uncomfortable, but my center is thrumming as it’s exposed. The thought of someone seeing is causing a wicked thrill in my sick brain.

The lights dim, and the previews start as Neo snatches my panties to the side, opening me to the cold air of the theatre.

“Neo,” I breathe, looking around to ensure we’re still the only ones this close to the screen.

“Shut up, stupid girl.”

As a pang of embarrassment rushes me, I only get wetter.

“Someone could see,” I tell him, turning my face to look at him, but his other hand grabs the top of my head, turning my gaze back to the screen.

“Watch your movie,” he says gruffly.

“What are you going to do?” I ask him, smiling even though he can’t see me.

“I’m going to make one of my own.”

His words don’t digest as his fingers part my cunt and slide over my clit.

“Fuck,” I squeak out as his other hand wraps around my throat from behind, cutting my air off.

“Quiet, stupid love. I don’t want to kill every fucking person in this theatre for having heard you come, but I will.”

My eyes roll at his words.

This is the thing about Neo Wade that had transfixed me.

That turned me murderous.

He’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

A monster beneath a beautiful exterior.

But the bite of his sharp fangs keeps me coming back for more.

As the movie starts, his expert fingers, caloused from wielding instruments of death, ghost over my entrance before swiping back up to grate over my clit in mind-blowing circles. It’s hard to keep the moans contained.

Neo flexes his hand over my throat, every so often giving me air before constricting again.

In between taunting me, he grips my pussy in his hand, staking his claim with a feral growl in my ear.

“Close your eyes,” he tells me.

“But the movie...” I whimper when he slaps my pussy, loud enough for me to hear it over the cinema’s surround sound, but I doubt it traveled back to the few moviegoers.

“Fuck the movie. You’re the show, stupid girl.” His lips’ proximity to my ear and how his breath crawls across my neck has gooseflesh pimples on my skin.

I drop my head back to his shoulder, doing as I’m told and closing my eyes.

“There’s a good girl.”

I moan, and he cuts it off with his hand, compacting my throat again. The rest of it burns back through my body, working its way out of me as a gyration of my hips against his hard cock currently pressed against my ass.

“I love it when you behave for me. You’re so good to your husband, aren’t you, you greedy slut?”

I can’t answer him.

He loves to ask me things when I’m unable to answer.

It’s his game.

I nod the best I can as his magical fingers tease into my entrance a fraction.

He pops them back out the second he feels my body pressing forward to encompass

them.

I try to groan and fail.

A twisted laugh burrows into my ear, his tongue following it .

My eyes roll back.

“Didn’t think I’d fuck you so easy, did you?”

He never does.

And I’m fucking addicted to it.

He circles my clit, working me back up to a point I know is going to make me crazed. When he put me in this position and exposed my cunt to the room, I worried about the ramifications. If someone found us, the gig would be up, so to speak. The famed Butcher and his wife would be jailed. Not for murder.

For fucking at the cinema.

Now, however, I could give a fuck less.

I’ll take my blade from my boot, lock the doors, and slaughter every soul in this fucking theatre before straddling his shoulders and letting his tongue dance across my pussy.

I’m desperate to come.

Desperate for him.

I grind over his hand when he finally lets me have a trickle of air.

I try my damndest to keep it quiet, lest I be without it again.

He covers my mouth with his hand, reaching between us and pressing me into his front even harder as he frees his cock.

The logistics of this situation seem tricky, but I don't care what I have to do.

I need him inside me.

Now.

“Put me inside you, stupid girl,” he whispers, nipping my ear.

My breathing behind his hand is ragged, and my body is throbbing so much that I can barely think past the need for him.

Reaching down, I sheathe him inside my pussy, arching forward with my back to tip him inside.

My breathing all but stops.

He feels so fucking good.

After as high as he took me, this is what I needed.

“Now, I want you to ride my cock and make yourself come. If you make one fucking noise, you won't come for a week.”

I choke off a worried sob in my throat, controlling something I've never had before.

My pleasure at the hands of Neo.

“You understand me?” he asks as I desperately move, arching my back and digging into the seat on either side of his thighs with my feet to slide him in and out of my body.

There’s a storm brewing, which seems only to be gaining more power by the second.

I nod beneath his hand.

“I’ve been waiting for this all day,” he whispers, clamping his hand around my mouth tighter, knowing his words will make me respond in an untamed manner.

The sounds of motorcycles on the screen drown out the wet, sloppy sounds of my center gliding over his dick, and I hate it.

“I planned to fuck you here as soon as I saw the theatre online. It’s all I could think about all day long. This tight cunt gripping my dick as if to kill it. Fuck, Lyla,” he moans against my ear as I grab either side of the chair and use it as leverage to ride him better, harder.

His hand finds my clit, a sign that he’s getting close to coming inside me.

The idea of him coming always makes my orgasm quicken, and I feel it doing so at the mental image of him stifling a cry into my neck while the patrons behind us are none the wiser. My pussy aches around him, my belly burning.

“Such a pretty little slut, letting me fuck you at the movies. Letting me fill this filthy cunt with my cock in public.”

That nearly gets a moan out of me, but the thought of not coming draws it back down

my throat as my eyes roll back in my head.

“Goddamn you, you feel so fucking good,” he growls, and it’s what breaks the dam.

I choke my moan down as my eyes fly open, and my mouth gapes behind Neo’s hand. He clamps it tighter as he feels me convulsing around him.

“Good girl, stupid love. Good fucking girl,” he praises, and I buck on his cock harder.

“Get on your knees. That pretty little mouth looks good enough to fuck tonight,” he tells me.

I slide down his body to the floor, turning around and grasping him in my hand.

He smells and tastes like me as I suck him hard and fast, not giving him a chance to acclimate to the feel of my mouth in the slightest.

His hands come down as he leans back in the chair, letting his head fall back as he fists my hair and thrusts up, nearly gagging me.

His charged drives into my mouth are haphazard and sloppy soon, and when his mouth drops open and his demented eyes find mine through the flickering movie behind us, I know he’s there.

“Right there, stupid girl. Don’t stop,” he whispers, and then he shatters .

Watching a madman come apart at the seams is like watching the most beautiful sunset after a stormy day.

Even if another storm is gathering, you bask in the tranquility's beauty, if only momentarily.

I swallow every ounce of cum down, licking my lips when he's finished.

He tugs me back into his lap, in the position I was first in, and tugs my panties back over my center.

There's this moment that spreads between us.

Where we don't know what's happening on the screen or even surrounding us, but we're together, we're happy, and we're both thoroughly fucked, so we don't care.

There's a plasticity about it.

Like no one or nothing can touch us.

Not even death.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NEO

I 'm on Carl before he can reach his desk phone, pressing against his back as my blade sinks into his throat.

“That won’t help you now,” I snarl, my lips dusting over his ear.

Pushing against my blade, he slides his hand over his desk as Lyla clicks on the small desk lamp. His cell phone dangles from her hand as she swivels in his chair, her feet perched atop all the evidence we’ve compiled and laid on the top of the desk.

“Looking for this?” she asks.

There’s usually instability in her eyes that I’m fucking addicted to, but not today.

Something about the Hatt’s case has woken a portion of my stupid girl I thought I’d never see again.

She’s aware.

Awake.

Even though she will still kill for me—with me—I know there’s a shift within her that’ll never leave her after London.

And I love it.

It's as if she's witnessed the darkness beyond the cloud of neurosis that we reside in and realized she's a bit more sane than she gave herself credit for.

"Who are you people?"

I sigh, turning my blade on its side and letting it slip over Carl's throat. The tip presses in firmly once over his Adam's apple, and he stiffens.

"It's always the same shit," I complain.

"Who are you?" Lyla muses.

"How did you get in here?" I add.

The taunting before the kill has never been my thing. It's Lyla's, but it seems she's bred something in me unwittingly because now it's become what livens my soul before I paint my skin with blood.

"I'll give you whatever you want. Is it money? I have money!" Carl pleads.

I remove my blade, and something in his eyes grows confident before Lyla stands and trains her gun on him, a sick grin on her face.

His hands slowly raise in defense as I tap my blade on my shoulder, moving toward the windowsill to lean against it.

I pull one booted foot up to press against the wall.

Lyla motions for him to sit in the office chair behind his desk as she moves to the

front of the desk.

“Go on. You wanted to see what this is about, so we’ve compiled a bit of a project presentation for you,” she teases, her grin deepening as the dimples in her cheeks sink inward.

Her dark hair is askew tonight, some of it tumbling out of a messy bun on her head, and as a glint of contentment moves through her eyes, my cock stiffens behind my dark jeans.

Carl slowly moves and sits in the chair, always watching Lyla and her weapon.

Wise of him, she can be a loose cannon when no one has eyes on her.

“What is this?!” he whispers, and we allow him the space to look over the case we’ve made against him.

Lyla had done so well for me, arranging an array of evidence against the man. She knew I needed it.

While the inkier side of me has killed for thrills without reason before, I need this when it comes to my baser motivations.

I need to know I’ve rid the world of infirmity.

And Carl is the very definition.

“This isn’t what it looks like,” Carl starts as he realizes we know what he’s been up to.

Lyla laughs, and my eyes snap to her, forgetting all about my prey as the malaise I

placed inside her rises to the surface.

“So, you didn’t poison your children all those years you were supposed to protect and love them?” she asks, and I can’t take my eyes off her nor add a word edgewise.

There’s an indication in her tone that has the hairs raised on my body. She’s not questioning Carl for the Hatt children.

She’s here to spill blood for me.

The one she’s here to defend is me.

She can’t have her revenge on my mother; I’ve already dealt with that. But she can have her revenge on Carl.

This is my kill, but even knowing that I want to sit back and watch someone else protect me, kill for me.

Even while I’ve witnessed her kill on command—my command—it’s wholly different from her slaughtering in my name.

To defend the innocent I once was.

The damaged little boy in my psyche wants to cling to her leg as she spills Carl’s blood in my defense, worshiping the ground she walks on like she’s the angel of death.

I created her, but she invoked this in me.

This love that now drives me to look at her over all else.

Even while my prey sits before me, I can only focus on her.

“I did it for Anne. She’s the one you want.”

I scoff, returning to reality as I push off the sill. “So you’re still going to let your wife take the blame? I came here to kill her. I’ll not deny it, but she’s not the blood I’ll end up slathering on my skin tonight, Carl.”

My words have tears springing from the man’s eyes. They roll over his flushed cheeks, and the blood pooling in them calls to me.

It’s like a morning songbird calling to the rising sun, this twisted need in my gut.

And tonight, I’ll answer it.

“I would’ve never done it if Anne didn’t need to always feel loved so often. She wanted her kids to need her more, so I made that happen.”

His defense is weak, and it only makes anger unfurl through the cords of muscle in my neck as I roll it.

Lyla looks at me, never dropping her gun away from Carl; in fact, I hear the moment she squeezes the trigger harder, and so does Carl because he straightens in his chair. “Want me to bring her in?”

“Bring who in?” Carl panics.

I smile, lifting my hand and tucking some of Lyla’s hair behind her ear. “You’re so beautiful tonight, stupid girl.”

She preens, closing her eyes and allowing my touch to ground her.

“Bring her in,” I answer, giving my command as I take her gun and point it at Carl.

Lyla steps into the hall, grabbing Ada—who’s strapped to a rolling desk chair we’d found in her bedroom.

She’s gagged, but the screams behind the gag are incessant once she’s in the room with us.

Lyla pulls a blade, brushing it over her face. “Quiet, toy. Too much screaming makes me giddy. When I’m excited, I can’t be trusted to keep my cool,” she tells the Hatt girl, and my cock twitches as I groan.

“Fucking her daughter. Was that for Anne’s benefit, too?” I ask him, and he grips the arms of the chair in his hands, knuckles turning white.

He’s a fit man—in his forties—with a full head of blond hair and a sculpted body. I can see the appeal his stepdaughter had for him.

Even if I still find the game these two have been playing sick.

How Ada could turn the other cheek and allow her siblings to be continually abused is the thing that Lyla couldn’t let go of. So, we captured, tortured, and questioned the little beast.

Our findings were that the girl had no soul, likely because of whatever the concoction of cleaners and poisons had done to her gray matter over the years.

“That wasn’t my fault!”

I roll my eyes. “It seems nothing you do is your fault.”

Carl shudders, and I know it's reality bleeding into his diseased brain.

Moving around the desk, I keep the gun on him. When I get behind his chair, I roll him beneath the desk further as I press the Glock to his temple.

"Do you see that blinking light over there in the corner?"

He shakes under my weapon, and the scent of piss permeates the room as he soils himself.

"Answer me!" I shout; my voice is full of incurable insanity.

"Ye—yes!" he stammers.

"That's what will be left behind after your death."

While it's not recording video, it is recording audio for apparent purposes. Anne will know her husband's and daughter's voices better than anyone else in the universe.

The woman has been tormented half her life, and she deserves to know the truth.

It's unlikely he's given it to her all these years. It's more likely he let her think she was the culprit and was slipping into some delusion of grandeur as she poisoned her children.

"She's going to have peace once you're gone, Carl."

He closes his eyes and nods, and the tension in his body subsides beneath my gun.

"Tell her, Carl. Tell her what you did," I prod.

It only takes thirty minutes for all his sins to be laid bare on tape; it takes even less for my blade to slice his throat open, nearly severing his head from his neck.

His lifeless eyes stare at the ceiling as the screams of Ada Hatt have been silenced by my stupid girl's knife. Her head is lolled to the side, blood leaking from her lips and dripping to the floor.

Lyla removes the tape from the recorder, pocketing it to edit and send to Anne Hatt when the time is right.

As I'm cutting off each finger Carl used to poison his children with, I feel a touch on my shoulder before Lyla crouches behind me, and her lips skim my ear.

"Almost done, madman?" her husky tone implies much more than she says, and I groan as the feel of it skims my infected cortex.

"Almost," I tell her as I dislocate the last finger to make removing it easier. The crack of it charges the buzz in my veins, and I shiver against it.

I don't watch Lyla as she moves away from my back. I'm too engrossed in defiling my prey, exposing him to the investigators that'll eventually come.

The evidence is sprawled out on the desk as I lay each finger to point at the main bullet points I want to hit, blood seeping into some of the pages from the severed ends of the appendages.

When I look up, my heart nearly stops.

Lyla is at the door, hand about to turn the handle as if she's going to leave here without giving me what my demented soul needs to finish this job.

As much as I've sated the urge to kill, I haven't appeased another hunger. One that she's deluded me with.

She thinks she's the only one whose coupling has forever transformed, and she's wrong.

Now, when I spill blood, I have also to have release.

With her.

"Where the fuck do you think you're going?" I growl, and she stops and turns back, tossing a sidelong glance at me.

There's a mocking sneer on her lips, and it riles anger in my veins.

"The job is done," she says, and I drop the last finger, not caring where it lands .

"Kneel," I command, my voice harsh, but I know she won't take it to heart.

She doesn't listen, however.

I storm across the room, fisting her hair and yanking her head back. "Do you think it wise to disobey me? I told you early on that you'd need to comply with the Butcher's commands, stupid girl. Now is not the time to test me."

Not when the scent of blood is heavy in the air, and my soul is filled to the brim with malice.

"Make me," she prods, her tone dour.

"You stupid fucking girl," I grind out, using her hair to shove her to the floor.

Her knees buckle under the pressure, and she falls to her knees beneath me.

I pull my blade, running it the length of her cheek as I toy the tip under the lower swell of her eye.

She hisses but doesn't recoil. "What will you do to me?"

"For your disobedience?"

She nods.

My other hand frees my cock from the tight confines of the jeans it's been hard against for hours.

"I'll remind you who the fuck you belong to," I tell her, slapping my dick against her face.

"Suck, you rebellious little whore!" I growl, hissing, as her tongue slinks out and laps at the pre-cum at the tip of my length.

When she sinks me into the swelter of her mouth, my knees nearly buckle.

Murder and mayhem are knotting together in the air surrounding us, and it alone is enough to make me feel unstable .

But the clutch of Lyla's mouth? That's enough to make me fucking feral.

Psychotic, even.

"Harder, suck me harder," I plead, forgetting who's in charge altogether as I press the tip of my blade into the side of her neck.

She moans and does as she's told.

A maniacal laugh makes its way from my throat. "There's my delusional, stupid girl. Suck your husband's cock like the murderous little slut I know you are. Suck it good, and I'll let you come."

She speeds her mouth on my dick, adding a hand to jerk me simultaneously. The action has my body burning, and my knees bend, bowing slightly in surrender.

She knows who's in charge, and it's not me.

It's never been me.

Since she crawled across the floor of that asylum with my pills on her tongue, I've been at her fucking mercy, gobbling up the bits she'd give like a starving man.

"There's my girl, not so fucking stupid after all. Gag on it," I manage, my voice sounding like it's grinding over sandpaper.

She gags, and the noise fills the otherwise silent space, besides the sloppy drags of her mouth on my cock.

"I'm going to come. Fuck, I'm going to come. You'd best swallow it all, stupid love. Don't waste an ounce of the Butcher's cum."

When she doesn't respond, I use my one empty hand to backhand her cheek the best I can from my angle above. "Do you fucking hear me?"

She moans in answer, and I know she's still with me.

Ready to taste my spunk on her hungry tongue .

“Oh fuck, Lyla!” My body bows forward, knees bending as I come in long thrums in her mouth.

She swallows each one, fighting for air.

“Good fucking girl,” I tell her, placing my blade beneath her chin and tipping her face up to me as I straighten, cock still hard and ready to sink into her murderous little body.

Tears streak down her face, and there’s spit glistening on her chin as she breathes heavily, looking up at me from below like I’m her god and she’s here to worship at my altar.

“Fuck, you cry so pretty for me.”

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LYLA

Neo lifts me with the tip of his blade sunken into the crook of my throat, and an unwell part of me wants to purr.

Our job here is finished. The two problematic members of the Hatt family are dead, and it's time to move on.

Not before immersing in one another, however.

It's what we love about killing.

The way we fuck the racing pins and needles caused by murder out of our systems.

Once I'm standing, I wonder where he'll lead me.

Will he fuck me over the desk, splayed out over Carl's fingers? Or will he have me sit on Ada's lap where she's still bound and bleeding in the chair with her throat slit?

Instead, he turns me around.

My brain wars with confusion as he leads me down the hall and up the stairs.

"Open the door," he tells me, and his tone leaves little room for argument.

I do so, finding what's beyond it deranged, even for us.

"What the fuck?" I whisper, forgetting his knife at my neck as I look around the room.

It's as if time stood still in this room, the decor never evolving as the child who slept within aged.

"Ada's room. I thought you'd like it."

It's pink everywhere the eye can see. The bed has flowers on its print, and the edges are frilled with lace.

"Why would I like it?"

"Well, you will," he says.

"Why?" As he's taunting me, my center has begun to throb in time with my racing pulse. I press my thighs together to wane the weighty tension between them.

His lips skim my ear as he leans forward. He hovers there momentarily, a buzzing in my body that causing wetness to gather at my core and seep into my panties.

"Because I'm going to fuck you here. This room is the very picture of Ada's delusion. She remained his little girl, feeding off the sick thought of who she was to him as he sunk into her body. Who am I to you, stupid girl?"

"My husband," I whisper, turning my face into the sensation of his presence.

He rears his head back, not allowing my lips to connect with his, which only makes my cunt needier.

“What else?” he asks, teasing the tip of his blade between my breasts.

I don’t know what answer he’s looking for here, nor what he’s playing at by having me in this time capsule of a bedroom, but I can’t deny how hot my body feels.

My toes curl in my boots as he teases his tongue across my lips.

“Am I your master? Your creator?” he whispers .

A whimper escapes my mouth as the power of Neo Wade envelops me while chewing me like its last meal.

“Yes, sir,” I answer before thinking otherwise.

I’d taunted him downstairs, but only to coax the harsher portion of the Butcher out to play.

He knows that.

Right?

A waver of nerves skitters through my stomach like rocks skipping the surface of still water.

“Bare. I want you fucking bare. Remove these clothes.”

I hasten to do so, kicking off my boots and then tossing aside my shirt as I make a pile of discarded, bloody clothes on the floor.

We’re being sloppy. We should be well on our way from the scene of our double murder downstairs, but I don’t care.

I can't care.

Not when Neo drops the blade to the floor with a thump, only to find my hips and squeeze.

The feel of the pain against the building arousal in me has me moaning.

I don't care who finds me here in this room with blood all over my skin; I fucking need him.

"Neo," I whine.

"Stupid girl," he answers, his tone heavy with obscurity.

"Where is your gun?" he asks, and at first, I can't make sense of his question.

He bites my ear, giving me the slightest twinge of pain to grasp onto.

"On the floor," I answer.

"Get it for me. "

I drop to my knees and search the pile of my clothing before finding the Glock we'd brought but not used.

After all, bullets can be traced.

"Present it to me."

His command confuses and excites me as I fit the gun into my mouth and crawl it over to him before kneeling at his feet and presenting it to him with my head bowed.

“When you’re a good girl for me, it makes me want to do dark shit, you know that?”

“Yes, sir,” I answer, knowing not answering won’t get me what I want.

The Butcher is out to play tonight, and fuck, how I’ve missed him.

“Get on the bed, on all fours. Let me see you,” he says, a slight amount of gravel bleeding in his tone.

As I heed his order, I have a rumbling storm building in my body that only Neo can stave off. So, I know I need to be on my best behavior.

Or he’ll ruin every single orgasm that tries to crest.

I get on all fours at the edge of the flowery bed, leaning down on my forearms and opening myself to him.

“Fuck, look at you,” he hisses, the cold metal of the gun-running the torrid length of my slit.

“This cunt is so fucking pretty,” he growls, crouching as he slips the tip of his tongue over my aching entrance.

I cry out, bowing back and opening to him.

“Such a greedy slut, per usual.”

God, his mouth.

His words.

They light a fucking fire in me that only he can tamp.

I need him so badly that my body feels like it'll overheat at any moment. I keep my mouth shut, however. I don't know what he'll do if I beg .

Nor do I want to find out.

“What has you behaving for the Butcher tonight?” he asks me, his gun sliding over my pussy as he stands and leans over my back. The barrel presses into my clit as he rocks it back and forth, and my eyes roll back in my head as I fight a whimper.

“Answer me, stupid girl.”

“I need you,” I admit with a whisper. “I need you so fucking bad.”

“I'll need you even when I'm fucking dead and rotting, Lyla.”

His words cause me to buck on the gun, forgetting wholly that it's loaded and the safety is off.

As soon as I stepped into this world with Neo, I knew my end would be fantastic. I knew that I'd go out in a blaze of fucking glory either with him beside me or with his hand welding the weapon.

“You going to come for me like this, beautiful?” His words have me moving faster, slinking higher toward release.

I nod. “So close. Please, Neo. Please let me come.”

He chuckles menacingly, pulling the gun away from my center. “No. I don't think I will. Not yet, anyhow.”

I'm his favorite game besides killing.

I love that I am, too.

When his cock nudges my entrance, I all but beg for him to press inside. To scratch the burning itch he's created.

I'm a lucky girl tonight because he's weak. He'd toy with me for hours, usually tormenting me until we were both mad for one another, but tonight, he doesn't.

His cock sheathes inside my body, stretching me and causing a sting where my muscles make way .

He gives me a few thrusts, just enough to build the fire inside me as he stokes it higher.

"You always feel so good. Fuck," he groans, and the sound of it makes me feral.

I rock back and forth, causing him to groan.

"Lyla," he warns, but I'm too far gone. Too greedy.

He can punish me later.

I think he's dropped the Glock to the floor or tossed it aside, but that's where I'm wrong.

I hear him spit before I feel the glob of saliva slide through my ass cheeks.

A broken moan curdles in my throat as the cold barrel of the gun caresses the tight, puckered hole.

At the sight of it, he fucks me harder.

He's deriving pleasure from the idea of the gun pressing inside me, and fuck, I am, too.

"Do it. Fuck me with it," I beg breathlessly.

Usually, I'd get some clipped response about knowing my place, but not tonight.

The Butcher needs this as much as I do.

He leans over my body, fisting my hair and yanking my head back as he works the tip of the gun into my ass, never missing a pounding beat with his cock as he fucks me.

Once the gun is inside me, he slogs it in and out, testing it as he bends his knees and fucks me from a different angle.

The feel of the gun with how he fucks me still is overwhelming. My breathing has halted as I acclimate to the full feeling.

My ass burns, but it only serves to drive me closer to coming.

"Two weapons inside you tonight, stupid girl. Fuck, you're so pretty so close to death."

His words cause a boiling heat in my veins.

The safety is off, and the gun is fully loaded. I'd left it so.

"Would you let me kill you like this? Would you let your husband blow your ass to smithereens?"

“Yes!” the sick side of me Neo bred answers for me without considering the ramifications of him following through.

“I bet you would look so pretty sprayed across these walls, stupid love. Like a painting at the National Gallery.”

My moan comes with a tightening in my belly.

I’m so close to unraveling for him.

Soon, I’ll fall to bits and pieces beneath him as a sheen of sweat breaks out across my flesh.

“Too bad I’m not through with you yet,” he grits.

He picks up the pace with the gun in my ass, and my eyes roll back in my head as my orgasm is right around the corner.

“What will you do when you’re through with me?” I pant.

He tightens his grip on my hair. “I’ll never be through with you, stupid girl. Never!”

It’s what breaks through the wall, impeding my coming apart, and I scream through a powerful orgasm as I feel my cunt squirt around him.

Only a few more punishing strokes, and he’s following me, my name on his lips as he breaks.

It takes a few moments before we stop moving together in the aftermath of sex. Neo removes the Glock and holsters it as he stuffs himself back in his pants, gripping himself to clean his length off.

I grin as I cock one leg up on the edge of the bed. “Clean me up a bit, will you? ”

He grins, kneeling at my feet as his tongue laps at the collective mess we made of my center.

“Get it all,” I breathe.

He doesn’t stop until I’m coming for him again. My hands gripped onto his hair like it’s my lifeline.

“God, that’s good,” I breathe as he lazily licks around my clit as I’m shuddering through the aftershocks of orgasm.

A scream comes from downstairs, breaking the moment we’ve just had to bits as our eyes lock.

“Seems our job isn’t done yet, stupid girl.”

“Seems you’re right, Butcher.”

Even with the pressing matter of being found out, a wicked gleam lights his eyes as he tosses my clothes and pulls his blade out.

I follow him downstairs to find Anne Hatt pulling her iPhone from her bag with shaking hands.

She’s come home early.

Unlucky for her.

Neo grabs her wrist from behind. “Now, let’s not do anything you’ll regret, yeah?”

I grin, the lunacy my vile husband bred in me rising to the surface of my psyche.

“Who are you?” Anne asks, and I pull my knife from its sheath.

“We are your saving graces. We gave you your life back,” I tell her.

Her eyes roam over the body of her dead child strapped to a chair, and Neo turns her head back toward where I lean against the front of the desk.

“Look at my stupid girl when she’s speaking to you,” he snarls.

“Thank you, love. Now, where were we? Oh yeah, we’ve proved your innocence. We’re the reason your trial will be thrown out of court when the inspectors come to gather evidence. “

“You killed them,” Anne breathes.

“Semantics.” I shrug.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LYLA

Anne Hatt is Neo's exact type. Her blonde hair and light eyes likely remind him of his mother. Her entire body shakes with fear, and tears roll down her cheeks. However, the way she's only looking at Carl gives the distinct impression that Ada isn't someone she's going to miss.

"What have you done?" she breathes, approaching Carl and falling to her knees.

Neo's head cocks, and yet, his eyes soften toward the woman.

Seeing this woman, who reminds him of his mother but is the picture of innocence, seems to confound him.

"We freed you," Neo says, approaching the other side of the desk, where he waves his hand over the evidence splayed out for Anne's viewing.

Her eyes are filled with pure fear as she stands and swallows.

Neo and I remain silent as she looks over the documents laid out with Carl's severed fingers over them, and with each new revelation, Anne's breathing shifts .

"He..." she stammers.

"He was the one poisoning your children. He was also the one fucking your

daughter.”

A cracked sob breaks out of Anne’s throat as she steps back from her dead husband, pressing herself against the wall behind where his body is slumped in his desk chair.

“I thought...”

It’s well past time that Neo and I leave her house, especially since we don’t know if Anne called the police before we returned downstairs.

“Who did you think was behind your children’s illnesses?” Neo asks.

He’s too transfixed with this case for his own good.

Anne shakes her head as if confused by the question, but her eyes flick toward her daughter for a fraction of a moment too long.

It’s telling.

Everyone has tells if you only tune into their face and pay close attention to each movement.

Every twitch, every jerking muscle, is the body trying to lay their sins bare.

“You thought Ada was making everyone sick, didn’t you?” I ask her.

She nods. “Because she stopped getting sick right before the cops got involved.”

“It’s why you kept quiet. Even if she was the one who did it, you took the time for her. You thought you were protecting her,” Neo says, and there’s admiration in his voice.

It's misplaced, but I can see how he'd find a mother taking the blame for their child admirable.

"If she was the one who was poisoning them, your doing time left her out here free to do whatever she wanted."

"Carl assured me that he had it under control," she whispers.

I laugh, and Neo turns to give me a slight shake of his head.

"He had it under control, alright," I sneer.

"What does she mean? What is she saying?" Anne asks, directing her question towards Neo.

Neo sighs, turning back to Anne. "She means that Ada stopped getting sick because she walked in on Carl dumping cleaner into the children's food. For her silence, Carl made a deal with Ada. One of a very sexual nature."

Anne gasps, covering her mouth as a strangled gag sound makes its way free.

"I knew that she liked to watch... I just thought it was a perversion. That the place we checked her into would help, but then the cops were involved, and I knew it would look bad, her being in there..."

"It would, especially if she decided to talk," I add.

"Why have you come all this way to do this?" Anne asks.

I'm curious to see how Neo answers, so I cross my arms over my chest and clamp my lips shut to listen.

“Because I was like your children. I was a sick game to my mother until I gained the nerve to fight back. I’ve spent my life avenging those who couldn’t avenge themselves. I’ve put my bloodthirst and delusions to work for those not strong enough to do the same. It makes me a killer, but it also makes me an avenging angel to some.”

My heart thumps away to hear him admit his motivations so plainly .

“What do I do now?” Anne asks, wiping her tears away as reality crashes over her.

“Now, you call the police and tell them you only just arrived. You play the grieving wife and mother, and you go on with your life without someone deluding your children and you behind your back,” I tell her. “You admit what happened to your kids and build your relationship with them.”

Neo turns to look at me. His face is stoic, but something glistening in his eyes screams astonishment.

“Well, you’d best be going, then,” Anne says, and Neo walks over and takes me by the hand to lead me out of the house.

We’ve never been caught before, and tonight was sloppy, but I feel like Neo gained something from the interaction with Anne.

He got to see the mark he left on the world in his wake, and it was worth coming to London for, even if we hadn’t honeymooned much.

Back at the hotel, Neo and I eat in silence.

It feels like we both need reflection. This was the oddest case we’ve dealt with, and it hit too close to home for Neo.

I see why he chose it.

It was his way of not allowing his mother to crawl out of her grave again, even if it wasn't him who was in harm's way .

Before we returned, we met with Cecily and gave her the updates.

She collapsed in Neo's arms and sobbed, her inner child likely healing a bit more to know that her attacker had been dealt with.

I don't know that it soothed something in Neo, but there's the slightest change in his demeanor. I don't know how to navigate it, so I've been toeing the proverbial line and keeping quiet as he processed.

"Back to reality tomorrow, stupid girl."

I want to ask what that means.

What is our new reality now that we're done with Anne Hatt and her family?

Even though Neo handled his mother long ago, it feels like this case also healed something in him. It's like he buried her a little deeper today.

All the damage Carl caused to their children is something Neo knows all too well.

It's what gave life to his deranged side.

It's what breathed life into the Butcher.

"Have we ever lived in reality?" I ask, trying to keep the banter and topics light.

He purses his lips, looking at me as if seeing me for the first time as my joke settles.
“We have a honeymoon to get back to.”

His words cause butterflies to take flight through my stomach, and I shift in my seat, the beats of their wings against its lining causing a tickle that makes me antsy.

“Any plans up your sleeve?” I ask him.

He shrugs, a rueful grin causing his face to darken a touch. Just enough to where I see the Butcher skirting the outer edges of his eyes. “Maybe.”

“Want to share them?” I prod, popping a bit of mashed peas in my mouth, dragging the spoon out of my mouth slowly to taunt him.

His breathing hitches, and he sits back in his chair.

“Come, I have something that would look more alluring in that mouth of yours,” he tells me, resting his hands on the arm of the chair as he lifts his hips a fraction of an inch, taunting me with his hardness that presses through his grey sweats like a promise.

I grab my napkin off my lap, stand, and toss it down over my plate. I wasn’t finished.

But I’m hungry for something else.

I take one step.

“You know better, stupid girl. Crawl.”

His words damn near make me purr.

I fall to my knees slowly before maintaining eye contact with him and crawling across the small expanse between us.

As I approach, he moves his chair back, lengthening the distance between us until the back of his chair hits the bed.

“Where will you go now, Butcher?” I tease.

“There’s nowhere to go, my beautiful, stupid wife. There’s nowhere but here. With you.”

I try not to read into the foreboding, ominous feeling hanging over me like a cloud that his words mean that he and I will never bathe in the blood of others again.

This case, while strange, also felt different.

Like he and I were turning a page together, furthering the plot in our shared story.

“Is that so?” I ask, coasting my hands up his shins, over his knees, and finally resting them on his thighs with a squeeze .

He reaches down and clasps my throat in his hand, not hard, just enough to lay claim to my breathing.

“I never knew there was someone out there for me.” He leans forward a bit, tipping my face back a hair with his hold to loom over my lips with inky intent. “Then you came into my room with a med cup in one hand, a cup of water in the other, and a look on your face that said you were mine to play with.”

I swallow, opening my mouth to reply, and he gives me room to do so by loosening his grip.

“I’ve always wanted to ask what you saw in me. Why me?” I whisper.

He teases his lips closer, and I damn near forget we’re having a conversation at all and close the distance between our mouths.

I always feel out of control near him.

His proximity steals my sensibilities, and he knows it.

His tongue darts out and teases the seam of my lips, lapping up the whimper that escapes them.

“Someone like me has a radar of sorts, one that allows him to know when he’s in the company of someone likeminded. You, my perfect girl, have an aura about you that I couldn’t look away from. You’re radiant with insanity. You also looked at me like I was something to eat, and I very much wanted you to devour me.”

My breathing halts, and my heart damn near does the same at his words. “I did not.”

His malicious laugh causes every butterfly still residing in me to fall dead, twitching on the floor of my stomach. “You did, stupid girl. Don’t worry; I’m not judging you. I had never wanted to see my cock disappear in something so bad before I met you. I had to have you.”

“Had to have me,” I whisper, lost for words, Fuck, I’m lost for thoughts.

His nose skims over mine, and I barely keep myself in check.

Barely able to keep from melting at his feet.

“You were mine from the moment we locked eyes,” he growls, which breaks my

resolve.

I press forward, capturing his lips as I wrap my arms around his neck and lift from the floor.

Straddling him, I deepen the kiss.

His hands grip my hips, squeezing, reminding me who's in charge, who I belong to.

Tangling my hands in his hair, I fist it in both of them as Neo's length teases my center through his clothes.

Fuck, I need him.

I know it'll always be like this with him. It's just how we are.

Until the day someone puts an end to us, we'll be the Butcher and his wife, floating in the insanity together like a storm cloud through the humid sky, gaining new life from the heat and electricity charging the air.

Living for the moment that lightning burns our souls.

His hand slides down the front of my pants and finds my core, and I break our kiss, locking eyes with the killer that has become my husband as he grins and swirls over my clit.

"Now, are you going to be my good girl tonight?" he asks, sitting up further to angle his hand down my pants as he moves toward my entrance.

I cry out and find his shoulders with my hands, hoping to any god who will listen that he doesn't feel like punishing me for anything.

There's always a need right at the surface, begging him to satiate it, but right now it's consuming me whole, and he's the answer to what ails me.

"I'll be your good girl," I whisper as he angles his arm further and sinks two fingers inside my wet heat.

"I'll be the judge of that."

I let my head fall back as I clutch his shoulders tighter.

My pleasure is up to the Butcher of Crows Hollow, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

NEO

I peel myself away from her lips—because that’s the only way to resist sinking into her mouth and staying there for the rest of the fucking night—and she whines like I’ve taken away her pacifier.

I can’t help but chuckle darkly at the notion.

“Up.” I tap her on the sides of her thighs after taking my hand out of her pants. I know I smell like her, but I refrain from inhaling her scent too deeply, lest I get too transfixed to play with my stupid girl how I want to.

Worry floats in her eyes, but she listens.

Searching for something to lay her on, I find an ottoman at the end of a chair near the television set.

Pulling it away from the chair, I pat the top. “Take your clothes off and lay down on this. On your back,” I tell her.

She furrows her brows the slightest bit. Despite that, she listens.

She said she would be my good girl tonight, and I might as well take advantage of it.

Her body splayed over the ottoman is a fucking sight.

I stand back and take her in as her breathing speeds. I'm sure her mind is reeling, wondering what I will do to her.

Moving to the closet where we've stowed our things, I find my bag.

The one I take with me when we're working.

It takes a minute to rummage through all its corners in the dark closet before I find what I'm looking for.

Ropes.

"Neo," Lyla says, warning in her tone as I approach her with the ropes in my hands, but I only grin.

"You said you would be my good girl, right?" I ask her.

"That was before I knew I was going to become your victim."

A laugh makes its way out of me as I shake my head. "You and your jokes," I prod, making her uneasy as she shifts on the ottoman.

Her nipples are hard, and I know that pretty little cunt of hers is wet at the idea of the danger she could be in right now.

I tie a rope over her middle, binding her to the ottoman. I use smaller ropes to connect her ankles individually to either foot of the ottoman, opening her legs wide.

Last, I tie her wrists above her head, connecting two ropes to the opposing feet from where her ankles are tied.

“Neo...” she breathes as I slink my hand over her stomach, descending until I’m spreading her pussy lips wide, my fingers swirling around her little nub in slow sweeps.

“Stupid girl,” I taunt back.

“What is it you mean to do to me tonight?” she asks, her voice breaking as she cries out when my other hand, which she hadn’t been paying attention to, tugs her nipple into a hardened peak for me.

“I haven’t quite decided yet. Though...” I trail off, disappearing into the closet again, only to emerge with a toy she hadn’t known I’d brought. “I brought this with me.”

The little curved silicone toy feels sleek in my hand as I wave it in front of her.

It’s brand new, and she has no clue what she’s in for tonight.

Hell, I don’t, either.

But since the moment she crawled to me all those years ago, I’ve wanted to ruin her, and I’ve nearly accomplished my mission.

“Now, we just put this in here...” I trail off, inserting the bulbous end of the vibrator and placing the clitoris stimulator in just the right spot before standing to look at my handy work. “Perfect. At least, I think it is. You tell me.”

I look at her as her eyes flick between the inserted toy and me.

Fuck, she looks beautiful tied down.

“I’ve never used something like this, so I don’t know if...” Her scream cuts off her

words as I press the already installed app on my phone, clicking the vibrations up a few notches as I watch her body shake beneath the bindings.

“Well, did I do it correctly?” I taunt, and as she nods.

A laugh tumbles from my lips.

I toy with the vibrations as she tries her damndest to writhe on the toy.

“Ah, ah, ah, you come when I allow you to come, you greedy whore,” I tease, dropping to my knees beside her .

She turns her face, seeking my kiss, and my breathing speeds in response to my proximity.

She’s always been a fucking drug that only gets more potent, more addictive.

I’m still under her spell, too.

“You look so fucking good tied down beneath my ropes, stupid girl,” I whisper, teasing her with soft brushes of my tongue over her lips.

Each time she tries to kiss me, I pull back.

“Neo, please,” she begs.

Pulling back to look at my phone, I drag the dial to give her more.

She arches into the rope bindings, screaming my name as she comes.

“Good girl,” I praise, and she turns her face into mine.

This time, I let her have what she wants and collide my mouth with hers.

The kiss is every word I could never say to her. Every single thing I've always wanted to tell her but can't. It's demanding and hot. Soft yet firm. It's more passionate than I've ever given her.

Things with Lyla have never been black and white.

She was an unexpected but welcome curve in my path, one I'll never stop speeding around with guns blazing.

"It's too much," she whimpers against my lips as her kiss grows sloppy.

"More!" I growl, and it's reminiscent of our first encounter when I couldn't get enough of hearing the noises she made when she came.

I'm still addicted to it.

Her objections disappear as another orgasm rips through her .

I stand and remove my sweats, tossing a leg over her middle to straddle her as I jack my hand over my cock. Pre-cum glistens at the tip, and Lyla looks at it as if it'll quench her thirst.

"Turn it off, please, turn it off!" she begs, and her pleas go unanswered as I bend my knees enough to shove my dick in her mouth.

"There, that's better," I tell her, holding onto either side of her face as I move in and out of her hot, tight mouth.

"Fuck, that feels good," I mewl.

She moans around my cock, and I know the toy is working her toward another orgasm.

“There’s my dirty little slut,” I groan, and her eyes darken around the edges, flicking up to look at me as I fuck her mouth in punishing thrusts.

Her wail is incoherent as I press forward and sink into her throat.

She gags, and it animates something in my fucked-up psyche. “Yes! That a girl, gag on it.”

Each time the head of me slides a bit too far, she heeds my sick command, gagging violently around me. Each time, I feel closer to coming than I want to be.

I never want to come when I’m with her.

I want to bury myself in her for as long as humanly fucking possible.

“Look how pretty you look on my cock. Fuck, those tears,” I snarl, losing my grip on reality as I feel my body aching to fill her mouth.

Her scream around me as she comes for a third time breaks me.

I drive forward, spilling down her throat as I fist either side of her hair in my hands, growling through each mind-bending wave.

“Good fucking girl!”

Reaching back, I tug the vibrator out of her and toss it onto the bed, where it dances around on the surface.

Pulling out of her mouth, I hiss.

“I knew you said you were going to be good, but fuck, Lyla.” I drag my softening cock across her open lips as she tries to catch her breath.

Her tongue peeks out and teases around the head, and my eyes roll back.

“Why can’t I ever get enough of you?” I breathe, anger swelling at the thought.

Even though I know I don’t have to worry about her being an obsession.

Because she belongs to me.

She. Is. Mine.

A while and three more orgasms later, we’re wrapped around one another in the dark silence of the hotel room when Lyla says, “I love you.”

The air between us is still charged, even though we have depleted ourselves multiple times.

“I know you can’t say it back, and I don’t need it. The way you just... the things you did... they’re enough. I know you feel the same way. God, I feel so raw right now.” She laughs, and I smirk.

“In love with a serial killer. They’ll make a documentary about you one day,” I joke, rolling onto my side and tugging into her body further.

She does the same, tossing a leg over my hip.

“Married to a serial killer, they’ll call it,” she tosses back.

I chuckle, tipping her face back as I dust my lips over hers. “I love you, too, stupid girl.”

She clears her throat. “You know, I said I didn’t need to hear it, but, fuck...”

“We all need reassurances occasionally,” I tell her. “I hope you realize just how much I do. I know I can never put it into words. If I could, I wouldn’t say them properly. They’d come out all...”

“Stabby?” she asks.

I jab her in the side with my finger, causing her to squeal.

“Something like that.”

She wraps her arms around me and snuggles closer. “I know you love me, Butcher. Or I’d be floating in bits and pieces down some river.”

I laugh and hold her closer.

“What now?” she asks me, and even in the darkness, where she can’t see me, my brows furrow at her question.

“What do you mean?”

“What’s next?” she says.

“Whatever you want, stupid girl. The world is your oyster, and I’m standing beside you holding the shucking tool.”

She laughs, and her entire body quakes against mine, almost leaking her delight into

my deranged soul.

Almost.

Given years, I think she'll infect me fully, though I don't think it a bad thing .

“What an analogy,” she finally says as she stops laughing at me.

“I think next we go to Paris,” I say wistfully, an idea forming that I can't let go of.

“Paris? What's in Paris? Another job?”

I find her lips in the dark, kissing her ardently until I know she's good and breathless.

“If I told you, I'd have to kill you.”

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Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 4:04 pm

LYLA

Paris

I 'm confident that everyone surrounding us thinks we're mad. Or maybe Paris is the kind of city where a woman being led through the streets by a man who's blindfolded her is typical.

"Just a bit further," Neo says, and my hand grips his tighter.

There's a giddy energy in his tone, and I don't know if that's a good thing.

Neo Wade is a psychopath, after all.

If he's excited, I ought to be afraid.

Even so, my heart speeds.

Finally, he stops me by grasping both my shoulders. "Alright. Are you ready?" he asks, and I nod.

A part of me isn't ready, but I keep my lips sealed, too eager to see what's beyond the veil of the blindfold.

I gasp as I take in my surroundings.

"Wait, I know this place... I've read about it before. This is..." Words fail me as I

turn and run my gaze over the many locks attached to the bridge.

“The Pont des Arts,” Neo says with a perfect French accent and pronunciation. “That’s the Seine River down below.” He points to the water as my eyes lock on the Eiffel Tower in awe, my eyes filling with tears.

This is the sweetest, most romantic thing Neo has ever done for me, and it has visages of the old Lyla, the one not covered in blood, peeking through the curtain of insanity in my mind.

“Neo, this is...”

“Now,” he cuts me off, “if you’ve read about this bridge, you’ll know the tradition is to write our names on this lock, lock it onto the bridge, and then toss the key into the river below.”

I nod, hanging on his every word as he presents a lock to me.

I turn it over in my hand, finding it engraved with our names on it in a beautiful script. “Neo,” I breathe.

I don’t understand when he’d done all this.

We’re always together.

He’d have had to plan this at some point, but when?

“Today, it’s illegal to add our lock to the bridge, but these are lucky waters, they say. If we toss the key away, our love will last a lifetime.”

I choke on a sob as tears fall down my cheeks.

I'm so overwhelmed that my chest is burning with emotion.

"Are we going to leave our lock, then?" I ask him.

He shakes his head, lifting something else out of his pocket.

It looks like a leather strap.

This he doesn't hand to me .

Instead, he steps toward me, opening either end as he fits it around my neck.

I reach up and run my hand over the collar, my fingertips brushing over the engravings in the leather.

There's a loop on the front of the collar, and I toy with it as Neo opens his hand for me to give the lock back.

"We're going to secure the lock onto your collar, and then we're going to toss the key into the river."

I snifle as my hands shake.

He fits the lock through the loop on my collar and clicks it closed, tugging it for effect twice as a smile spreads on my face.

He pulls two keys from his pocket next and hands me one.

"What do you say to an entire lifetime with the Butcher of Crows Hollow, stupid girl?"

I bite my bottom lip before stepping toward the edge of the bridge, tossing the key as

far as I can.

It clunks into the water, drifting slowly beneath it to its ultimate resting place.

I turn back and eye Neo as he smiles. “I agree.”

He throws his key over the side of the bridge, and I tug him to me with the front of his shirt, getting on tiptoe as my lips find his in a bruising kiss.

He lifts me, and I wrap my legs around him.

This story between us began in an asylum for the criminally insane. I was his nurse, and he was my patient. Fate interlaced our lifelines because it knew something that we didn't.

That even a broken, psychotic man needs the one thing in the world that every other sane one does.

Love.

The End.