



Trapped: A Dark College M/M Romance Novella Primal Play (The Wicked Chase Book 2)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: I know you.

I know you from class. You're isolated. Frustrated.

Yeah, I know you.

Trapped with your wings pinned, like a sullen, surly butterfly.

Tonight, in the moonlit woods, you will falter. While you search for the torched lights that should lead you to freedom, your fear will keep you from finding it. But I will set you free, if you let me have my way.

I'll obscure your senses, hunt you down, let you stumble and dip into my web, and devour you like the pretty papillon who should be mine.

My chosen one.

Welcome to the Wicked Chase, a game for brothers and participants.

After all, wouldn't you want a chance for more wealth?

The rules are easy—you only need to last for two hours in the woods of Monterrey Castle.

We. Are. Privileged.

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Spiders.

So much more than air-breathing insects with eight limbs, fangs that inject venom, and spinnerets that extrude silk. Did you know that they are either aggressive or docile? Black. White. Bad. Good. There is no in-between. No grey area.

They carry the creepy kind of beauty that freaks most of us out.

Not me though.

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated by them. Such stealth for a creature so small and delicate. Such precision in the way they walk, run, or crawl. And it's not just the outward prowess that is to be admired. A spider is also cunning. The way they seek out their prey through smell, and actively pursue or cautiously stalk, waiting in ambush— it's a game of the mind too. Sometimes they catch their prey's attention by aggressive mimicry, before grabbing and holding them between their pedipalps and front legs. And then they bite.

That bite.

I love using my teeth. Blood seeping into my mouth. My tongue dragging softly over the broken flesh, sealing the wound with a kiss. Fuck yeah...

The thought makes my insides tingle, and for a fraction of a second I'm oblivious to my surroundings, forgetting that we've just come out of the bushes like a troop of cloaked fiends, scaring the shit out of the participants whom we've invited for tonight's quest.

For the Wicked Chase.

Classmates from Saint-Laurent Boarding College for boys, lured into the woods with the promise of an altered life.

Wealth. Status. Heritage.

Membership in the prestigious, secret brotherhood of the Alpha Fraternarii. Forged by the blood and sacrifices of those that came before us, we now carry the mantle of control in this modern age. We continue to use politics to control the masses, as our ancestors did. Our methods are unorthodox to the unlearned, but they are effective, as our participants will soon learn. Fear, when infused with sex of all kinds, can prove to be a potent control mechanism. After all, who doesn't want to play a role in today's political climate? Even if it starts here, at Monterrey Castle.

Or to be precise, at Monterrey forest. In the middle of the night.

"During the Chase, you may be subjected to physical violence—with no lasting injuries—as well as being drugged, tied up or even used for the brother's sexual pleasure. You agreed to this," Elder Jacques booms. The Elder's black cloak flutters around his shrivelled shoulders. The head of his long, wooden cane rests within his enclosed fist. To our participants, he might look like a scary "cult man". They might be right. To the outside world, we may very well be considered exactly that. Not here. Here, we are those who possess so much wealth, who command so much respect from the mindless public, that we do as we please and everything is acceptable—the depraved, and the dark. The vile and the primal urge to dominate and control.

Yes. Elder Jacques paints an eerily perfect picture for our esteemed guests.

Sometimes I wonder if the Elder has ever been through the Initiations himself; his younger, insecure self afraid to join the secret society. He's always so collected. Like

he never ages. Like he was never young to begin with.

The formalities are meant as an appetizer, an introduction to what's to come. Standing across from our four contestants in a line, my brothers and I stand proud. We're impatient, and the air is thick with anticipation as we wait for the game to begin. Someone from the line across from us stutters a reply, a string of unintelligible words, as he fidgets with the mask on his face. All four participants wear a similar camouflage of a silk—a dark mask, knotted with a soft ribbon at their napes. The shape and softness radiate sensuality, but lack the power and aristocracy of the Venetian masks that we, the brothers of the Alpha Fraternarii, sport in bright colour and lascivious shapes. Gold, silver, copper and bronze.

“You signed up for this,” Elder Jacques says. Raising an arm, he points with his cane back to the castle, where students left earlier today for Family Break, an initiative from Saint-Laurent to encourage families to spend time together over the weekend. “But if you insist on backing out, be my guest. Leave.” No one answers, but apparently that's not enough for the Elder, who's only just starting to let his rage show. “Anyone else? Hmm? Anyone else wants to turn their backs on the invitation and refuse the opportunity of a lifetime? Because if you do, please, do it now.”

Silence.

He takes another step, his dark mantle sliding through the neatly formed lines. The participant who complained flinches, clears his throat, then straightens up. Poor boy. He's facing Alex, whose face is covered with his glorious bronze mask. His hunting weapon hangs from his hand—a leather swing and stone balls. A bola.

Just like the previous time, the guy won't last one hour. I'm not sure what game Alex is playing with his prey, but he seems to enjoy chasing him down, eliminating him, only to bring him back in the game. Knowing how tonight will end, the poor guy will have to come back once more. Because tonight's showtime for me, my check is the

highest. Which means this will be my final time partaking in the Wicked Games, because unlike the first time when I was merely out there to have some fun, tonight's prey is my chosen one.

Standing across from me, in his school uniform, the upper part of his face obscured by charcoal lace, curled into the same shape as my own copper mask, is my target.

Robin Pinault.

"D'accord," Elder Jacques seems pleased as he trots back to his place at the head of our line-up. No one has left. "Now that we have that cleared up, let's move on to the interesting part. Participants, did you know that the monks who lived in Monterrey Castle in the eighteenth century offered shelter to some of the elite when the streets of Paris burned?" Some hesitant nods.

Robin just stares at the Elder, his jaw pinched tightly.

"It was those families who rewrote our past," the Elder continues. The wind picks up through the evergreens that frame the horizon, swinging their endless branches slowly like uncontrolled tentacles. I shiver involuntarily, anticipation slowly unfurling in the pit of my stomach. I'm hungry for tonight. Although this part of France has already dealt with its first heat wave over the past weeks, with temperatures hitting 38 degrees, we were surprised by heavy rainfall at the beginning of the week. For a second, we believed that tonight's Initiation would be called off.

We were lucky though.

What started as a glorious and hot day has transitioned into a pleasant night. Crisp, with a hint of a lukewarm breeze. The perfect night to hunt.

Silence slices through the air. Hardly a breath taken as our participants wait for Elder

Jacques to continue. The quiet is shattered by a cloud of bats taking flight just above us. Their screeching pierces through the dark, causing our participants to jump. A smile touches my lips. So jittery. Ah, they will be fun to hunt. Fear can be so attractive in these situations.

“After the last monks left in the early 19th century, the castle was turned into Saint-Laurent Boarding College for boys, an institute that we’ve all come to know as one of the finest throughout the entire world. Our country’s elite regroups here.” Elder Jacques pauses, letting his words land. “Our country’s elite redefines their values here.” His voice has smoothed into a gravelly whisper, and across from me, I can feel Robin fret as he moves to put his hands into the pockets of his pants and lowers his gaze.

“Tonight, you’ve been invited to join the club of the privileged.” Grabbing a document from his cloak, Elder Jacques holds it up in the air. “And having signed this NDA, you understand the need for secrecy. the outside world does not understand us, and so you are required to uphold the trust and confidence we have placed in you. Make no mistake—” Dropping the paper in front of his lap, he tilts his chin and gives the line of participants a challenge glare. “Each of you has undergone an extensive background check. Everything there is to know about you, is known to us. Failure to uphold the trust we have placed in you will result in reprimand of the highest order. The NDA is a formality. A courtesy offered to you out of respect for your place at Monterrey Castle. We have maintained secrecy for centuries. Make no mistake, we will ensure your silence by all means.” The elder moves forward once more and has his claws dug into the chin of the first participant. The one who fidgeted before. “You don’t want to see your little sister hurt, hmm?” The guy shakes his head furiously, and even from this distance, I don’t miss how his lips are trembling. He’s already on the verge of a breakdown.

Scanning each and every one of the participants across from me, my eyes once more linger on my remarkable part-time classmate. My prey. I’m elated he showed up,

though part of me still can't believe it. Still can't believe that he dropped his guard and signed his life away.

What made you come here tonight?

"Exactly," the Elder soothes, rubbing his finger over the guy's cheek, before abruptly dropping his hand and turning his body halfway toward our side of the line.

"My hungry brothers," he murmurs, as if speaking to a lover. "When the church bells chime, you'll be given two hours to hunt. Participants—" He swivels his gaze back to the other side. "Take a good look at the masked man in front of you. For the duration of this initiation you will identify your pursuer by the color of their mask - gold, silver, copper or bronze. They are the only ones who can eliminate you from this game. Now, the rules are simple." He leans in ever so slightly toward the guy next to Robin. "Survive. Don't trust each other, don't make any friends. You're on your own here. Keep your mask on at all times, and don't leave the forest, even if you're wondering what time it is." His hand moves toward the guy's pocket and he fishes out his phone, tossing it away and into the darkness with an audible chuckle. Passing two participants, he steps behind them, his frame almost entirely swallowed up by darkness.

"How do you know you've won? How do you know if the other participants have been eliminated? It's simple." He pushes his cane into the ground. "You don't. But we will know. And when you are the last man standing?" He huffs out a husky chortle. "You'll know."

My eyes search the line of participants, seeking out Robin. My gaze meets his. His eyes are on me but I don't think he sees me. His face is blank, his eyes glazed over. Has he retreated into some dark part of his mind? His chest puffs up, as if preparing for battle. A second time tonight, a smile touches my lips. He's perfect.

Then, something flashes in those eyes. Is it surprise? Realization? The NDA didn't state that he can only be eliminated by me. Nor does it say that I'll claim him after I capture him. Or perhaps he is not as brave as he's trying to look? My chest tightens. *Ne te prends pas la tête*. Don't worry, beautiful. I'll hunt you and then I'll take care of you.

"I know what the rumours tell you about a possible frat house with its silly pledges inside the walls of Monterrey Castle," Elder Jacques drifts closer to Robin. "They are lies. Remember when someone blabbed about a secret evening in the basement? What was his name again..." He pretends to think carefully, his chin pinched between his fingers.

No one speaks. Every single student knows about Camille Dubois and his dubious departure from Saint-Laurent.

Robin clears his throat. One of his hands has left his pocket and he rolls his fingers into a fist, unclenches them, before clenching them once more. Ah...he remembers.

While the Elder continues his formalities, I let my eyes roam over my chosen one once more, skin itching with contemplation. Robin wears his light caramel hair in an unpractical, unusual length. It's too short to be wrapped out of his face in a bun of some sort—though I believe that would be against college rules—but long enough to frame his narrow face. Some days it even looks like that thick mop of straight strands completely absorbs his fair skin as it hangs like a curtain over his cheeks. His eyes are light and large, with thick, curly lashes under bushy, taupe-coloured brows.

He's in second year like me, though he majors in Business Administration, where I am in International Business. We share a few classes together, and the same library hours, which is how I know of his existence. It's a shame really that he only always uses those gray-colored eyes to glare at the entire world around him. Those lips, those pouty, pink lips, permanently curled into a disapproving sneer.

Not tonight. Tonight, Robin looks wary. I might not see much of those facial features I dream of with the mask he's wearing, but the expression in his eyes is clear. He's anxious.

Finally his gaze clears up and his eyes focus on me with clarity. It's just a flicker of a moment, but it's enough to cause an explosion in my belly.

Fuck, my snappy, snarling part-time classmate is afraid of me.

At the thought, arousal unfurls inside the pit of my belly. It tickles like a gentle brush of a feather, causing internal goosebumps, the way it crawls persistently slowly toward my groin, rousing every nerve in its wake.

My fingers flit over my own mask. My contact lenses are drying out my eyes, making them feel scratchy. I could have worn my glasses like last time, knowing that they'd be solidly perched against my nose, securely held by the mask. But I was vain, I guess. Wanted to look my best when I finally get to fuck Robin.

Like a spider, I don't have good eyesight. And tonight, like a spider, I, too, will rely on touch, vibration, and taste to navigate and find my prey. Spiders create traps of silk thread with glue droplets on their web. They paralyze their prey with venom so they cannot escape. Like this, their prey can stay alive for hours, and the spider can have a juicy meal whenever he gets to it.

This is exactly what I have in mind. With Robin as my prey.

I don't have silk thread to offer my chosen one, but I do have quite the surprise for him, hidden in the forest. Just like the venom only the spider can inject into its prey, Robin is about to receive a kind of venom only I can provide.

Speaking of...did you know that male spiders like to leave presents?

I'm not just a predator. I can be sweet too. After finding out I had been chosen to partake in the Wicked Chase, and I'd decided that our time had finally come, it didn't take me long to find a cute chocolatier in the town of Saint-Laurent. They made me the finest of boxes with tons of sweets, wrapped up in golden ribbons and accompanied by glossy cards. And so over the recent weeks, I have been leaving them in his bedroom by the window with a little note:

Soon now, mon papillon.

My butterfly.

Though, despite the effort on my side, none of the chocolate has managed to erase that permanent scowl off Robin's face. In class his eyes flit and glower, his lips permanently curled into an disinterested sneer. I wonder how they'd taste against my lips. Against my teeth, my tongue. Against my cock.

We're here now, papillon. But don't you worry, I'll erase that glower off your face in no time. And once it's gone, and your face is void of that usual sulky look, it'll be mine to paint with emotion. I might choose a hint of wonder, a splash of venom and a whole sweep of desire. Of hunger, mixed with desperation, because you'll be entirely at my mercy.

Caught in my silken web.

Elder Jacques takes a final step forward, leaning just that bit too much on his cane. I wonder if he truly needs the walking stick or if it's purely for theatrical purposes. It would suit him, the slithering creep he is. The golden crown engraved in the wooden rod stares at me when the Elder stops right in front of me, throws me a filthy wink before offering me his back.

He's now looking at Robin, and though I can't see their eyes as they make contact, I

can feel the air turning thick with tension.

Everyone's aware of what's going to happen now, since the Alpha Fraternarii don't have secrets.

The church chooses this exact moment to announce midnight, with slow, heavy chimes. My chest tightens. Fuck yeah, tonight's my turn to win, my amusement prepared down to the last detail.

"You stay," the Elder tells Robin, then gestures to the other participants, "Go now! May the best man win. You have two hours. And remember—everything has been set up for our entertainment. And entertained we shall be."

No one hesitates, clothes flapping in the wind as they run through the forest, fleeing for cover.

"Boys, wait..." the Elder hums, his eyes still on Robin. "If you give them a chance to find their cover, the sweeter their surrender will be. Now, you..."

"What's that?" Robin asks, the usual mistrust creating a harsh sharpness to his slightly higher pitched voice. My heart rate picks up, ruffling steadily as it increases to a delicious, rapid thump. Fuck yeah, we're really doing this.

"This is your choice." I can hear the smile in the Elder's taunt. Always fucking taunting, that old man. "What's it going to be? White, blue or red?"

"Vive la France," Golden Mask whisper-murmurs, followed by a muffled chuckle. The dick.

"Silence!" Elder Jacques barks, then swivels around. "Better yet, go now!"

My brothers don't waste a single beat. In a fog of rustled cloaks and howls of excitement, they leave their spots and follow the footsteps of the participants into the woods.

Then, after what feels like forever, silence returns once more upon us. I'm still standing behind the Elder, waiting.

"Are those drugs?" Robin croaks. Yeah, my dick likes that tone.

"Final warning. If you wish to keep things as they are, you can leave now," Elder Jacques replies. "Our guards will escort you back to your dorm, and you can be gone home for Family Break in less than half an hour." Leaning in, he dips his disguised head in the curve of Robin's neck, exposing my prey's face to my greedy eyes. His wide, unblinking stare radiates horror and is focused on me, as if keeping his eyes on me would help him protect himself from this physical invasion of his personal space. It seems like not wanting anyone close to him runs in Robin's DNA. Ah, pretty boy, don't worry. Soon we'll be so close I'll be part of your DNA.

"You have exactly three seconds. One—"

"What do these pills do?"

"Nothing you didn't sign for. Two—"

Robin lets out a grunt and then I see him snatch the white pill out of the Elder's palm and stick it into his mouth. He swallows, making his delicate throat bob.

"There, that wasn't so hard, was it?" Elder Jacques pats him on the shoulder, sounding satisfied, much like my dick. The chase is on. "Now, run."

Robin's eyes remain on mine for the next few seconds. Then they flit back to the

Elder and he blinks. I can't help but wonder if the drugs are taking effect that rapidly?

“You're exactly the crazy bunch of fuckers they told me about,” he spits out. Then he turns around and runs.

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I should have told them to fuck off. Every single one of them.

My dad.

My brothers.

For the countless times they've made me feel inferior. For making me stand out in a world in which I didn't even want to be seen in to begin with. Because we all know I don't belong.

For the past twenty years, they've made me feel exactly that. Unworthy, an outsider. In return, I've given them exactly what they were looking for. The youngest son and brother, the spoiled brat with the cocky attitude. The pretender. As a teenager, I would skip class when Dylan, my bodyguard, was too slow to catch up with me, only to head back to my room where I smoked pot and drank beer. I attended the art academy. Got into poetry and philosophy, into painting. That newfound passion brought me into a different circle of people. Those who weren't drawn by money and heritage. Those who'd hopefully accept me for who I was. They did, at first. We'd hang out and I was relieved to be away from home, from the accusatory glares. But it didn't take them long to find out.

Long story short. They chewed me out, spreading venom and implying that I had no idea what true art was because I came from money. It pissed me off and I got into fights, my pride and self-esteem on the line. That's when Dad intervened and took me from the academy, only to dump me at Saint-Laurent Boarding College for boys the following school year. It will be three years this September.

I hate it here. Hate the presumptuous kids that hang around like a bunch of ants, pretending to be something they aren't. No, their parents are rich, and even worse—they are rich through heritage, not because they actually succeeded at doing something remarkable in their lives. Yet they behave like they are kings themselves. Fucking despicable. The only good thing about this sombre castle is the fact that I have a single dorm. No roommates. No hassle. And yeah, assholes, I do love art. So I've used my dorm as my own, small gallery. I've come to love my space. Like the entire architecture of the building, my room is made of high ceilings and countless dips and curves, carved into the walls.

I know of the existence of a brotherhood inside the walls of Saint-Laurent, because my entire family are members. When I started attending boarding school though, my Dad and I agreed that I wouldn't receive an invitation to join their secretive elite club. He didn't think I was cut for their values, and I told him I agreed.

Still, it felt like a rejection. As if he was rejecting me. Over and over again.

I swallow away the sudden bile that has risen in my throat. It's not like I care what Dad thinks.

I shouldn't.

It's not like I care that he didn't want me in his precious "group." I don't care about anything. If I could have it my way, I wouldn't even be here in the first place.

Yet here I am. Because a pathetic part of me wants to prove him wrong. Wants to prove myself wrong. Perhaps I do belong somewhere after all.

As I make my way through the darkness around me, I tell myself it's better to keep off the sand trail, despite it being lit up by a string of beacons in the shape of torches.

The cool breeze brings shivers, or perhaps it's the realization of my predicament that's slowly creeping inside.

Chosen.

That was the exact word those two middle-aged men used when they sat me down in that fancy office in the South Wing a few weeks ago.

“Robin Pinault, vous avez été choisi.”

Chosen? Flabbergasted, I'd let my eyes slide from one to the other. I'd never seen these men before, nor had I ever been in this part of Monterrey Castle. The South Wing, as we were told, was for personnel only.

Pourquoi moi? “But...why?” I asked.

“You've been chosen,” was the simple reply.

I'd tried to laugh it off—my sarcastic signature, usually enough to keep people at a distance, but they didn't flinch. And then...right when I wanted to tell them to get lost, one of them opened this fancy-looking briefcase and put a document and pen on the table.

And for some inexplicable reason, I immediately knew that this was the secret brotherhood Dad had spoken of. My mind was spinning. If someone else had chosen me, then Dad, nor my brothers were aware of this little encounter. Of the possibilities this little encounter brought...

“But even my own family doesn't want me to join!” The walls I built to shield myself from Dad's rejection and the way it made me feel hurt, trembled and I despised myself for the momentary weakness. I should have just walked away, but I couldn't.

“The highest bidding family wants you,” they said, brushing my objection once more aside. I doubt they’d even heard me. “And they get to decide.”

Easy as that. The power of hierarchy. My family is powerful, but there are those more powerful than us. Part of me was enraged by its cruel simplicity, although another part of me felt...protected? What a weird sensation. No one had ever stood up for me before against my own dad.

It felt good.

Though the NDA was weird.

I glanced through it twice, cleared my throat while my head tried to understand what the hell I just read. Underlining the exact phrase with my index finger, I looked up.

“You may be subjected to physical violence-with no lasting injuries-as well as being drugged, tied up or even used for sexual pleasure?”

They shrugged. “A mere formality,” one of them replied.

My heart hammered in my chest. “So you’re saying there’s nothing for me to worry about?” This was nonsense and absolutely something I shouldn’t agree to.

Another casual brush-off. “I’m saying that this is a respectable fraternity, and no harmful things shall take place.” Then he leaned in, capturing my eyes with his own. “Nothing more harmful than the things you’ve managed to do to yourself anyway. From what I understood, you’ve used your fair share of drugs in your previous life?”

Reclining back into my chair, I touched my fingers to the centre of my chest where an unfamiliar rage was beginning to bubble. “You’ve checked out my background? No, I won’t—” I got up from my chair, but got pushed back immediately by a pair of hands

on my shoulders.

“Sit, and listen.”

“No—”

“Background checks are standard protocols at Saint Laurent, Robin,” the same man interrupted, his voice nothing more but a controlled boom, his expression blank. “We know everything about you, including the art academy and your group of friends. The fights.”

“Ex-friends,” I huffed out.

A small smile crept up his lips. “Ex-friends indeed. Now, you are entitled to decline this opportunity, but before you do so, I want you to fully understand what it is you’re saying no to.”

“I won’t be beaten up,” I started, but he shushed me with a single wave of his hand.

“If you want a future in which your father and brothers see you for the powerful brother you might become, sign this document. If you want a future in which you decide what you wish to do, sign this document. And you might become our next member.”

“There is no freedom in my future,” I growled, but one look on his face told me everything.

There would be—if I dared.

So I signed the document. And the moment I left that office, I felt like change was already taking place. I felt different. Okay, I was still my cranky self, but something

had changed.

That's when I started receiving the chocolate boxes.

My right foot trips over a stone, bringing me back to reality in an instant as my body stumbles forward. "Merde," I hiss. My hands shoot out, palms digging into the ground to prevent myself from falling on my face. The sudden rustle of leaves in the top of the tree causes me to flinch. When I see the group of bats flapping away, I let out a relieved huff of laughter.

I don't usually come in the forest of Monterrey Castle, which is ironic considering the fact that the entire college is surrounded by endless kilometers of forest. I'm much more of a stay-in-my-room kind of guy. And in the library. And in the tiny as shit art room, that has been specially designed for the likes of me; students who don't want to study Business but have been forced to by their family.

I didn't touch the chocolate, though the sweets looked delicious. Part of me was convinced it was some sort of silent threat from the board to show me that they knew of my past and wanted me to behave within school facilities. It couldn't have anything to do with being chosen, right?

No. That was plain ridiculous. A sweet, treacherous wish.

They were just messing with me. I thought that for the past weeks, carefully avoiding the chocolates, carefully ignoring the sweet dreams that found me in my sleep regardless. Of gentle touches in the shadows and tender whispers in the dark.

And then I received the invitation on my doorstep.

"You, our brother," I hum out loud, half mocking, because for some reason I know the twisted words by heart. "Who carries his heritage with dignity and pride, who

walks this world with his head high, searching—not quite finding—to belong. And belong you shall, brother, because today is the day that your life will change.

You are invited to become part of the inevitable, the circle of gold that will keep your spine straight and your dignity intact. To meld into a group of people who are like you, brother, who were once searching but who found—found—what life really means.

Loyalty.

Respect.

Tradition.

Sacrifice.

And tonight your Initiations shall begin.

I should have walked away right from that first meeting, but the chance of winning tonight's games... the chance of beating my old man by becoming part of his little elite club...

If surviving two hours out here in a pitch-dark forest is all I need to do to prove my old man that I can be part of his secretive club of the privileged, then that's what I'll do, despite having swallowed a white pill that may or may not be the legal kind. Sliding my phone out of the pocket of my uniform pants, I quickly check the time. Ten minutes have passed and I'm feeling fine. You see? Easy.

The sand trail behind me is deserted and dark, aside from the decorations they have put out.

Where would the other participants be?

Where would he be? Copper Mask.

I try to wave the thought away, not wanting to think of the guy who stood across from me, but my mind's too slow for my thoughts, getting tangled up inside my head. Oh well. If he thinks he can take me down, he better think again.

The sudden blaring, low sound of a horn makes me jump. It's freaking loud, and goosebumps coat my skin in an instant.

"Putain de merde," I breathe, my heart thumping violently in my chest. "Where the hell did that come from?" Circling the tree trunk with my hands, I push my back flush against the wood, eyes darting wildly around me. The sand trail is still empty.

The horn blows again and I tremble on a whimper.

This wasn't mentioned in that fucking NDA.

What, the use of an instrument? I try to taunt myself, but my brain doesn't receive the message. My mind is slowing down, failing to catch up with the accelerating events that come tumbling past my hiding place without any sense of mercy.

A movement on my right catches my eye. Someone's moving fast, his uniform giving him away. He's a participant. He shouts something, and my eyes turn to slits. What the fuck is happening? My eyes scan the darkness. Fuck! I can't see.

My back presses deeper against the tree. In the madness of the last two seconds, fear takes hold of me. It feels like tentacles sprouting from the trunk of the tree, gently digging into my back. I give my head a firm shake. No. This is crazy.

I frown, my eyes narrowing even further, skin rumpling until it's about to tear.

"A horse?" I whisper, staring baffled into the shadows.

There's another blow of the horn that has me glued tighter, if possible, against the tree, followed by a terrifying shout. And then there's only the clacking sound of the rider creeping into my foggy brain, only to transform into a sharp, clattering sound that makes my ears buzz.

"Mon Dieu," I whisper. What exactly have I gotten myself into?

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For the sweetest of seconds it's like the entire world has been paused.

The forest with its rustling leaves and foreign sounds. The horse with its rider, completely disguised in black and bronze. Even his swinging arm, leather ropes carrying that ball seems to have stilled.

There's nothing.

Somewhere deep inside of me, my mind tells me to flee. To turn around and run as far away as I can. But my pride, my aversion toward anything that is related to the Pinault family name, keeps me grounded to grass and sand. To tree roots that feel like living entities as they appear out of nowhere, meandering organisms that wrap themselves around my ankles.

I can't move.

The thought brings a grimace onto my lips. Of course you can move, I tell myself, but my own voice is nothing but a metallic resonance inside my mind. It's weird. They're fucking with your head.

White pill.

I think of that song by Jefferson Airplane, a band my mom used to love.

One pill makes you larger

And one pill makes you small

And the ones that mother gives you

Don't do anything at all

Go ask Alice

When she's ten feet tall

She'd sit in her workshop, kneeling in front of countless canvasses, with her paint and brushes, and she would cradle her body to the rhythm of the song. Like that, looking disheveled in a big dress with splashes of colourful stains on the fabric, her long hair pulled into a loose braid and those freckles that decorated her cheeks and nose, she'll stay branded in my memory forever.

Precious. And gone somewhere far away.

"Mom?" I call out, but there's no reply in the darkness.

That's when the world is put back to "play."

The horse's hops quickly morph into gallops as it dives off from its spot in the shadows. It can't be further than fifteen meters away from me, and I let myself slide down and crawl even closer against the shelter of the tree.

The horse appears at alarming speed, its hooves crushing fallen leaves and churning patches of grass. The rider swings his ropes smoothly around his shoulder, as if it's the most normal thing to do in the middle of the fucking night in the woods. The horn is blown one more time, it's sound full and velvety, though equally menacing. If it's not the rider playing the instrument, then who is? And where does it come from?

It makes my ears buzz.

It's in your mind.

And then, suddenly, the horse halts, the reins pulled tight. Waiting.

Fuck me, I hope he hasn't seen me. I turn my face slightly to catch a glance of the animal and its bronze rider. They keep in the shades, silently. The silence is deathly, and a sudden snapping sound close to me makes me jump out of my skin and my blood runs cold.

There's someone else out there. I can feel it from the way the leaves bristle. From the way the air tenses. But mostly, from the way my skin crawls.

Then, a cry, further down the trail. Its raw sound rattles my ribcage. Shifting my aching backside and head as carefully as possible toward the sound, I can't help but shiver when I see him. The participant from before. The one who was afraid.

I don't know why, but it feels like everything's being put in perspective as I gaze up at him. From my position lurking in the shadows, he can't see me. Although I wonder if he would look at me in the first place. He's too busy freaking out. He's mumbling to himself, hugging his school jacket close to his slender frame, head bent as if he's counting his own toes. Then suddenly his head shoots back up, and he stares toward me. His dark mask has slid off ever so slightly, and even those loose, blonde curls that frame his cheeks and forehead like a bouquet of flowers, can't conceal his identity.

My heart starts hammering. I know that guy. Flicking through my mind, I try to remember where I met him before. It's not like I socialize a lot with these stuck-up kids, but there was that one guy...

My eyes widen. Yeah, that's him. Orlane, or Olivier, or something like that. Has a job in the library.

He's one of the nice ones.

What on earth is a guy like him doing here? He's a geek, always his nose in his books. He shouldn't be out here at midnight, running from some asshole on a horse. Yet here he is. He—we all are.

Because...why? Because we believed this promise to change our lives? What does a guy like him need to change? He's from a powerful family, if the rumours are true.

On the trail, Olivier starts running. His loose jacket flutters around his frail shoulders like a cape. But instead of running away, he's...

“Mais putain, qu'est-ce que tu fais?” I hiss under my breath. He's coming my way.

Ignoring my itching flesh and whoever is too close for comfort, I flick my gaze toward the road instead. Has he not perceived the danger that's heading his way?

“Come on then, just do it!” I hear him cry out, his limbs becoming more unhinged with each step he approaches as if he's a wooden doll steered by his master.

The horse whinnies as it stamps its hooves. And then the rider clacks his tongue, the sound sharp like a razor in the thick air of the forest.

“Allez, allez!” Bronze Mask lets out a high hoot, and then they start moving forward in one smooth motion, heading toward the sand trail.

Heading my way.

Something flashes inside me, sharp like an electric wire. My skin prickles with awareness, limbs and nervous system compensating for my faltering mind that shakes and shatters.

I shouldn't do this. The words echo through my mind, but my body doesn't catch up. Instead I scramble up, using the tree trunk for leverage as I get back onto both feet. Once I'm standing up right, I notice the buzzing in my ears has increased. Ignoring that for now, I eye the approaching horse, then push myself from the tree and get ready to run.

"Don't!" An arm pulls me by my shoulder and roughly pulls me back onto the ground. "Don't interrupt his little mindfuckery." My head spins when my knees hit the rough forest ground of grass, sand and the occasional stone. My arms reach out to protect the rest of my body, but they're too slow, feeling like two uncoordinated antennas.

"Ouch. Watch it, man!" I snap, breathing heavily as I pant the stinging pain away. Someone reaches for my hand, yanking me back up. Before I know what's happening, he's got me pulled behind the tree.

"Yeah yeah, you can thank me later. I'm B, by the way."

"You were at the other side of the tree trunk all along?" I ask, finally taking him in. No wonder I'd felt him so close.

B nods. He's a participant like me, and the sight of his school uniform makes me feel relieved. Puts things back into perspective. Right now, that's all we are. Ordinary students of Saint-Laurent.

"The other guy will be eliminated. Don't save him. It's the game," he says. His voice rings in my mind, and it takes me an awfully long time to respond.

"But that guy on his horse..." I whisper urgently.

"I know. Just be happy that you're not competing against him." He hesitates a beat,

then, “Who are you competing against?”

“Copper mask.” I give him a sluggish shrug. “Haven’t seen him around here yet.” Behind us, at the other side of the tree, the horse passes by with thundering speed. They would have found me easily. I wince at the thought, then flinch from the heartbreaking cry coming from down the road.

B sniggers. “Poor bastard really is scared. It’s a game man, albeit a nasty one. But you know what they say, right? Work hard, play hard.”

I frown. “What does that have to do with this?” Behind us, the rider lets out another high howl over the clopping sound of the horse’s gallop.

“That you need to prove yourself in order to be part of this group, dumb ass.” He gives me a nudge, and I lose my balance, falling sideways in the sand. My palm reaches out, grounding me right in time.

B eyes me warily. “What happened to you then?”

“What do you mean?” I snap. This guy’s already getting on my nerves. Newsflash, people always do.

He squints his eyes from behind his dark mask and I lift my other hand, only half surprised when I feel the soft silk caressing my own cheeks and forehead. I’d forgotten that I was wearing it.

“Looks like you’ve been smoking, is all.” Getting onto his knees, he carefully leans sideways from the tree and glances toward the sand trail. “They’re gone,” he hums, then leans over his shoulder to eye me. “That leaves three of us.”

“Three of us,” I repeat and my voice resonates in my chest. “Three of us,” I try again,

then giggle. The sound vibrates through my ribcage, and it's a funny feeling.

"You really are a weirdo," B decides. "But I don't think I know you?"

"No, I don't think you do. I'm not one to make loads of friends. You?" I let out another cackle at the internal reverberation, a sound that becomes louder when B rolls his eyes at me.

"God, you really are a crazy cookie. Okay, listen, this was fun and all, but I've gotta go." He gets up and straightens his uniform.

"Who's your opponent?" I ask.

Still bent forward, he looks up through his blond hair. "The guy with the knife."

Golden Mask.

"That sucks," I mumble.

"Yeah, well...we'll see how this ends. Even if I get eliminated, I still get to be fucked by one of the elite." He gives me a half-hearted shrug. "Surely that counts for something? Good luck to you. I guess I'll see you around." He turns around before I can react. My brain feels foggy and I roll my lips, frowning.

What do you mean? The question rattles through my mind like trembling ground. Like uncharted territory.

I watch B leave on a suspiciously smooth skip as he practically bounces through the dense bushes. And he thinks that I'm the weird one? The thought makes me snort, but my amusement's cut short when I realize that the slightest of sounds makes my body tremble peculiarly. So I got drugged after all. I wonder what the fuck that white pill

was. I've smoked my fair share of marihuana in my life, but I've never been into taking heavier stuff.

In an attempt to calm myself down, I rationalize these foreign sensations. So my flesh is littered with goosebumps and my mind is slowly catching up. What does that mean?

Am I cold? No.

Am I afraid? Yes, but that's not strange, given the circumstances.

This game only lasts for two hours, then it's over.

"Take out your phone and check the time," I command myself. I obey, but my hand trembles so badly that it takes me a few tries before I manage to keep hold of the damn thing. It's a little after half past twelve. That's—

"C'est pas mal," I choke out. Not bad at all. "Only ninety more minutes." My voice quivers with trepidation. Fuck me, that is bad. That's ninety minutes too long.

I want to go home.

No, you don't.

I'm afraid.

No, you aren't.

Right now, I need to feel what's real.

I'm going to stay here, and sit my time out. Voilà, that's it. My head lolls to one side

in reply. Not from fatigue, but from something else.

“Keep it together, Robin,” I tell myself. Closing my eyes, I imagine telling Dad that I’ve made it into their precious little men’s club. Hah! Look at that!

But right now, the thought doesn’t make my heart swell with pride. Right now, I’m feeling miserable. So I do the only thing I guess is right. I scramble up once more and sweep a hand over my pants. It’s too early to surrender. Drugged or not, I will survive the next hour and a half.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 6:56 am

Staggering through the bushes, I try to keep as close to the sand trails as possible since they are lit up by beacons. Over here, the forest is quiet, though quite frankly, I don't know where here is. I lost my way a long time ago.

I barely remember which direction I took after I was told to run. I just did as I was instructed, without even looking back to see if I was being followed.

By Copper Mask.

Is he the one who chose me? And if so, why? Do we know each other? Licking my lips, I try to defend myself from the thoughts that have been haunting me from the day I was summoned toward my altered life. The day I was requested to sign that NDA.

I'm good at that, usually. Good at blocking my feelings, keeping my heart at a respectable distance from everything and everyone.

But right now, I'm not good at blocking out any unwanted thoughts. My brain is in tatters, and my traveling legs can't seem to bring me home.

Je suis perdu. Perhaps quite literally. Lost my way in life. Resentment is my middle name. For everything I can't do, regardless of my passion, for everything they won't let me be, because of the loser I am, and for everything I apparently can't become, despite my determination.

Like becoming part of this fucked up brotherhood.

I think of the rider and his horse. Of the terrified cry of that participant. Olivier. Of B's collected and distant behaviour.

How far would you go to change your destiny?

How far will I go?

I want to remember the details those two men exchanged during my summoning in their office in the South Wing. Nothing stood out, aside from that arguable document that I signed. And now I wonder why I did.

Vengeance. That's why I signed those damn papers. It's what I feel every day when I climb those double-spiral stairs and follow the narrow halls. When I glance at the endless framed photos of posh, stuck-up kids in uniforms who smile dutifully at the camera. It's what I feel when I sit my classes out, only to head out for the library afterwards to spend my entire night in there. When I enter the cafeteria and occupy my usual corner where I sit with the same unnoted group of strangers who hang out on the same spot. They'd rather hang out with my snarky self than be alone. When I avoid looking at that noisy table in the center of Monterrey's existence—the table of the elite of the elite. The super rich. None of us do, it's an unwritten rule. Stay away from them, and if you're lucky, they'll stay away from you. Although...

“And if I'm eliminated, I still get to be fucked by one of the elite.” B's words left a damn hole in my brain that's filling up with a ton of questions.

Fucked?

I'm not getting fucked by no guy, that's for sure. I'm not into guys. Not into girls either, to be honest. Although I've been involved with a few girls before, at the academy. Nothing serious, but a guy needs to experiment a little, right?

The elite.

I think of that table in the cafeteria once more, then lift a listless hand as if swiping the thought away. None of that matters. Not now. All that I need to do now, is find a place where I can lay low, and preferably not hit the ground before I do so.

The sand trail breaks up in two separate directions, and from my spot in the shadows I contemplate my options. I think I came from my left side, though right now, I'm unsure. I'm unsure of everything. Though I refuse to be lost.

Flicking my finger out, I mutter, "Am Stram Gram." Eenie, meenie, miney moe.

Left. Right.

Tick. Tock.

My ears buzz a little sharper and I wince at the sensation.

"I'll take a left, fuck it." That way I can stay on this side of my hiding spot.

Staggering forward, I keep my balance by clutching my hands to the solid tree trunks before wobbling to the next one. My lips start to feel dry, and my face itches behind silk. I should just take it off, despite that old man's warning.

"Espèce de merde," I swear, irritated. "Who's he to tell me what to do anyway? Who's anyone to tell me what to do?" Letting go of the tree, I rest my hands against my upper legs, shaking myself a few times. "Enough of this," I decide. Enough of the drugs, of this game, of this psychological mindfuckery. "You can't tell me what to do!" I let out.

It feels so, so good.

Expanding my chest, I take in a deep breath of air.

“You can’t tell me what to do!” I rumble a little louder. My knees buck, but my eyes see clearer. Yes, this is helping. Taking in another inhale, I open my mouth wider this time as I cry out the same phrase. And again. And again. I continue until I’m left a shuddering, panting mess. But fuck me, do I feel better. Tears roll down my flushed, covered cheeks. Yeah, much better.

“Sir?”

I flinch at the sudden greeting and my head jumps up, eyes creating a teary, hazy sight. For the shortest of seconds, I wonder if I should hide.

As if he can hear my thoughts, the bodyguard, who slowly approaches me from the sand trail, lifts his hands in defeat. One of them is carrying a bottle of what seems to be water. I lick my lips at the thought. “No need to run away from me, I’m not participating in the games.”

I slowly make my way out of the bushes. “Does that mean that it’s finished?”

He’s one of the bodyguards who awaited me earlier tonight, at the given time and place in the gardens outside. The one who placed the mask in front of my face and tightened it behind in my nape. He seems vaguely familiar, but it’s difficult to place him because of our current position in the woods. The bodyguard gives me an apologetic smile. “Not quite. But I’ve come to bring you some water. You must be thirsty.” He holds out the bottle that I eye suspiciously.

“Does everyone get water?”

“No.” He shakes it a little in an invitation for me to grab it and I can’t help licking my lips at the sight. He’s right, I am thirsty. “But you must be thirsty. It hasn’t been

spiked, I promise.”

“Yeah? And what’s your promise worth to me? Nothing.”

His smile widens. “He told me you’d be snappy.”

Snatching the bottle out of his hand, I glare at him. “Who?”

The one who chose me.

I swallow the thought down altogether with a big sip of water. It feels great.

“You already know who, sir.” He watches me take a few more sips, then takes the bottle back into one of his large hands, surprising me as he leans forward. “He’s watching you,” he murmurs. Then he turns around and walks away. Leaving me there, on that trail, right between two torched beacons, bewildered.

Wait! I imagine shouting after him. Don’t you walk away from me, you son of a bitch. Don’t you... But he’s been swallowed up by the shadows.

I stay like that, just standing there, staring into the void of the forest and vanished silhouettes, for what feels like a long time. My thoughts are accompanied by a steady thumb that creates even more chaos inside my head, making my mind swim.

“I want to go home,” my thoughts voice out loud, words coming out slurred. “Where’s home? Where the fuck is home?”

I grimace. Guess that drink was spiked after all. Or maybe it’s just me. Maybe it’s my family catching up with me through my head, accusing me of trying to get into their precious fraternity. Accusing me for being different from them. Accusing me for being into art.

The usual bite stays away. So many years of fighting, and I've grown tired. Or maybe it's just my head...

One pill makes you larger

And one pill makes you small

And the ones that mother gives you

Don't do anything at all

"Maman." My mind whispers.

It's been so long.

"I can hear your thoughts from here, you know?"

At the sound of that smooth, teasing voice I spin around so fast that I lose balance and hit the ground on my knees. The sharp sting makes me hiss, sand burning my palms as I reach out the ground for stability. I look up from below my hair, and fear seizes me when I see who's found me. Who was apparently watching me.

Copper Mask.

"Fuck you," I spit. I try to get up, but my drugged state makes my movements slow and sluggish. Instead of pushing myself onto my feet, I fall back onto my knees with a grunt.

He chortles, as if I've just told him a funny joke. It's nothing but a scratchy, soft sound that is enough for anger to bubble up inside my panting chest. But there's also fear, already, coiled together, pounding lightly at the rhythm of my heart beat.

He still hasn't made a move. Or maybe he has, but my mind is failing me because of the drugs? I can't be sure anymore. "You are here to eliminate me."

Cocking his head to one side, he watches me. I've got to give it to him, his mask is phenomenal. The warm, tan colour intermingles perfectly with the delicate embroidery that has been threaded into the material. It makes both sides of his cheekbones come out perfectly—both the uncovered and the covered part—and brings out the straight lines of his nose. A true work of art.

"I'm here because I chose you." He says.

I let out a snort. "Well, you've got the wrong guy, then."

"Oh, yeah?" Slowly, he drops himself to his knees, his eyes still burning on mine. I swallow, trepidation keeping the consistent thrum in my mind going strong.

"Y—yeah."

I watch him closely, heart jamming in my throat when he starts crawling forward to where I'm still kneeling. Blinking rapidly, I will the earlier tears away and for my sight to clear up. It doesn't though. There's no mistake in his approaching, clambering frame as he closes the distance between us. It only takes him a few movements before I back up, my stomach coiling tight. "Stay the hell away from me." Fuck, even my voice stutters. He must hear it too, because his lips curl up. "I mean it." Clambering up in an attempt to prove my words, I only stumble a little bit this time, before I get back to both feet, swaying heavily.

"It will get worse," Copper Mask murmurs from where he is now gazing up at me. Sitting back on his haunches, he straightens his upper body. His black cloak is casually swept over his shoulders, showing off his developed build and wide chest. The hood is securely wrapped over his head, covering his hair. As I look at him,

panic nibbles at my insides. “The disorientation,” he explains.

I don’t say anything, just continue to stare at him. My thoughts are faltering, riddles and flutters occupying my mind. Who is this guy?

“And then it will get better,” his lips tug into a smirk. “Soon now, mon papillon. Soon you’ll be mine.”

“W—what?” Fuck, my brain needs to do something now. I need to stop this madness. “I’m not available,” I blurt. “To be chosen, or to be f—fucked.” I hate how my tongue stutters over that one word.

Copper Mask tilts his head back and lets out an obnoxious laugh. Then he returns his gaze at me, his lips still smiling. “Didn’t your father teach you to respect your superiors?” He crawls forward, and I jump back, nearly tripping over my own feet, which makes him laugh even louder.

“You’re not my superior,” I snap, the words once more drumming inside my head. Fuck, he’s right. It is getting worse. The outside darkness flickers, and my knees feel wobbly when I turn around and flee.

“Over here, sir!” A bodyguard urges me with a gesturing hand, and I follow him blindly, the vision of Copper Mask on his hands and knees one I don’t wish to recall ever. But as I hobble over the sand trail, the memory of that mere sight causes something to tighten in my stomach. Something that has nothing to do with fear.

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Even in his current state, Robin is still snappy. Confused, yet furious. Wobbly, yet surprisingly lithe as he makes his feet move—thump, thump—onto the soft ground on the sand trail. The drugs are kicking in, the effects on Robin pleasing me. Apparently it doesn't take more than my magic cocktail of Tizanidine, Antihistamines and a tiny bit of LSD for him to stagger and hallucinate. Freaking delectable, is how he looks, the way he slowly but steadily unravels in front of me.

The background check confirmed what I already thought of him. An unfettered soul born into the wrong family, with a dad desperate to force him into the iron fist of Saint-Laurent. But my little butterfly wants to flutter his wings and fly.

That's not going to happen. Although I won't let anyone else but me wrap him in silk after I've come and claimed him. After all, that's what this game is for.

The Wicked Games.

Me and my brothers like to hunt our prey. We like to chase them down and claim them as ours. Just because we can. And if you think that's unethical, just look around you and inside this world. We live in a hierarchical society, fighting in our own corner every day.

Ahead of me, Zin, one of my two bodyguards out here tonight, gestures for Robin to head to his left. Who says I can't play a little before I get to devour my snack? My chosen one.

When I watch him obey with pathetic, sluggish movement, I chuckle under my breath. I wasn't lying when I told him that we'd soon be there. Soon he'll run into the

finest threads I spun especially for him. Glistening with Thor, the best superglue I could find, to make it strong enough to catch a human. For the most fascinating, snappiest guy I've ever met.

Become mine, and with that, the artist you want to be.

Under my proverbial wings. Yeah, my cock likes that idea, already swelling inside my boxer briefs, pretty much the only garment I'm wearing under my cloak tonight, per the rules. Grabbing my phone out of my pocket I call Elder Jacques, who confirms what I want to know: two participants are already eliminated. And with one more hour to go, it's showtime.

"How's he doing?" I ask when I pass Zin, who dips his chin like the endless professional he is.

"He is out of his mind, sir."

"Good. Get him some real water for later. I want him clear enough to understand his own official ritual once we get inside the castle."

Robin Pinault will become my brother. My lover. My own, personal artist. More blood travels south. I've played this game before during the first round of the Wicked Games, but since Ma?l brought in the fattest check, I was wise enough to use that round as a rehearsal. A satisfying one, I must say, that involved a terrified, sweet boy with a tight ass.

Will Robin tremble for me? Or will he hiss and riot, tear and beg when my silk lures him in and melds itself with his searing flesh?

Fuck, I guess we're going to find out.

Leaving the trail, I get up and take on a leisurely pace and start whistling some tune I heard Dominique play the other day in the Atrium when Thurel officially became a brother, and Ma?l's lover.

I approach Enzo, my other bodyguard, who pulls the shrubs aside, pointing his finger to where my trap is waiting. "I sent him the right way, sir," he says. "I believe he has started fighting it."

My heart rate picks up, and I can barely manage a 'thank you' before my feet start walking faster. Sure enough, a little further into the woods, I catch a glimpse of a staggering Robin. His troubled vision has picked up on the shimmer of the copper-colored silk threads, just like I knew it would.

Prey.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est ?a?" He murmurs to himself, the question making me smile. Oh, my little butterfly, you're about to find out. I touch the bottle of lube in the pocket of my cloak, needing to make sure that it's there. Nothing will spoil our moment.

Carefully approaching from behind, I eagerly watch him taking those fatal, last steps until he's fully facing my silk web.

"What's that?" He asks himself again, before he reaches out his hand, and...I swallow my growl before it can escape from between my lips. His fingers stick to the thread and he hisses in surprise, before trying to pull back. "What the..." He tugs and complains, his movements jerky and uncontrolled, and fuck me, if it isn't the most delicious thing I've ever seen. So very different from my first prey, Robin is still prickly, still defying every single obstacle he's facing. I can't wait for him to tell me all about his mind. Though we might have to wait for the drugs to wear off before that.

I chuckle at the thought, the sound making Robin look up and over his shoulder. “You!” He roars when he sees me. “What the hell is this?”

I smirk. “My web.”

“Your what?” His eyes widen, and then he gazes back in front of him again, and starts trying to jerk free his hand with renewed energy.

Taking a step in his direction, I add, “I’m sure you’ve noticed some of the other brothers. Four different colors, four different arms. There’s Golden Mask, who carries a knife.” Robin lets out a pained grunt, then turns back over his shoulder. When he sees me approaching, he lifts his free arm, jabbing his finger my way.

“Stay away from me.”

I take another step forward. “Then there’s Silver Mask with his rope and collar.”

“I told you before, I can’t be chosen. And I won’t—” He sputters, head lolling to one side, and I watch him clenching a fist, trying to fight the drugs. It’s a lost battle without any real water.

“Then there’s Bronze Mask, who rides a horse,” I continue.

“I’ve seen him.” Robin sighs, facing the web once more. His hand is still plastered tight against the soft and glittery thread, the superglue visibly doing an outstanding job. I take another step, then drop to my knees behind him like I did before. This is what a spider must feel...

The gesture catches him off guard, and his flight instinct kicks in. Only...that makes him tumble forward and into the web.

For the sweetest of seconds, time passes at the slowest possible pace, and with mouth agape I watch as Robin's hands and feet get stuck to the thread as he topples right into my trap. I watch him fight, his delirious state causing his visions to play tricks on him as he swears and yanks in an attempt to free himself. The more he jerks, the tighter the material will stick against his clothes and bare flesh.

"What the... you're crazy!" He wheezes. But he's already too late. Robin's entire body is glued to the silk web that I carefully spread out for him between two large evergreens. If only he knew how long it took me to stretch the delicate, lustrous material that matches the color of my mask, all the while respecting the fractal shape—the never-ending pattern that spiders use. All that hard work has paid off, judging the eye candy my vision is filled with.

It's perfect. Just fucking perfect. During the previous Wicked Chase, I had to practically throw my prey into the net since his mind was clear enough to see the bronze finery for what it is—danger. But tonight, with the right dose of tranquilizers, with the right guidance by my men, with the right guy, everything falls into place.

Literally.

"Fuck, baby, you're so pretty," I mumble in awe, looking at his back and round ass. At those long, trembling legs. Robin mutters something in reply, but his voice sounds out of breath. He's getting tired of fighting, the earlier, forceful yanking of his limbs turning once more into sluggish movements. Dropping once more onto my knees, I crawl up behind him, reveling in the way his body tenses when I lay my hands on his calves, before slowly sliding them up to his thighs. Not giving three fucks that he's still dressed, I press my lips on the rough material of his pants, enjoying this first connection with my little butterfly. Skidding my face over his hips and toward the center of his body, his firm and plump ass, Robin winces. He yanks at the thread once more, but the movement has become desperate.

With my nose between his crack, I inhale deeply, making sure to squeeze his meaty, clothed ass cheeks.

“You can’t...I’m not...” Robin whimpers.

“I can and I will, papillon,” I murmur, enjoying the way his pleas cause shivers of desire. “You know what spiders do when prey gets caught into their web?” Robin lets out a wheezing sound. “They watch them getting trapped, reveling in the sensation of them getting stuck.” I leave one final caress on his back, then retreat, only to slowly make my way to the front, suddenly impatient to devour his panic with my greedy tongue and hungry eyes.

Fuck, the sight doesn’t disappoint.

“Hey there, butterfly.” I smile fondly at his glazy scowl and watch him shiver as I trace the lines of his mask with a digit. Perfection. “I could let you hang there for hours.”

Tonight’s all about showing Robin my true colour. After all, copper symbolizes positivity and goodness, and is the bringer of good luck. With its tarnished glow, it stands for fire and pride. I may not have shown those traits yet today, but I will as the night goes on. I can be exactly who Robin needs, if my sweet, flapping butterfly can give in, let me blanket his wings and take him home.

To me.

His hands are no longer balled into fists, like before, when we stood across from each other at the start of the chase. Brothers versus participants. Fine laced masks versus plain, dark camouflage. Hunters versus prey.

“And I might just do that,” I decide, trailing my finger through his light-caramel hair,

gingerly brushing it out of his face. “Let you hang in here for a bit. Let you think about—” Cocking my head, I pretend to think my carefully prepared repertoire through. Robin doesn’t take long to sputter.

“You can’t leave me hanging in here, man,” he wheezes, leaning in a little so I can brush his hair behind his ear. I don’t think he notices. My dark eyes collide with his wide, gray eyes. Wiggling once more, he tries to wrap his fingers around the glittering thread. When it glues against his palm, he swears under his breath.

“I can, and I will, pretty prey.” Letting my tips tease the exposed, flushed skin of his cheek, I drag them all the way down to his lips. I’d die to feel the pillowy wet treat of his mouth, but knowing Robin, he’d probably bite my finger off. The thought brings a smile to my face and instead I let my digits linger on his chin, dipping my nails just a little into his skin.

“Wh—what are you doing?” Robin shivers, the sound making a flutter brush through the pit of my stomach.

“Getting to know you,” I hum. If it was up to me, I’d stay here, cut him out of his uniform and devour his skin centimeter by centimeter, relishing his scent and the texture of his flesh. Fuck, I’m hungry for him.

But a spider isn’t anything if not patient. So with a final brush over his warm, smooth skin, I pull my fingers back and slowly get up until I’m once more standing tall. Since his wriggling has caught him entirely into my web, Robin needs to crane his neck to glare up at me, which he does. Then slowly, he unfurls his fingers, the only part aside his face that is not captured by the thread, as if he’s trying to reach for me. His thumb and index finger end up being glued to copper silk, rendering the rest of his hand useless. His full, curvy lips quiver and his eyes blink a few times though that doesn’t diminish the way his gorgeous, wide eyes stare into the world with a weird emptiness, proof that he’s still pretty drugged up.

“I’ll see you later, papillon,” I chirp, dropping my hands by my side. I catch his desperate gaze and this time my cock jerks inside my briefs. Fuckkk... to see him this way, so lost and completely in my clutches, is the hottest thing I’ve ever seen.

Turning around, I grin when I hear him mutter swear words, no doubt pointed directly at me.

“Hey! Come back you!” He shouts, sounding exasperated, right before I’m about to hide into the bushes.

Halting, I contemplate his order for the tiniest of devilish seconds. It’s not part of the plan I wrote out for tonight, but it sounds like a fun game. But no...noooo... honour comes to those who are patient. Fuck, isn’t that partially why I love spiders so much?

“I’m stuck here,” Robin wheezes, panting. The fight must have left him, because his voice is void of the usual sharpness. It actually sounds pretty...sweet. Soft, with a touch of smoothness to it, the tone a little higher pitched than when he utters his usual, one-syllable barks. No, there’s a fragility to this side of Robin and so far, I have only caught a glimpse of how beautifully I will make him fall apart for me. Right down to every delicate crack, before I’ll put him back together, then wreck him for fucking life. Until he understands that he belongs to me.

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“Come back!” I call out once more, in vain. My voice has turned into a pathetic whisper while I watch him leave in a flutter of black and copper. And I’m still here, caught in a huge spider web. Caught in a horror movie.

My gaze flickers and I blink ferociously to keep my vision from swimming. It’s like the trees are waving at me, with big green claws. Faces are carved into their trunks. Smiling faces, sad faces, angry faces. A rough chortle explodes in my head and the web trembles under my skin and limbs. Turning my gaze, I peer up to the side. What if—

Squinting my eyes, I let out a pained whimper. My skin itches with fear, and if I try hard enough, I can just imagine a monster-sized spider crawling through its web, approaching me. I rattle my body once more, clambering my jaw shut. I won’t give anyone the pleasure of seeing me freak out here. But that spider, I can practically see it coming closer, with agile, gaunt legs and a big, black body. Pitched-black eyes and chelicerae hanging under those holes. Palps, with which they can inject venom, hold me, keeping me trapped in here.

Piégé...

“S’il te plait,” I beg. “Get me out of here.” My mind is playing tricks on me. I know that, but it doesn’t stop me from shaking from fear, unable to clear the fog from my already troubled thoughts.

Do you know what spiders do when prey gets caught into their web?

“I should never have come out tonight, should never have accepted that stupid

invitation,” I hear myself mumbling. My heart pangs at the feeling of regret.

Then why did you?

“I don’t know anymore,” I whisper. “Sometimes I ask myself why I let him enrol me in Saint-Laurent in the first place.”

“But that would be a lie.” Those words definitely don’t come from my own mind. I tilt my head back and peer out into the darkness. At the trees. There are no longer faces carved into wood. Instead, the woods look their usual endlessness. Foreign and spooky.

Not a spider, I realize, but it’s the trees’ green tentacles which are approaching me slowly, thoroughly. I cry out in panic, body convulsing against the brilliant threads. We flutter as one in the midnight air, but they don’t release me. No, I’m left to accept the invasion of green feelers, reaching for me in their search for my mind. Probing my memories.

“I don’t want to hear it,” I choke out. But my mind is playing tricks on me, making me remember.

Spiders watch their prey getting trapped, reveling in the sensation of them getting stuck. They can let them hang there for hours.

Has it been hours yet?

“Because I hate them all,” I spit out, my animosity lacking any bite. I’m floating, my body caught in the air, my thoughts spun around my consciousness.

“Who?”

“My...” My throat constricts and I choke out a dry cough, fingers curling against the web for another useless attempt to break free.

“Enzo!” An order is barked, followed by a gentle tilt of my head. Then, a cool liquid is pressed against my lips.

“Drink.”

I sputter, jerking my face trying to escape the liquid. “F—fuck off,” I choke, then grimace in pain when the bodyguard grabs me by my hair and jerks me back to the drink, this time less friendly.

“It’s just water,” he grunts into my ear. “You need to come down, Robin, and water will do the trick.”

“Va-te-faire...” I don’t manage to finish the swear words, because the next second, he angles my head all the way back and liquid is falling down in a storm of droplets that hit my nose, mouth, and ultimately, my throat. I sputter and wheeze, before my mind droops in relief. It’s water.

After a few gulps, he removes the bottle from my lips, then releases my hair, carefully not to push my nose against the thread. So far, my face is the only part that hasn’t been taken by the brilliant strands, aside from two useless fingers. As if to make a statement, the bodyguard takes out a pair of scissors and cuts the silk wire right in front of me, making sure that my face is left free.

“There.” With that word, he disappears back into the darkness. I stay like this for an undefined moment, while my thoughts swallow me up once more.

“My family,” I admit, although the question has long been absorbed. “I hate my family.”

It's actually not as hard as I thought it would be, sharing these words with someone else, provided he's still here. Even if that someone else is wearing a cloak and a mask and has me trapped into some fucked up spiderweb in the middle of the night in Monterrey Forest.

"Hmm," is all he says, voice smooth and soft. I still can't see him, although I've got the feeling that my vision is becoming a little clearer. Or perhaps that's yet another mindfuck. Regardless, it gives me more strength to share my next words.

"I was never like them. My dad, my brothers, they are...typical rich people, if that makes sense?" I wince at the judgemental choice of words. "I was more like my mom." The thought of Mom makes my words falter. When I don't speak for the next few seconds, Copper Mask asks,

"Was?"

"Yeah, she, uhm...she left me. Us. She left us. It's been a while." My voice breaks at the end, and I hate myself for it.

"I didn't know," he says. I huff out a snort.

"Yeah, well, you don't know me."

"Oh, I know much more than you think," he throws back, causing a shiver to run down my spine.

"What does that mean?" I ask.

He lets out a raspy chuckle. "You know what that means, papillon."

"Stop calling me that."

He doesn't reply for a moment, and I'm left fighting with the dark-brown silk. What the fuck did he use to make it stick like that?

"I think my patience hit its limit."

Those words, and the hungry growl that follows, are the only warning I get, before a rustle passes through the shrubs right across from me. I expect the trees to bend forward, their branches and leaves bowing right in front of me. I blink, throwing the hallucinations away.

His black cloak flutters around his shoulders as Copper Mask slowly makes his way forward, and my legs kick and thrust against the web. Not the trees, but it's him, sliding down onto his knees in an agile crouch as he lowers himself until our eyes meet.

"You like that, huh? Going down on your knees for me?" I snarl, voice thin with strain.

Copper Mask curls his lips into a slow, lazy smile that makes me feel helpless and annoyed as it brings a loathsome flutter to my stomach.

"I do," he admits. There's something about his mouth that makes it beautiful. Perhaps it's the way his lower bottom lip sticks out that tiny bit, looking wet and full and perfectly edible.

Clearing my throat, I look away. What the fuck? I have never thought of lips like that, regardless whether they belong to a man or a woman.

"Why did you leave the art academy?" He asks, head cocked to the side.

"Why do you care?" I snarl, glaring back at him. I lift my glued arms and tip my chin

up, body warming in a sudden wave of annoyance. “Why did you trap me in this fucked up spiderweb?”

“Because it’s part of the Wicked Chase,” Copper Mask shrugs. He moves up from his knees to lift his hand, skimming my skin, and I can’t help but flinch, ignoring the way he hums satisfyingly at that. His fingers are soft when they touch the delicate skin behind my ear. He moves them surprisingly slow, and that weird feeling is back in my stomach, flopping and coiling and making me feel even more defenseless. My hands reach up again, this time accompanied by my legs, but still the result is the same. Whatever glue he has used for his mindfuckery sure as hell holds me up.

“And I take my cobwebs very seriously. I love spiders.”

“You love—” I grunt in disgust. “Whatever, man.” Another flicker of confusion fills my mind and I squeeze my eyes shut, afraid of the shifting images of the forest. Afraid to catch sight of Copper Mask’s mockery. “You have me. What will you do with me?”

“You tell me,” his reply comes instantly as his splayed fingers keep on tracing slow, gentle circles on my heated skin, making my toes curl.

“Tell you what?”

“Why did you leave the art academy? Why did you come here? Or should I just believe it was destiny?”

“That’s none—”

“Shhh.” His fingers slide down to my mouth, then press into my flesh. I need to fight the sudden urge to part my lips and take them in, tasting their softness. It’s a wild thought, completely out of order, yet I can’t shake it off. It brings another flutter

racing through my veins, and to my utter bewilderment I notice that blood is heading south. Am I getting aroused by this guy?

“Don’t fight me, mon papillon. Tell me instead.” His fingers linger, and I squeeze my hands, feeling the thread carve into my skin, needing the sting to keep me from unravelling in front of him.

What the fuck did you give me? I want to ask, but I’d have to open my mouth to do so. I won’t. Won’t give in to this absolutely ridiculous impulse that’s raging inside of me.

Our eyes meet. His are dark, the perfect match to his copper mask, rich and sensual. Cruel in its intentions, just like his fingers as they slide over my lips, making my insides sputter as I keep my jaw clamped shut. He tilts his head, taking his time to roam those glorious eyes over my face where they halt on where his digits connect to my mouth, only to flick back up to meet mine.

“We share some classes together,” he confesses. The words make me flinch.

What the actual fuck? I know this guy? Then why doesn’t his voice sound familiar at all?

As if he can hear my thoughts, he smiles softly. “You are that prickly guy who always sits in the back of the room, a permanent scowl on your delectable face. So grumpy,” he drawls, then puts the tiniest bit of pressure on his fingers and lets them slip through the seam of my lips. My breath hitches when I feel them gliding inside with precise cautiousness and I can’t help but widen my eyes. I can’t believe he did that. I let out an annoyed hum which makes him smile, then clacks his tongue as he shakes his head.

“No, pretty boy, not going to happen. You’re not going to talk to me anyway, so you

might as well have your mouth occupied with something else. Now, where was I? Oh yeah, classes. As I said, our paths have crossed before. Mister Montague's class The Evolution of Financial Institutions Through Time?" Mind stuttering over his weird reference, my gaze dips and stares at his two digits before they fully disappear between my lips. The movement is making me feel really uncomfortable and a little hot. But when I flick my eyes back up, it's not Copper Mask I look at. No, I'm staring right back into the past, flipping through the past weeks and right back to Mister Montague's class.

"I always sit by the window," he says, taking in my expression with full intent. "Right in the center." He catches the moment my brain clicks. Oh, fuck. The center of class, those rows by the window... They are reserved for the elite. It still doesn't tell me exactly who he is, but I've got a creepy, sneaky suspicion. What did that guy B say?

Sputtering my thoughts against his digits, I grunt when he lets out an appreciative hum. "My fingers could live inside this warm, wet heat of your mouth, butterfly." Still he slowly pulls them free, using the tips to crawl over my face like those damned spiders he apparently loves so much. They creep over the corner of my lips, past my chin, over the racing pulse in my neck, to the dip where my collarbone joints. I shiver, then startle when I feel my cock harden further inside my pants.

"You're friends with Arthur Deveraux," I clip, wiggling once more on the web. It sounds like an accusation, and a funny one, judging by the way Copper Mask smiles.

"I am. Who else?" The twins and their cousin are not in our year, but I always see them in the canteen. I sometimes catch myself staring, wondering what it would be like to be part of the elite of the elite, then look away real quick, shutting them and my thoughts off.

Zooming back into Mister Montague's class, I try to remember the faces of the elite.

“There’s Paul,” I slowly begin. The guy’s as obnoxious as he’s rich, and a real bully. Copper Mask doesn’t flinch at the name. Not Paul. “Jean-François,” I continue, remembering the blond with the annoyingly high-pitched voice. Copper Mask doesn’t react to the name, so he’s not Jean-François. There are another three or four guys whose names I don’t know, but who definitely don’t sound like this guy, and a group of goons. Kids who will do anything just to stay in their good graces. The thought makes me grimace, the frown freezing on my face when I remember the final guy. Quiet, like me. Always surrounded by a bodyguard, who—

“Putain de merde.” I try to turn over my shoulder, but can’t lean in far enough to catch a glimpse of the bodyguard named Enzo. Now I know why his face seemed familiar. He always hangs around in the back of the classroom.

I can only stare at his face. Behind the fine embroidery, he has the perfect cheekbone structure. A sharp nose, wide, dark eyes. Thick eyelashes and a bushy, dark set of eyebrows that match the colour of his eyes and hair. Copper.

“Arsène?” I squeak.

When his lips tick up, my hands start trembling. I suck in a breath. Arsène de Noailles is one of those enigmas we have in college. He’s from a very rich family, part of the elite, keeps to himself, and is practically always shielded by his bodyguard. He’s right. We share a few classes together, although we have never exchanged words. The few times we have study projects, I work with a few geeks, and the elite work amongst themselves.

Arsène is very handsome. Even I, someone who isn’t into guys, can appreciate his dark and mysterious demeanour.

His fingers touch my collar and open the first two buttons of my college uniform. The touch is so soft, so cautious, so unlike the way he’s got me hanging here. My body

shivers, cock trembling beneath my clothes. Leaning in, Arsène is careful enough to stay clear of his own sticky threads as he lowers his head and lets his mouth brush past my ear. “Enchanté,” he muses, making the hair on the back of my neck stand up. “At last we get to properly meet. I hope you’ve been enjoying your candy treats?”

The chocolate boxes.

“W-were you...” I stammer, unable to find my words. He pulls back to his full height, facing me once more. My gaze roams around as I try to follow his movements, even when he rounds the web where it’s tied to a tree and comes my way, from behind. “You left me gifts?”

“I did.” He sounds proud as he leans in, ghosting right above me, his puffy air warm as it nearly touches my hair. Then his lips descend, and he brushes his mouth all over the top of my head, mouthing my light strands. My breathing speeds up and my nails dig into the skin of my palms as I shudder and try to control myself at the same time. I have never reacted to a single person’s closeness, boy or girl, this intensely. “You have no idea how sexy you are,” he grumbles. Those words, its vibration, it goes straight to my cock and I can’t help the ragged moan that escapes my mouth. What the hell’s going on with me?

“So snarky, so bitchy, so angry.” His mouth has reached down to my nape, where it has found some exposed skin. He gives me a raspy chuckle and I shiver. “Why are you so angry, papillon?” His teeth dig into my flesh and my knees buckle on instinct, probably in an attempt to get away from him, although the result is quite the opposite. The web makes me bounce forward, then rocking back, right against his body. Biting my lip, I let out a strained mewl. His chest feels firm, despite the cloak he’s wearing, and his...is he as excited for me as I am for him?

I panic when I feel his hands on my waist, guiding me back and forth. “What the fuck are you doing? That’s none—”

He grabs my ass cheeks tight and squeezes. “If you say that again, I’m going to strip you out of these clothes and leave you naked in the woods,” he hisses.

“You’re such an asshole,” I grit out, wiggling to free myself from his hold. It’s useless, and he knows it, which is why his snicker makes me fucking furious. My hard dick makes me fucking furious.

“You’ll soon find out how much you love me being an asshole, pretty boy,” he hums, then lands another kiss in my nape. “Alors, dis-moi.”

I sigh heavily. No one’s ever asked me to speak up my mind, and now that I’m about to, I’m feeling exposed and a little ridiculous. What if he thinks I’m overreacting?

“Come on. Let me inside your head. Why are you so angry?” He lands another nip on my ear that makes my toes curl in the air.

“Okay.” I take in a deep breath. “I mean, I don’t know why—I guess I’m just not the nicest of people,” I start. I expect him to chuckle, but he’s silent, apart from his mouth, that’s still circling and heating the skin in my nape, and the hand that has snaked around my waist and makes a rustling sound as it busies itself with my belt, somehow deftly avoiding the threads. “I guess I was alright when I was at the academy, because it was my own choice. But then I got into fights and my dad decided to take me out and bring me here. By then, both my brothers had both graduated, thank fuck. We never got along. It has always been the three of them, my dad included, and then there was me. The youngest one, the different one. I never wanted to come here. I don’t care much for studying.” I let out a sarcastic chuckle. “And I don’t even know why I’m telling you all this. You really fucked up my mind.”

But it feels really good to talk to him.

Arsène turns his face and barks, “Enzo!” Then his mouth is back at my ear and I let

out a shuddering breath at his proximity. “Continue, mon papillon,” he murmurs into my ear.

My mind pulses with thoughts, despite its improving state. “I always wanted to follow in the footsteps of my mother, who was an artist. She left us about ten years ago, and though I haven’t seen her since, I have been following her path. I guess that’s all there really is. I can’t follow her footsteps now, because I’m stuck here.” I grimace at my choice of words. Quite literally, I guess.

There’s a dull thud when the belt hits the forest ground, and then Arsène pops the buttons of my pants. Shock, followed rapidly by shame when he finds out that I’m hard for him, makes me buck my hips, trying to shake him off.

“That’s it,” he hisses, catching my rolling hips with his hand on my stomach, pulling me flush against him. “Show me your delicious, useless anger.”

My hands tremble against the thread, and I moan when my ass connects to his erection. We’re both still clothed, despite my opened pants, but fuck...why is this so hot? I try to think of anything to distract my thoughts, but desire floods my brains, fusing dangerously with the remaining drugs, turning me into a willing captive.

Papillon. Prey.

Soon now, mon papillon.

“Money has always been a nuisance to me,” I choke out, desperately trying to focus. “It has always made people dislike me and exclude me from their groups. Even here, in a college for the rich, I am left out. They don’t fucking want me.” Hearing my own voice, heavy with accusation and disapproval, makes my rage sizzle even hotter.

“Yesss,” Arsène purrs into my ear, encouraging me while his fingers dip lower,

teasing the waistband of my underwear. My pants were glued to that web before, and I don't want to know what the strong bodyguard has done to free me out of my clothes during my outburst, but here we are. Right now, I don't care. Because I'm not finished. "Come on, sweet butterfly. Try to raise your wings. Give me your all." His digits crawl under the the material of my briefs and he croons a, "Fuck, yeah," at the same time I let out a choked moan. It heats my insides and clears my mind. It's like I'm in a trance, and no one apart from Arsène's breath, voice and body can get to me. And my own fury, fierce and flickering, ready to erupt.

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Fucking delicious, is what he is. Perfectly placed, trapped in my web, my hand almost on his exposed cock, his delectable indignation raging over us like I wanted it to. I can't wait to put my cock inside his tight ass and thrust and stroke us both to paradise.

Patience.

“They never wanted me in their little club,” Robin sneers, and I smile against his ear while I let my hand dip under the waistband of his briefs. It's warm here, and hard. So fucking hard. And so easy to rile him up. “They never wanted me with them. And perhaps they were right, perhaps I am a little shit. Perhaps I am—” He chokes on the words when my digits curl around his shaft. A filthy moan passes his lips. I weigh it inside my palm, then reply with an equally primal grunt of approval. He has a nice, solid girth, his skin velvety and scorching hot. He feels good in my hand, like he was made for my fist.

“Fuck them all,” Robin lets out, once more back in his rage. “Does that answer your question?” He tries to turn over his shoulder, but with my weight pressed against his back, and the dangerous web glued against his front, there isn't much space. My hand glides up to the tip of his dick, and when I find it eager and wet, I use my thumb to brush pre-cum from his crown and smear it onto the rest of his cock, using it as lubrication.

“So soft,” I purr. “So soft and hard at the same time. Have you ever been touched by a guy before, papillon?”

He gasps when I give him a little squeeze, rage leaving his body at once. “You need to stop it now. I can't...I'm not...”

“I take that as a no.” The words have my own cock throb in my underwear. The thought that he is unspoiled and mine to claim, leaves my head spinning with desire. Fuck, such a devilishly delicious thought. Under me, Robin moans again, though this time I wonder if he realizes.

When he suddenly freezes, I find myself curious what is going through his mind this time. I think that once more, he will keep those thoughts to himself unless forced to spill the fucking beans. He doesn’t, not this time. “Does this mean that I’m eliminated?” He blurts out. “B said... fuck! I would have loved to see the surprised look on my old man’s face when I could tell him that I got accepted.”

Nuzzling the back of his head with my mouth, wishing we could remove our masks already and really get to see each other, I simply smile.

Patience.

“What does that mean, papillon? You want to join our brotherhood?” My hand’s now shaped into a fist I use to glide over Robin’s cock. He stutters and wriggles, annoyed and aroused, fighting and surrendering at the same time. But his wings are still glued to the web, his mind not set free yet.

“Why does that feel like a trick question?” He grunts, sounding both intoxicated and aroused. My favorite combination.

“Ah, because maybe it is?” I mouth some more kisses onto his clothed shoulder, revelling in the sweet sounds he’s making under me. “Nah, just kidding. But you do realize that I chose you, right?” Trailing my other hand up under his jacket, only to reach for his back dimples and slip my fingers under the waistband in search for more bare, warm skin.

Robin bucks when I find what I’m looking for, tightening the glue of the thread onto

his body even more, despite his writhing.

“Hmm, you feel good under my touch,” I croon. “Have you ever played with your ass before?”

“No—what are you—” Once more, he tries to turn and glare over his shoulder, but my mouth is waiting, pressing my lips against his while my fist keeps on stroking. Robin bucks and fights, and I swallow his moans in the sea of heat that floods through my stomach. I’ve never wanted anyone as much as I want him. Pulling back, our lips remain close as we pant harshly, our breaths intermingling.

“Fucking love it when you wriggle like this, pretty boy,” I murmur. “Now, come, fight me some more. Gets me all hard.”

“No,” he chokes, but when my hand reaches out to cup one of his ass cheeks, I am pleased to find his cock pulse in my palm. Grabbing the bottle of lube from my pocket, I keep my head against his nape, teeth scraping his tender skin.

“You know what I think, papillon? I think this is why you’re so angry. Because of this desire.”

“What are you talking about?” He snarls, but I don’t miss the way his delicate skin blushes.

“Is it because you feel attracted to boys? Or are you secretly shy with everyone?”

The heat on Robin’s flesh intensifies, and he goes back to writhing, pushing and pulling. Only this time I can feel the desperation, the prickliness that is built around his delicate aura like some wall of thorns.

“Don’t worry, my beautiful butterfly. I will let you fly. Your brothers will set you

free.” With a solid pull, his pants and underwear roll easily down onto his knees, and Robin lets out a surprised snarl.

“What the hell are you doing?”

I ignore him. After giving his dick a final, thorough, long stroke with my fist, I return my hand to his ass. His beautiful, round, juicy ass. “Fuck me, gorgeous, how come you’ve been hiding this from everybody? You are absolutely perfect.” Not wasting a precious second, I slide down onto my knees, ready to worship that beautiful ass with my hands and mouth.

“My brothers are going to be so fucking jealous when they see my chosen one, papillon,” I mumble, spreading his cheeks apart until his tiny hole winks at me. It’s too dark to cherish the full intensity of the soft pink spot, but there will be plenty of time for that later tonight. “Their hands will itch and their mouths will water.” As if to make a point, I collect some of my saliva, then leave a perfect, thick drop of spit on his crease, before rubbing it into his skin with my index finger and thumb.

Robin lets out an unhinged shudder and stops his push and pull against the web. “Did you just... did you just spit on me?” He sounds undignified.

“Hmm, I did.” My trapped butterfly really has no experience with this. By the time we’re finished tonight, he’ll be wrecked for the rest of his life. By me. I’ll make fucking sure of that. “I am going to make you feel good, don’t worry. Just relax for me, and listen carefully while I tell you all about your new future.” I take my time rubbing the delicate seam between his ass cheeks, skin now wet with spit. He’s shivering and mumbling a string of unintelligible words that end with a strangled cry when I dip my first finger experimentally inside. Boy, he’s tight as a vise, though that shouldn’t surprise me.

“Wh—wh—” He stutters, and with that another layer of his guards peeled off. It’s

fucking exhilarating. His mind is clearly still playing tricks on him, because he falls back into his incomprehensible mutters. Yeah, the drug I gave him got him good. Well, he'd better get used to it. The way his shoulders slump and his beautiful, light eyes stare into oblivion with his brain hallucinating like that? It's fucking glorious.

Spurting some of the lubricant onto two digits, I rub them together, making sure the gel gets warmed up a little before I join my first finger with the second. Robin tenses, his words rushing out of his mouth, high and urgent, though they still don't make any sense. His hips rock back onto my hand. His body knows what his mind has trouble processing. It's fucking perfection.

"Our brotherhood is called the Alpha Fraternarii, and we rule this country," I tell him, while probing with my fingers inside his ass in search of his special bundle of nerves. "Our ancestors found the fraternity during the French Revolution, when a number of elite families fled Paris and were given shelter by the monks who lived here, in Monterrey Castle."

Robin cries out the next second, and his hips stutter as he pants before they grind back in search for more friction.

"That feels good?" I whisper.

He turns back over his shoulder, eyes glazed and his lips parted, without a doubt to snarl a reply. Instead he lets out a moan when I hit his spot again. I smirk inwardly at his reaction. So fucking responsive.

"These families promised one another that they'd never be thrown off their proverbial thrones again," I continue, slowly sliding my fingers through his narrow, tight tunnel. Fuck, he's so hot, and so narrow. He feels amazing, and knowing that my fingers are the very first to touch him, makes my own dick throb impatiently. "So they created a brotherhood, based on their mutual values. On our mutual values."

“And...what are those?” Robin moans, sounding out of breath. I lean in and place kisses on his clothed back, revelling in the way his ass moves in line with my scissoring digits. Slow, thorough strokes that each hit his prostate exquisitely.

“Traditions,” I whisper against his nape, then flick out my tongue for a little taste of his bare skin. There’s the hint of saltiness from his sweat, mixed with something sweeter, like green melon, though it’s faint. Perhaps his cologne.

“Loyalty.” My teeth come out to play, nipping at his flesh, while Robin bucks and mewls. Snaking my free hand out in front of his waist, I grab hold once more of his naked, throbbing cock. The tip is wet at once, and I swipe my thumb around it, then reach up and hold it out in front of his mouth.

“N—no, you crazy fucker—” He protests in an attempt to put his usual snappiness back in place, but the armour is crumbling. And with his body trapped in my web and two digits buried in his ass, he doesn’t really have much to say.

“Suck it clean, papillon. Taste yourself.”

He lets out a coarse huff that makes me smile against his warm skin. Gotcha, pretty boy. It takes only a few more seconds for my thumb to be met with his warm, curling tongue.

Fuckkk...

“And,” I ask, rubbing my head over the delicate dips of his neck until I reach for the corner of his lips. “Do you think it tastes good?” The lower part of his face, and the only part visible, is flushed and he shivers when my lips connect to that sensitive arch of his mouth. Not waiting for his answer, I skim my tongue against his mouth and lick over his seam. Robin turns to meet me, and I dive in, desperate for our very first kiss. With one hand slowly working his cock and the other one stretching and playing

his ass, his movements are uncontrolled. He moans and writhes, protests and whines for more. He's my fucking drug, ferocious and passionate.

A rough diamond.

"Fuck. I'm, I'm gonna—" He chokes.

I smile, halting my movement, while pulling him impossibly close to my chest. "You, what?"

"I—no—" My fingers pick up their rhythm once more, in a mutual chase with his own body for release. Robin bucks against my chest, panting and wheezing. Swearing and protesting. Then, "Please—please—"

"Fuck, you begging for me sounds so sweet." I lick at his neck once more, a long taste that makes him hum and purr. "You want to come? Viens alors, mon papillon."

Come for me, my butterfly.

Robin can't hold off a second longer, his climax bursting free on a ragged cry that echoes in our mouths, before I swallow it in its full delight. His cock pulses and releases, filling my hand. And his ass clenches, devouring my fingers as he shudders, before finally, ever so slowly, deflating and unclenching. I carefully remove my fingers, give his firm, delectable backside one longing look, then take out the buttplug I brought for the occasion.

"Now that you've had a little taste, I'm going to keep your ass prepared for me." I say, then show him the plug, chuckling when he flinches at the sight of the huge ghost spider that's kept under a glass with a copper brooch that's tied to the actual plug. As expected, Robin's hackles skyrise immediately.

“That’s disgusting! No, no.” He shakes his head. “You can’t possibly put this on me.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t put it on you.” I smack a kiss on the corner of his mouth, then add some lube to the plug. His hole is still wet and open from my fingerfucking, and the plug slides in slowly, until all I see is my beautiful copper-coloured, eight-legged beauty snugly pressed between those perfect, perky globes of his. “Fuck, your ass accommodates the plug so well,” I praise. Caressing Robin’s ass cheeks, I take out my own cock, hard and leaking, the crown flush and purple. I need release. A quick and filthy one.

With one last, longing ogle, I walk around my web to face my lover. He looks properly wrecked, his arms and legs hanging loosely in the web for the first time since he got trapped. But his eyes... surrounded by silk, they look larger, more fragile, like he lost the battle. Flitting his gaze back to mine, he simply watches me as I widen my stance and start stroking my cock right across the web. I’m so close I can feel his puffy breath on my rigid cock. It’s on the same height with the way he’s slumped forward by his drugged state of mind and the featherlight touch of the web, the sight mouthwatering.

“I love your silk mask,” I mumble, my own, filthy thoughts spurring on my working hand. “But I’m afraid I’ll have to remove it for what I’m about to do.”

His fingers move as if to object, but his palms are still glued to the web. “We’re not allowed to take off our masks,” he protests, albeit weakly.

“True, it’s part of the rules of the games. But I think that we’ve passed that phase, don’t you? I mean, you know who I am.” I give him a toothy grin to which he grimaces, before he looks away, searching our surroundings.

“There’s no one here,” I supply. By now, my brothers must be making their way to the dungeons, awaiting the official initiations. But I don’t tell him that. Not yet.

“It’s just you and me, pretty boy,” I say instead.

“Uhm—” He looks away once more. “Will you remove yours too?” The question comes out in an uncomfortable whisper, one that makes my stomach flutter. Fuck, a prickly Robin is one thing, but a frail, defenseless Robin is quite something else. It’s divine. So sweet, I muse, and without thinking, I tear off his mask, feeling triumph. I was fucking right, I knew it. He’s grumpy because he’s fucking shy. Fucking, fucking love it. Pulling back my own mask as well, I slide it back and between my thick strands, eyes on my pretty boy, while I furiously work my dick. I’m already so close.

The way Robin peers up at me...it makes me feel fucking invincible. That’s how it must feel when a spider finds its prey in its web.

Papillon, I got you exactly where I want you.

“You look so good when you’re caught in my web,” I pant. My other hand reaches for my heavy balls and I grope them in my palm, massaging them while I pull and tear on my cock. My orgasm is approaching now, I can feel it in my curling toes, in my clenching stomach. And then it hits me like a freight train, making me buck and groan as I empty myself on Robin’s unmasked forehead and cheeks, on his lips and chin. My release, thick and dripping over his handsome face while he hangs there, helpless, is an image I will carry with me forever.

It’s a perfect fucking picture.

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Arsène is one of those casually sensual guys. You know, the type who can walk into a classroom wearing a pair of sweatpants and an old shirt, and still look like he is about to hit the town. Not that that kind of garment is allowed in class at Saint-Laurent.

But still. He's one of those classical, handsome guys with dark brown hair, carelessly slicked back, revealing a proud, sculpted face. His forehead is prominent, adorned by curvy, thick eyebrows that match his equally dark eyes. Long lashes flutter as he peers at me from up close, from right across the glittering thread where I'm still hanging. With my face dripping with his spunk.

"Fuckkkk, Robin," he murmurs, then carefully reaches out and touches my face with his fingertips. He rubs his release into my skin, watching intently as he does so. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to do this."

"What? Come on my fucking face? Release me at once," I snarl, discomfort boiling up to the surface. Suddenly this entire evening, the drugs and hallucinations, the chase, followed by this sexual pent-up, has me feeling on edge. "I said release me," I repeat, but Arsène just watches me, his fingers still playing with his cum on my skin.

Ignoring my shaky sneer.

Steps behind me make me even more jumpy, but I have got nowhere to go as I'm still trapped in this fucking nightmare.

I want to go home.

Do you?

The desire hits so sudden that it catches me off guard. Not home home, not to my dad, nor my brothers. But somewhere else, somewhere where I can feel at home at last. Somewhere where I can paint, can get lost in my own world and feel safe.

“I can see it in your eyes,” Arsène mumbles, carefully observing me. His thumb brushes my cheek and chin. “Your anxiety. Don’t be afraid, papillon, I’m going to let you fly.”

The sharp smell of acetone hits my nostrils, and I jerk away as far as I can, fear rattling through my nerves. My hands resume their pulling, a desperate search to break free from copper thread, when a sudden touch on my shoulder makes me cry out. I look at Arsène, whose face I can now admire in its full glory. A few of his dark strands are stuck to his forehead, curling up at the edges. He watches me with a smile, then flicks his tongue over his plush, full bottom lip, and I know.

He likes my fear.

“Relax,” he purrs. “It’s only Enzo. We’re going to let you out now, and then he’s going to escort us back to Monterrey castle.”

“Back to...” Something slithers through my spine. Dread? Or perhaps it’s a relief to know that this is nearly over? “Am I eliminated?”

What will school be like after tonight? Will Arsène go back to ignoring me after he’s had his fingers in me? His cum on my face?

“I’m going to unglue you from the web now, sir,” Enzo says from behind me, as if it’s the most common thing in the world. “This might sting a bit, but it doesn’t hurt. The super glue, or Thor as we call it, mixed with thread is highly efficient.”

“No shit,” I growl, grimacing as I watch him work efficiently with cotton and

acetone. He wasn't kidding, that shit stinks. He brushes over the bare skin of my fingers and wrists, while keeping a firm grip on my neck to prevent me from falling like I'm some wounded puppy. A wounded, naked puppy, I realize with flushing cheeks. Who's wearing a butt plug with a dead spider on it. A huge, dead spider.

I shudder.

,“Look at his ass and you're fired.” Arsène barks from the other side, and I don't need to look at him to feel his prying gaze on me. “Twenty years of service or not.” Enzo gives him a careful, “Yes, sir,” while he gingerly works my palms, pulling me back a little while he works my knees to prevent me from falling back into the trap.

“Your boy is a little shaken up,” he remarks sheepishly.

Really? I inwardly sneer. My mind is unsteady, with thoughts whipping by and a variety of sounds invading my brain. But a part of me is sobering up even further, realizing that this is part of the drug and its hallucinations. It's not real.

Not real.

My own hands are real though, as they fly down with a newfound urgency. While Enzo and Arsène are still talking about god knows what, I make quick work of getting my pants back on. And I've already taken at least ten steps before I hear footsteps behind me, hunting me once more.

“No!” I snarl accusingly toward the forest. Where are those green tentacles when you fucking need them?

Not real.

The grip on my shoulders is though. It's hard, thwarting me from escaping any

further as I once more crash toward the forest ground. I wince, and the voices in my head swell in volume, before they disappear altogether.

Enzo grabs me back up and simultaneously puts the bottle of water at my lips, and I don't want to drink, but I'm so fucking thirsty, that that's exactly what I do. Desperate gulps that reinforce my ownership back over my unsettled mind.

"It's nearly time to fly," Arsène muses from where he's crouched down beside me. He's already so close, and this frantic attempt to escape has drained the little energy that was left inside of me. I surrender.

The next second, he's all over me, as if he can feel the shift inside of me. Arsène's arms around my shoulders. His chest pressed against mine as he puts us both up and back onto our feet. Despite the white school shirt and his black cloak, I can feel his muscles flex when he presses me closer, inviting my chin and face into the crook of his neck. He's a little taller than I am, and we dip and curve perfectly in one, smooth bow of lines.

Those thoughts are a slap to my face, and I shove them aside, shove him aside as well. At least, I try to, the gesture making him look down with a frown before he pulls me effortlessly back in his strong hold.

"Don't run away from me anymore, papillon," he hums inside my ear, and I shiver. "You should be celebrating, you won the Wicked Chase. We will be celebrating. Soon now. Isn't that what you wanted? Why you came out here tonight?" Painting a wet circle with his tongue on my neck, he hums, "To piss off your daddy and your brothers." Suddenly, he spins me around, catching me off guard, and presses our lips together. "You've done so well, papillon, but next time you run away from me, I'll keep you like a wrapped up larva for my little friends to play with."

"Next time I run away from you?" I echo when he pulls back. Fuck, it's like my mind

is playing tricks on me once more. “You drugged me, chased me down into these woods, only for me to get trapped into some giant spider web...” I halt, panting. I am still standing there, in his arms, feeling my defenses crumble. “Y—you kissed me, put y—your fingers in my ass, and, and...”

“Made you come?” Arsène lands a solid slap on my ass cheek, making me jolt in surprise. “Left a plug in your ass?” He gives me another whack. It stings, despite the thin layer of clothing. Fuck, it really stings. He keeps his hand on my ass while his mouth finds the back of my neck, and he gives my earshell a lazy lick when he muses, “Came all over your face? Yeah, we both won the Wicked Games, my little butterfly.”

“I’m not little,” I huff, clenching my jaws, though that’s barely the point and we both know it.

His hand brushes over the small of my back, keeping me close. Tight. “But you are young. You’re just starting out on your journey. You’ve always been trapped. Was it tough to live a life perpetually comparing yourself to your big brothers? They have their own business now in some city up north, if my intel was right?”

“Lille, yeah.” I sigh. His comment bites, making my thoughts spiral inwards once more as I skim my heart on how the true implication of his words make me feel. He’s right. I’ve always compared myself to my older brothers, was always the third wheel. That wasn’t just my feeling...it was true. I wasn’t like Dad, I was like her. Like Mom. The source of our broken family.

Arsène leads me by his hand through the forest, and I find myself letting him. Perhaps I am more like a wounded pup than I thought. I sure feel exhausted, and that plug isn’t helping. My ass feels weird, causing friction with each step I take, keeping me on edge. Or perhaps it’s simply the thought of that dead spider decorating the insides of that glass end of the plug. Ugh.

The forest is quiet aside from the gentle breeze and the sounds of the woods. An owl hoots, and our feet occasionally crunch over small branches as we slowly make our way back to the castle. The air soothes my mind though, and I'm definitely sobering up, despite still feeling a little absent. Arsène's thumb brushes the back of my hand, causing a pleasant buzz in my core.

"I paid for tonight to be my victory," he confesses when we nearly reach the football fields that form the gate toward the meticulously maintained inner court of Saint-Laurent.

"Wait...what, what does that mean?" I ask, frowning.

Arsène brushes a wild branch aside and leads me onto the garden path. "That means that my family is a prominent member of the Alpha Fraternarii." He flashes me a wicked smile, shrugs as if to apologize for what he just confessed, then presses his hand into the small of my back, pushing me forward. "I wanted to win. Because I wanted to have you."

"But you don't..." I clear my throat, my eyes straight ahead and onto the slowly revealing contours of the castle. "You don't know me."

Behind me, Arsène chuckles. His hand is still on my back, still urging me to keep on moving. "You keep on saying that, but what's there to know? You are prickly and reserved. You are creative, intelligent and interested in plenty of subjects, but when someone gives you a compliment, you become snappy and distant. You fascinate me."

Snaking that same hand around my waist, he stops us, spins me around before taking my chin between his fingers, forcing me to turn and look at him. His eyes glitter with mischief. "Always hiding behind that gorgeous, light copper hair. I wanted to see what was underneath it. Your pretty eyes—" His fingers skid up, leaving burning

traces in their wake as he reaches for my eyelids that flutter under his soft touch. “Your nose.” Fingertips tease the tip of my nose, and I must have closed my eyes, because when his lips ghost over my own, goosebumps scatter freely in surprise. “Your mouth,” he murmurs, then drops his mouth onto my own. I shiver and let him press his wet, full lips onto my own. He moulds our flesh together, teasing and brushing, before he mutters against my mouth, “I want you, and in my world, that’s enough reason to go out there and claim you.”

The words make me pull back, unsure whether I should be appalled or flattered. “So what, you just take what you want?”

Arsène lets out a dramatic sigh. “Why do I feel like we’re going in circles here?” Grabbing the mask from my hand, he gestures to me to turn around so he can tie the knot in my nape, making the lace cover my upper face once more.

“Maybe because we are?” I grit out. “You can’t just barge into my life and choose me.” Turning around, I catch him sliding down his own copper mask.

“Why not?” He seems genuinely surprised. Pulling my strands tight in my hand, I let out a frustrated huff.

“Because you just can’t. Not even you, rich and all.”

“Because I don’t know you?”

“Yeah, for starters. And because...” Crossing my hands in front of my chest, I tilt my chin and give him a glare. “You haven’t even asked me what I want.”

“What you want?” He huffs out a laugh. An annoying, smug as fuck laugh. He takes a step toward me, and before I understand where this is going, he has already wrapped both arms around my waist and pulls me in, snug to his warm, black cloak.

“I know you want this,” he purrs, pressing our foreheads together. Our lips are close, his breath warm, his hips glued against mine, steadied by his firm grip. “I know you want someone to take control. To own you.”

My swallow is thick, but bile remains. I feel a little lightheaded, but this time it has nothing to do with the drugs. I don’t think so at least.

It’s his words.

“You’re right,” he continues. “I don’t know you well. But tell me something, papillon, how well do you need to know a person to know they feel like they might be right for you?” He drops a peck onto my lips, then, while I’m still forming a stuttering retort, takes my hand and pushes me forward, nearly making me trip over my own damn feet. “Come on now, you don’t want to be late for your own party.” He chortles out loud, slings an arm around me and pushes me close to his side, then drops his head shortly onto my head as if we’re suddenly best friends. “The very first time I saw you was in the library.”

Sudden discomfort boils over, making my hackles rise. “I don’t care where you met me,” I snarl. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to snap like that.” I inhale, then let out a shuddery exhale. Fuck me, he is right. I can’t seem to communicate like a normal person. Squeezing his hand, I mumble an apology.

He squeezes back. “You looked so handsome. I needed to have you. And this was the best way.”

“What is the best way? Make me your prey, drug me and then claim me?”

He seems to like my assessment. “Exactly.”

We walk through the door held open by Enzo, who doesn’t seem taken aback in the

slightest by this cruel admission. Me, on the other hand, I'm flabbergasted. "That's not very romantic, is it?"

Arsène lets out an amused snort. "Oh, I can be very romantic. Haven't had any complaints so far. I just like to hunt. And you have been on my mind ever since I saw you."

"We're second year students," I let out.

"Not a problem. I have a spacious dorm for the two of us."

"That's not what I meant." But my heart hammers treacherously at those blunt words. "When did you see me that first time?"

"On November second last year." Rather than taking me to the impressive double-case spiral stairs, he guides me through the narrow corridor of the castle, with its heavily adorned framed photos. Hundreds of students from various years, some even over one hundred years old, stare vacantly back at us.

My eyes widen at his confession. "That's practically eighteen months ago!"

"Hmm," he hums.

Enzo leads us to the South Wing, but we barely enter the hall when he surprises me by moving a large, metal knight aside, revealing a door. It carries the same ochre-coloured wall paint as the rest of the wall, but under the bodyguard's hand, the nob cracks and the door opens with a tired, screeching sound.

"I'm a patient man, mon papillon. Come now, and come home."

"What do you mean? I don't—stop. Stop. Please." Grabbing him by his wrist, I look

down at the dark stairs. I'm afraid, the feeling so foreign, so unwanted, that sweat breaks out on my skin.

I dealt with fear a long time ago, and it's not welcome right now. Yet here it is. And now that I have acknowledged it, it won't go anywhere. Deep and heavy, it sits in my gut. "This is going too fast. I don't understand." My hands tremble, and Arsène must notice, because he grabs hold of my shoulders and pulls me flush against him.

"Dis-moi tout."

The simplicity of his words make me nearly snort. Nearly. Because there's nothing simple about this. "How can you just say the things you say?" Pulling back to look at him, I feel strength from my own words. "How can you do what you do? Spiders, and webs, and drugs, and chases." Inhaling deeply on a shudder, I need to collect my thoughts before I can share them with him. Ironically, he waits patiently. "You had me trapped in a web for fuck's sake, the entire night! You crawled after me, you t—touched me..."

"And you liked it?" His voice is light as a feather, his fingertips on my swollen crotch barely registering. I jerk away, glaring down, embarrassment crawling through the pit of my stomach, making my cheeks heat. I just came, how is it possible that I'm hard again?

"I—no. I don't, this is not me." He meets my scowl with the slightest of smirks on his lips. On those sensual, delicious lips. "You did this," I snap, "You did this to me." Touching my forehead with a brush of my fingers, a fresh surge of panic rushes through my body, only to go numb once it hits my mind. That fucking drug still rules my brain, albeit with ups and downs. I yank my free hand out of his, scowling, and seriously considering bolting away once more. "You gave me something, I can't—I don't..."

I wouldn't get far.

"I did, butterfly, and you look so fucking sexy like this. Confused and trapped, nervous and aroused. You look like you're all mine."

His words make my stomach flutter.

I won tonight's Wicked Chase.

What will I tell my dad? My brothers?

"That look," Arsène muses, nudging my fingers away by placing his own hand against my forehead, rubbing it gently with his palm. "What is it that really scares you? Hmm?" His lips brush my ear. He has pulled me sideways against his front, leaving my eyes to scan the corridor. Perhaps keeping up the illusion that I can get away. When I don't answer, he moves his hand back onto my crotch, bringing a jolt of desire through me. I hiss at the touch, then tighten my jaw. His lips caress my lobe, then I feel them suckling it on a hum. Oh, fuck... I fist my hand, my eyes glued to the wall. "That I'm a guy? Is that what scares you?"

I give him a forced shake of my head. My tongue feels like it has dried up inside my mouth, caused by the same heat that's now licking through my insides.

"Then tell me what it is, papillon." He gives Enzo a slight tilt of his chin, then cups my stiff cock through my pants. I let out a moan, unable to keep it down. My eyes must have slid closed, but they snap open when his strong hands grab my arms and pull them behind my shoulders, tight and nearly painful in their severe hold.

"This!" I shout, wriggling and sputtering as I am once more held captive. "Get your hands off of me!"

A rough laugh in reply.

“You trapped me,” I finally manage, the words sounding thick and croaky.

“Hmm, I did,” Arsène rasps. “And you liked it, didn’t you?” He moves us a little further, then turns me around, my back hitting the wall.

“No, I—” My eyes quiver as the truth hits hard. I did. Yes, I’d been terrified before. But looking back, the suspenseful invitation, the NDA I had to sign in order to partake, the promise that I’d been chosen by someone, it had started something foreign inside of me. Then tonight, the masks, the hallucinations, the chase, that web. Arsène’s touch. Something close to desire.

“You remember,” he purrs, and when I open my eyes I flinch when I see that he’s sunken down to his knees. “I see how your cock flexes beneath your clothes. Do you remember how much you wanted it? Don’t be ashamed, my sweet butterfly. My tragic artist. I’ll give you everything you need.” And while I’m still sputtering, he’s already moved on to unbuttoning my pants, leaving me staring down as the remainder of my garment falls onto the floor in a puddle, leaving me naked from below the waist. “Now, why don’t you put your cock in my mouth, Robin? And I’ll suck it real nice for you.” He looks up from beneath his lashes, making my movements stutter. One of my hands lands on his dark, slick hair. The strands feel even softer than I could imagine, and I inhale greedily, enjoying the texture on my fingers, the picture of Arsène sitting there, his mouth in front of my hard, throbbing cock, as he waits for me, a glorious combination of copper threads and embroideries and full, wet lips.

“Is it that easy, huh?” I ask.

His mouth slowly curls into a wicked smile. “Sometimes it is, mon papillon. Sometimes you know in a fraction of a second.”

“But what about the rest? What about all the other things we don’t know yet?”

Arsène moves up his mask a tiny bit to give himself more space to manoeuvre, then sticks out his tongue and licks at my crown, lapping up pre-cum with hooded eyes and a husky moan. Desire sizzles inside my body, thick and heavy. “We’ll learn as we go. Don’t we always? By becoming a brother in our brotherhood, you have the world at your feet. Want to become an artist? You can, because you’ll always have more than enough clients. By becoming mine, you’ll get whatever your heart desires. Want me to crawl after you, sedate you, then fuck you?” He flicks once more at my slit and I let out an uncontrolled groan that makes him smirk. “At your service,” he whispers. Then he places his entire mouth on my tip and suckles lightly, making my eyes roll back and my toes curl with pleasure.

“Oh, fuck,” I gasp, searching for leverage with my hand. I find a pillar close enough and hold on for dear life as Arsène licks the underside of my cock, sliding his mouth all the way down. He captures one of my balls and suckles on it lightly while his other hand fondles the other one, making them heavy as arousal sizzles through the pit of my stomach. Then he pulls back, licking and sucking my shaft as he slowly, teasingly makes his way back to my glans. It’s oozing pre-cum once more, and when his tongue circles around the head, I let out a long and unhinged moan. His eyes open, and his gaze sparkles when he catches me watching, mouth agape, unable to hide my emotions. They are raw and bare, out there for him to snatch up and keep. The thought should scare me, should be enough for me to bark out some bullshit and bolt, but I can’t. My defenses have crumbled and this is all that’s left of me.

“Your mouth is so skilled,” I let out. He must have done this a thousand times.

Arsène pulls off my cock with a soft plop. “It’s because it comes naturally, you’ll see. And yes—” He slides his tongue over my shaft, while the fingers of his other hand reach between my legs and crawl toward my ass, “I have a lot of experience. But you have nothing to worry about. I chose you, remember? A choice I don’t take lightly.

Besides, the brotherhood likes to fuck. And if you ever want to play with someone else, you can.” He suckles at my crown while his fingers grab the plug, sliding it deeper into my ass until it hits my prostate. He hums when I let out a hiss, followed by a moan, then picks up the sliding rhythm of the plug that matches his tongue and mouth. It feels fucking divine. Biting my lip, I try to contain myself, but the sounds of pleasure keep slipping through.

“As long as we play together, mon papillon,” Arsène adds. Keeping his mouth open for my tip to nestle on his tongue, he looks up at me. The plug mercilessly drives onto my g-spot, and I can already feel my body preparing for my climax, toes curling and balls drawing up. He doesn’t need to ask, I know what he wants. And it makes my body throb with the need to come. He plunges the plug another few times forward and then I erupt on a startled cry, body shaking and cock emptying inside Arsène’s mouth and on his tongue. I can hear him humming and slobbering around my glans through the buzzing in my ears, hear my own mewls and whines as I slowly come down from my high. When I open my eyes, I catch him licking my cock clean, the sight making me want to get hard again instantly, though that’s not going to happen. But fuck, he’s so gorgeous. The most popular guy at school, a member of the elite. And he’s on his knees for me, after having told me that he chose me.

Me. Robin Pinault, third son of Marie-Pierre Pinault, Directeur Général of the National Police.

Arsène wants me.

“Now then,” climbing back onto his feet, Arsène slides his mask back in place, then makes sure to reorganize my pants for a second time tonight. “Shall we go downstairs then? It’s past time and our brothers must be feral by now.”

The smile he sends my way is wicked and cruel, and like the prey I am to him, I feel my guard rising in trepidation. “Past time for what?”

He raises a brow. “Well, for your initiation, of course.”

“Initiation?” I echo, dully.

“You’re about to become part of our brotherhood, mon papillon. We talked about this?” He grabs my hand, and I feel his bodyguards rounding up behind us as we make our way downstairs. Cornering me.

“Where are we going?” I ask when we reach the basement. It’s quiet here, and damp. My heart rattles wildly in my chest.

Arsène squeezes my hand, then lets go, only to show me the palm of his hand. Two pills are displayed. “Time for another little game. Trust me?” He shoots me a wink.

No! My fingers linger as I take them in.

“Are they any different?”

“Yes. One is white, the other one is black.”

I snort and he snickers in return. “Yeah, I can see that. But are they—”

He clicks his tongue. “Just the colour.” When I slowly reach for the black one, he cocks his head. “Really? I would have sworn you to be more of a white-pill boy.”

“Fuck off.”

He lets out an obscene laugh, watching me swallow the black one down with a sip of the water Enzo hands out to me.

“Attaboy. Now, come, my butterfly. Let’s make those wings fly.”

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Joy. Pure, effortless. It shines brightly, twisting my entire sight into glittery objects.

We're walking a narrow corridor, through which Zin guides us, with Enzo at our backs. Portraits of important looking people from the past leave the walls, come flying to me in a creepy salute, and I reach out my hand in an attempt to grab hold of them, chuckling when I'm too slow and watch them flutter away, out of reach. Everything is glowing and glittery, and it's so pretty. To my side, chairs screech forward by themselves, wanting to keep up with our little group. They can't keep up. Nope, nooo...

"Too slow," I hear myself mutter, then giggle at the echoing sound in my head. Arsène turns to face me, a slow, crooked smile on his face. His eyes seem so large, so dark, so beautifully shaped. He looks like an elf. And his arm... it's still wrapped around my waist. "Too warm." My hand touches down to his. "But your fingers feel good."

He pinches my chin and I tip back my head, chortling. As far as my eyes can see, I see glitter. Oh, his arm is so nice against my nape. So strong. "It's because you're wearing all these clothes, papillon," he muses, and my stomach flutters deliciously.

"All these..." I giggle once more. "Clothes. That's a good one."

"We'll get rid of them in a moment, pretty boy. Patience, we're nearly there."

Sounds float my way when we reach an open door, filling my ears with a cacophony of voices and instruments. A piano, for sure. But there's also some sort of drum that resonates effortlessly through the buzzing in my ear. I blink but my eyes are dry,

hesitating for the first time.

“Where are we?” I ask. I don’t think I’ve ever been here before.

“The playfield of the Alpha Fraternarii, butterfly. Regardless of what they might tell you about the South Wing being reserved only for personnel, this is where the real fun takes place.”

“This is where I had my meeting and signed my NDA,” I remember.

“Exactly.”

Reaching the threshold, Arsène stops me with a hand on my shoulder. He shows me his palm, on which the white pill sits, shoots me a wink, then tosses it back and into his mouth.

“Let’s go crazy together.” When he sees me frowning, he adds, “Don’t worry. We make those pills ourselves. I know exactly what’s in them, and they’re not strong. They’re just meant to take off the edge a bit.” He leans over me and I can’t stop myself from inhaling his skin, now adorned with a layer of sparkles, his scent, that combination of wickedness and ginger. It’s addictive.

I gasp when he presses his hand on my clothed ass, right where the plug sits. The sense of ownership that washes over me brings a new whiff of desire that tickles my balls and makes my cock slowly fill.

“When we get in there, you’ll get introduced to our brothers by the Elder,” he explains. “I will then take off our masks.” Lifting his other hand to my face, he cups my chin and dips his mouth so we’re practically touching. His eyes are blown, and his stare is intense, hungry. “I will take everything you’ll give me, Robin. Your snarls and thorns, your awkwardness and assertiveness. Your shyness and soft, hesitant

approach. And these walls you have to keep you safe inside and everyone else out? I'll tear those walls down and capture you. You won't need them anymore because I'll keep you safe."

I blink. My initial reaction is to shove him away, both physically and mentally, but both my mind and body are tired of fighting him. My stupid heart wants to believe that his words could be true, that this could perhaps be the start of something new. Something I have secretly craved for for so long.

"This is what's going to happen." Arsène grabs hold of something that has been placed against the wall. When I give it a good look, it's like the rope spins and twists into his hands. Still, I immediately recognize what it is.

"No," I blurt. It's the copper thread he used for the spiderweb in the forest.

Arsène smirks. "Yes. Right there, at the altar."

"Altar?" My eyes dart from the rope to the open space waiting for us. I wince when I catch sight of the number of cloaked guys inside the dungeon. Some of them are standing in circles, talking and laughing, others are seated. All are waiting, that much is clear. For us to make our way inside.

You are here for our entertainment, and entertained we shall be.

"Could this all be a joke?" I wonder out loud. My mind is toying with me.

Arsène frowns, his arm still wrapped around me. "A joke?"

What if I'm the joke? What if my father and brothers are behind this?

"You are so beautiful." I look up at Arsène. Those curvy, plush lips, his strong,

square facial features. He tucks the hood a little further over his head, covering up his features, but I know what's underneath there. I'd recognize those dark, sleek strands anywhere. "So, so beautiful," I hear myself murmur. He smirks at me knowingly, hand cupping my hardening cock. "You're out of it, papillon. And hot for me once more." He squeezes my shoulder, gesturing for me to enter the room. "Allez."

"No, wait." I freeze, and Enzo bumps into me with an apology. Zin turns around, eyeing us with a frown. "From where I sit, I look right at you in class," I rush. He's right, I am out of it, my brain can't catch up. And then the words come tumbling out of my mind. "Do they—" Arsène nods. I clear my throat. Zin opens his mouth to speak, but Arsène raises his hands, silencing him at once. My hands turn to fists, putting pressure in my palms to keep my mind from going crazy. Suddenly I'm feeling so hot, my body scorching with need.

"Do they know it's me?" I blab, then look away as I let out a shuddering breath.

No one speaks.

"These guys here. Do they know it's me?" I finally repeat, slowly looking back at Arsène. "Are they classmates?" I dare a glance at the room. To the now silent room. Fuck, these guys are intimidating. All of them. But... school mates? Brothers? "I should never have come here tonight, should never have left the art academy for Saint-Laurent." I gesture around me, then huff out a choked chortle. "So it is a joke after all." My chest clenches when I ask him, "Is this why you chose me?"

To make fun of me.

Fuck, that thought hurts. I wince.

His arm has dropped from my shoulder and has taken the warmth with him. I shiver, cold creeping in. At least it helps sober my mind, or at least I hope it does.

“You know why I chose you,” Arsène continues. He sounds annoyed, matter of factly. Slowly, I nod. It’s not enough. “Say it,” he hisses. “I want you to hear yourself admitting it to your stubborn self.”

I take in a long breath, feeling my shoulders deflate. “Because you like me.”

“Because you fascinate me, butterfly,” he corrects. “And now you’re finally doing it.” His gaze caresses mine with something soft, framed by the possessiveness I have come to recognize over the past hours. “You’re finally showing me what really frightens you. You’re finally fluttering your wings, testing freedom.”

I frown, irritation boiling up. “You can’t just throw around these cryptical words, you know? I’m a nobody, Arsène. If my dad—”

“Fuck him, papillon,” he growls. “Fuck all of them who’ve made you believe you’re not good enough.”

“You can’t say that,” I snarl. “You don’t know me.”

“I told you this, pretty boy. We have our entire lives to discover each other. But that—” He points his hand to the open room. Every single one of the cloaked men inside is openly staring at us, the only sound coming from the piano. “That has nothing to do with your family, and 100% with mine. I wanted you. I chased you down.”

“You drugged me,” I huff.

“You bet your ass I did, and I’ll do it again, over and over again if that’s what it takes to make you feel good. I want to discover every single spot that covers your body and soul. Want my spiders to crawl all over your skin.” I flinch at the sudden touch on my jacket. It’s only his fingers. It’s enough to grow warm again, to search for more of

him, to enjoy the way my dick quivers inside my pants, hardening further with every breath I take.

“Right now, we’ll welcome you as a brother to the Alpha Fraternarii. You wouldn’t be the first passive brother in our ranks if you prefer focusing your time on your studies and your art.”

“My art?” I feel my eyes widen and my heart swelling. Arsène takes a step forward, finally putting both hands on my exposed cheeks, cupping them gently as he lets out a soft smile.

“My men are filling my rooms with your stuff as we speak. The days of you living in that dorm on your own are over. From now on, you will live with me.”

“What?”

“Don’t worry, papillon. I’ll make sure they add enough blank canvases for you to create new work. You can paint and relax as much as you like. Keep my little friends company.”

”Your little friends?”

Arsène tips his head back and chortles. “You’ll see soon enough.”

“Is this all still part of the game?” I whisper.

Scrunching up his nose, Arsène clasps a hand around my shoulder and pulls me close. I exhale a ragged breath, his touch grounding my glittery-filled view. I need him close to me.

“I don’t know if I’d call a future altering moment, a game. Do you?” He flicks his

tongue out and laps at my ear, chuckling when I flinch. Ugh, what's it with this guy and ears? "Besides, what's the point in objecting?" He hums. "I've got you now, and I don't intend to let you go. And the rest? We'll figure it out as we go."

"But that's not how this goes."

"No? Why do you always need to understand everything with your brain? It's not like it's of any use tonight." A toothy grin. "It just is, papillon. It just is."

Enzo clears his throat discreetly. "Sir, we really have to move forward now. They are waiting, and listening," he adds, sounding uncomfortable.

Arsène doesn't stop staring at me, waiting. I give him a slight nod, then clear my throat. Fuck me, I'm nervous. Hallucinating tranquilizer or not.

He smiles, then looks at the crowd, tips his chin in a greeting, before turning back to me. One of his hands snakes behind my neck and he yanks on my hair while dragging his teeth over my exposed neck. Forcefully. I let out a yelp, taken by surprise and the sting, eyes finally tearing after hours of dryness as I take in the beautifully decorated ceiling. He lets out a raspy chuckle against my skin when the crowd cheers.

"Arsène," I whine.

"Hmm?" He nips his way up, tipping my head even further back by my hair, enjoying my wheezing begs to stop. He doesn't. Instead, he keeps me down, only slowly dipping his own chin in search of my face. Then he licks my lips. Sounds of approval fill the dungeon room and our breaths catch the moment his mouth seals mine. He stays like this, keeping me in this painful, excruciating hold in a clear show of power. No kiss, no nothing. This is what he needs. This command, knowing that he's got me in his grip. What's more disturbing, is that I seem to need that too.

“Trust me.” He murmurs against my lips.

Trust him. Fear clambers up, but before I can protect myself, he shushes against my lips. “Easy, papillon. I’m not going to hurt you. But I am going to bring you inside that room and wrap you up on the altar. Then I’m going to prepare you really nice with that plug and with my tongue, and then fuck you until you beg me for release. How does that sound?”

My breath stutters, cock plump and throbbing against his. He knows it, knows that I’m hard for him. But this time there’s no mocking. This time, no matter how ludicrous it sounds, it’s like he’s waiting for me to agree. When I finally nod, he hums in approval and presses a kiss to my mouth and releases his hold, freeing the sting on my scalp.

And no matter what my brain tells me, my heart wants it too much. I want to go home. I want to belong to Arsène. I want Arsène to be home.

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The dungeons of Monterrey Castle. I've visited them before, for movie nights and other activities, but never in the South Wing. And never did they look like this.

A foggy room, thick with the heady scent of spices, resinous and woody notes that penetrate my nose, swirling around my dazed state of mind. Like lovers.

I grab Arsène's hand.

Dark, with only the flickering light of torches to make the shadows dance against the walls. There are so many of them, obscure shades that whirl around—cloaks, dark and long, with hoods to cover their heads, and elegant, colourful masks to hide their identity.

I'm in school with these guys, my troubled mind sputters. I'm in school with guys who lead a double life, who are part of this secret brotherhood that, if Arsène is speaking the truth, has more power than your worst nightmare.

And still I'm finding myself moving forward, led by flaring shapes and rich scent, by a possessive, warm hand that is wrapped around my nape while the other squeezes my palm. Around us, the crowd gives way, and we continue our march with tens and tens of pairs of eyes on us. Watching, following.

Do they know who I am?

Nerves flutter freely through my stomach, supporting the heavy weight in my head and making it more bearable. Making me more pliable when we finally arrive at the altar Arsène mentioned before, and halt. My heart is pounding so violently, I fear

others might hear, but my gaze is pointed toward the three cloaked men who stand in the center of the room. They're clearly waiting for us. Their masks are shaped like a crow as black as their cloak, its obscene nose long and crooked, aside from the white fur that's been stitched on the seams of their hoods. It forms a sharp contrast to the rest of their garment.

The man in the middle booms his golden cane, and around us, the soft murmurs fade away, only to be replaced by utter, thick, silence.

"Arsène de Noailles." He lifts a hand and his lips curl into a cruel smirk. He's the one from before, the man who instructed us contestants, about the rules of the game. The one who handed me the drugs. "You've done well, brother, I am proud of you."

"Thank you, Elder Jacques," he replies, gripping me tighter. I swallow, the sound ticking between my ears, Arsène's fingers light and pressing on my shoulder, grounding me while simultaneously sweeping my anchor away. Making me drift. Making me restless.

"I brought my chosen one." Arsène's gaze searches as his face shifts. "Did you prepare the altar?"

"That you have," the Elder agrees. From behind the hideous mask, his dark eyes shift between us. "And yes, the altar is ready. Your brothers can't wait to welcome our newest member, can't wait to see how you will present him."

"He'll be trapped," Arsène hums, sliding his hand over my nape, fingers crawling under my collar in search of naked flesh. Piégé. When our skins connect, he lets out a private, raspy hum, his eyes still flitted toward the Elder. "He's already subdued. I am, too. And prepared." He turns my way and whispers, "For my cock."

"You're a generous lover." Out of nowhere, Golden Mask appears, a small smirk on

his face.

“That I am,” Arsène grins in reply, throwing him the tail-end of the copper thread. Golden Mask catches it smoothly, that smug grin still on his face. I wonder if I know him too?

Arsène squeezes my neck. “Eyes here, papillon.” I ignore Golden Mask’s chortle, instead let Arsène wrap his large hand around my nape, tracing the line of my beating pulse. Then he guides me forward, to the altar.

“Welcome to your initiation,” he muses, pulling both my hands behind my back as he walks me forward until my pelvis hits the cool material of the altar. It’s a wooden table, shiny and polished, void of any objects.

“This is your pledge, Robin Pinault.” Elder Jacques speaks. “And in return, you will carry the name brother of the Alpha Fraternarii. A name that will open every single door in your life to come.”

My pledge in return for the name of ‘brother’. My body in return for pleasure. My soul in return for ownership by this guy who claims that sometimes we know what we want in a single moment of time. And that he knows he wants me.

When my stomach hits the coolness of the shrine, Arsène kicks my feet apart and opens my pants with agile fingers, before shimmying my pants and boxer briefs down my legs and onto the ground. He helps me step out of them, then makes a show of spreading my hands high above my head, placing his thighs between my spread ones. Between my naked spread ones. His lips press against the back of my ear.

“Soon now, papillon.” The faint of a whisper. I mewl in reply, my head once more spinning with incense and soft piano. And glitters, everywhere. With Arsène and his all-consuming presence, threatening and protective at the same time.

The cane booms once more and utter silence follows. Even the music dims.

“Brothers, I present to you tonight’s winner of the Wicked Chase.”

Silence. Arsène rubs his hands over my ass cheeks, spreading them a little, no doubt to admire the plug and that disgusting spider. Inside my head, I whimper and fight against the swirl of desire that brings. To be on display for him and the others, naked and vulnerable, yet protected and safe. It’s the weirdest sensation ever.

“Power presents itself in the weirdest of shapes. It comes in money, in opportunity.” He lets out a vicious laugh. “In health and prosperity, and jobs. In ownership.” Elder Jacques’s voice raises at the end, forming a mild crescendo.

Ownership.

“Congratulations to the both of you.”

Somewhere someone strikes a gong, its sound precise, filling the dungeon with an ominous timbre and a full, round sound that’s picked up by the piano as they fall in play together.

Golden Mask positions himself in front of me, grabbing my raised hands and pushing them down and against my back, until my nails practically reach my ass. I lift my head, ready to open my mouth and protest.

“Sshh,” Arsène soothes from behind me. “Let it happen.”

Golden Mask shoots me a devilish smile before he lets his gaze slide to the way Arsène is undoubtedly binding my wrists together, trapping me just like he said he would, capturing me for the world to see. His fingers work fast, their touch soft as a feather, yet merciless, the movements trained.

Like a spider.

The thought makes me shudder, realization hitting my absent mind. The butt plug. As if sensing my distress, Arsène rubs my back, making my body tremble even more. Uncontrolled. Because my limbs are being pulled so tautly together by his glittering thread that it can easily burn into my flesh when I resist the slightest. Thank fuck he hasn't added any superglue this time. I don't care for a repetition of that cobweb in the forest.

“Do you have any questions about our brotherhood?” Elder Jacques asks. Arsène brushes two digits in my hair, lifting my head to meet the Elder's glare. Yanking at my hands, I feel my body convulse in a sudden fit of panic, coiling like a tightening fist in my stomach. He leans in from behind, rubbing my hair with his lips, and I feel his own dark strands tumble freely over mine, blanketing my lighter ones with his golden glow. He must have pulled his hood down.

My prey. The words ghost through my ear.

“N—no,” I hear myself say. My mind is once more swimming, but this time it's not just flickering shadows. It's my blood that's flooding south, making me feel a little light-headed while my cock fills with desire. Arsène's fingers cup my cheek, turning my head to meet his lips, and my face flushes. His mouth presses a soft kiss on the hot skin. He doesn't talk, just makes soft, reassuring humming sounds while he continues to touch my face, neck and nape.

It makes me feel deliciously helpless.

“The Alpha Fraternarii has big plans for the future of our country,” Elder Jacques says, his dark eyes still on mine. “After tonight, your life will never be the same again. Our brotherhood respects their traditions, and as such, you are under protection of the family de Noailles.”

“What about...” The words leave my mouth in a flood, only to dry up before I reach the end of my phrase. I flinch at my own boldness, then turn angry at this anxiety, that turns into blind panic once more when I realize that I’m completely wrapped up. Arsène has left his fingers under my chin, the imprints still warm and tickly, and has moved on to explore more of my revealed flesh. My eyes fly back to Golden Mask, who’s still standing by my side, his gaze toward the scene.

Elder Jacques tilts his head. “What about your family?”

Behind me, Arsène taps my naked ass and with my mind still on the Elder’s words, I absentmindedly feel how he slides out the plug. He was right, the drugs are not as heavy as the other ones were, but they still make my mind numb. Make me obey without a single snarl. Make me fucking want this so badly.

No, I inwardly shake my head. That’s not on the drugs. Me wanting Arsène has nothing to do with these tranquillizers and everything with his powerful, broody self. With his dominant, yet pure hunger for me.

Then a cool, wet finger probes between my crease and I hiss.

Putain de merde.

I am tense, legs shaking, lips trembling. Around us, brothers come closer, their cloaks and masks ominous in the dim light. The melody’s so peaceful, the only thing my tumbling mind can hang on to, which I do, clambering and begging for it to continue, to never stop.

I moan when Arsène’s fingers slide deeper inside and press against my g-spot, hips rocking back against his digits.

“F—fuck,” I pant. Arsène chuckles softly, raspily, the sound humming inside my

body. My eyes flutter, together with my mind, and I let out another unhinged cry when his fingers pick up the pace, scissoring mercilessly inside my tight heat and hitting that sweet spot again and again.

“Baise-le, Arsène,” Golden Mask purrs. Turning to lean on my cheek, our eyes meet, and he smiles wickedly, revealing a golden tooth. Fuck him, he’s asking Arsène to fuck me.

“Spiders are patient,” Arsène croons against my ear, his voice hitched and unable to reveal his arousal. He positions the plug right in front of me, the large wolf spider at full exhibit. I wince at the sight. “But fuck, papillon, you are perfect. The way you’re splayed out for me, wings spread, only to be restricted by me. Don’t worry, pretty boy, I want you to fly. I want you to make your art, for you to be happy. You’ll be under my protection. Your dad and brothers will stay away from you, if you want them to.”

“H—how?” I breathe, then let out a needy gasp, because I can feel him line up the head of his cock against my hole, his fingers still crooked deep inside. My question echoes through the silenced room, much like it throbs inside my head, repeating itself on a reverb. If I don’t even understand what I mean, how’s he supposed to know?

“Because our brotherhood is based on respect,” Arsène muses. After one final press against my prostate, he slowly pulls out his fingers, and I’m left empty, a shuddering breath escaping my lungs.

“I’ll be right there.” A whisper, a promise. And then his fingers coax the tip of his cock past the ring of muscles that clench on instinct at the invasion of something big, and slippery. Something persistent like his crown, followed by the rest of his shaft. Slowly, persistently, filling my tight channel, moulding it snug around his shape.

“Arsène is right,” I hear the Elder call out. “The Alpha Fraternarii honour their

values. Respect.”

“Respect,” the brothers repeat after him. Arsène bottoms out, his hands on my exposed ass cheeks, spreading them apart.

“Your ass is perfection. Tight and hot, papillon. So fucking delicious.”

“Loyalty.” The Elder booms, his command echoed by the rest. Arsène leans forward, his chest touching my back, his hands now in my hair, brushing the strands out of my face, while his other hand cups my chin, angling it so that his mouth can easily find mine. The rest of my face, covered by lace, feels hot and clammy. He growls against my lips, a guttural, animalistic sound.

“You are mine, Robin. Mon papillon.” And then he starts moving, slowly dragging his cock nearly out of me, before he slams back in.

Hard.

I cry out, feeling split open and claimed in front of all these guys.

Outside of our bubble, I can hear the sound of their chanting, I can smell the herbal, woodsy essence and vibrations along with the melody of the piano. But everything is muffled, as if I’m not really here. Maybe I am not. Or maybe it’s the exquisite love making that has plunged us into an everlasting tumble into the unknown. The past. The present. The future.

Golden Mask was right—Arsène is a generous lover. His lips nip at my flesh, warm my skin, lick and kiss everywhere they can reach. His hands tangle in my hair, pull me closer, caress my wrapped up skin under loud purrs, while his hips keep on rocking a steady rhythm, driving us into a frenzy. Heat coils up into my stomach, makes my toes curl and my eyes burn, and my heart thumps violently in my chest.

“You’re so fucking perfect,” he whispers. “And you’re all mine. I’ll give you what you want.”

And he fucks me mercilessly, hips plundering my thighs, his cock feeding my desire. Again and again, he hits my prostate, making me jolt and cry out in ecstasy until sweat drips over my forehead and I’m desperate for release. We both are, because I can hear him whimper, hear him pant.

“You feel so good, mon papillon. Look at you. At my mercy. Caught in my web.”

Piégé. Trapped. Willingly.

Arsène slaps me against my ass cheek, hard, and a jolt of pleasure zaps through my veins. “Hmm, you like that, pretty boy?”

“Oui,” I moan.

Without a single hesitation, he smacks my other cheek, and again, and again, until scorching desire overtakes my drugged senses and I hear myself babble incoherently.

“Oh, fuck, feels so good,” I whimper. “Again, again, please, Arsène.” Someone lifts my face by the chin, revealing two long, ringed fingers and a pair of dark eyes. A golden tooth. Arsène slaps me on my cheek, the skin feeling raw and burning, and I pant against the ringed digits, my useless, wrapped up limbs unable to stop him from gazing down at me. His smile is cruel, his other hand wrapped in my hair. I swallow, blink, then dart my gaze to catch sight of the cloaked brother huddled between Golden Masks’s spread legs, sucking his cock while he’s watching me getting fucked. He traces the lines of my parted, trembling lips with a finger, lets it slip inside for a brief wander, before it dips out and smears my saliva onto my mouth. And I... My cheeks flush hotly as Arsène lands another smack, and then his hand wraps around my cock. I cry out, my entire body trembling with need.

My eyes shoot back at Golden Mask, whose lips are parted as he lets out a groan. With one hand on the head of the guy huddled in front of him, and his digits curled under my chin, he climaxes. The sight nearly topples me over the edge, my cock pulsing with arousal.

“Please, please—” I whine. Arsène strokes my dick in short, fast movements that match his thrusts, and then his thick, dark hair intertwines with mine again, and he places his fingers next to where Golden Mask has his still on my chin and onto my lips. I open for him and his digits cup my jaw as he plunges deeper, faster.

“Come for me, mon papillon,” he growls, and his hand squeezes as he smacks his mouth onto mine. His tongue spears through the seam of my lips with an urgency that is climbing in my body. And then I tumble over the edge, crying out inside his mouth as I do, our moans swallowed, our need wrapped up in each other’s arms. We come together, my cock pulsing inside Arsène’s palm, while he fills my clenching ass with his release.

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I don't know how long we lay there. Minutes? Hours? My entire body feels limp, heavy and powerless. Somehow during this apocalyptic gathering I surrendered, and my limbs show the remnants. My mind has calmed down though, with those flickering shadows having disappeared altogether with the cloaks and masks from the other member of the brotherhood.

No, it's quiet here, in the dungeons. Aside from the piano that still plays a sweeping melody, the place is peaceful. Cocking my head, I leave my right cheek to rest on the altar, eyes fluttering when I stare outside the window toward the blackness of the forest. In a deserted corner, a couple is making out, their masks discarded as they kiss each other passionately. I blink when I recognize the taller guy as Arthur Deveraux, heir to the Deveraux Empire. The smaller guy is barely recognizable, his long, wavy strands, much like my own, reaching his cheekbones and blanketing most of his face, while Arthur's large hand cups his nape to keep him close. Régis Deveraux.

"My gift," Arsène mutters behind me, the first sign that he hasn't actually fallen asleep atop of me. He lets out a yawn and stretches his arms, his body still heavy on mine. Then he slips out of me, leaving me feeling vulnerable. "I'm going to unwrap you now, papillon, and then we're going home. You must be tired." The ghost of his own raspy tone confirms that I'm not the only one who could use some sleep here. Lowering his head, he surprises me by pressing his firm, warm mouth on every single centimeter of skin he releases from the brilliant thread, soothing and warming my flesh once more. "You did really well," he purrs, followed by a lick and a nip. "So, so well."

When my hands are free, he takes his time rubbing my wrists and forearms, before dropping a slow kiss on each of my palms. Then he continues releasing me from his

ropes. “You have entered the world of the Alpha Fraternarii,” he muses, then grasps my chin between two fingers and turns my face over my shoulder to look at him. His gaze is dark, wicked yet gentle. “I love how you let my brother play with your mouth.”

Searching his gaze wildly, I stammer, “Brother? As in, your brotherhood brother, or your real brother?”

Arsène huffs out a laugh, shaking his head as if I just made a good joke. Leaving me flicking through my memory as to if there has been talk of another de Noailles at college. Not that I can think of, but that doesn’t mean shit.

“Well? Answer me.” Annoyance bubbles to the surface in less than a few seconds. “Is he your flesh and blood?”

Arsène grabs me by my hair and yanks my head back until I bump against his chest. My legs are still tied up, but I use my hands to tear and dig. “And what if he is? You were sweet to him.”

“Untie me at once,” I snarl instead.

“Uh huh, this takes time, pretty boy. Time that I intend to take if it makes you feel good.” Uncapping a bottle of oil—almond of some sort by the smell of it—he starts massaging my hands and wrists with a slow, unyielding motion.

Someone chortles, and I momentarily freeze, taken aback by the laughter that sounds as if it’s coming from an entirely different scene. Like we’re in two separate movies.

It’s the pianist. He’s blindfolded, his black suit jacket discarded, the collar of his white shirt open, the deep v-shape exposing parts of a naked chest. He’s sitting at the piano, his fingers on the instrument. Those digits, roaming freely over the keys, held

in control by another pair of hands, used like a willing ragdoll. The melody changes from that dramatic, gentle sound to something lighter, matching their mood. They are both laughing now, the blond guy working the musician's fingers as he kisses his nape at the same time. He's no longer masked, the silky material propped up onto his forehead instead. My eyes flicker.

I recognize them. They are one of the most popular couples of Saint-Laurent. Gaël Deveraux, the wicked cousin of the Deveraux twins. Realizing that they are all part of this brotherhood somehow makes the fight leave my body, paralyzing my snarky defense mechanism.

I should have known. These guys run the school. And apparently their families rule the country.

I can't fight the shivers running over my body. When Arsène's warm, oiled fingers return to my naked skin, this time rubbing my shoulders, I lean into his touch, fatigue threatening to weigh me down like a heavy blanket, making the remainder of my walls crumble at this man's feet.

"Word has gone out to your family, Robin," Arsène muses and his fingers dig into my skin, massaging my sore muscles.

A low rumble is the only sound that escapes my throat, muscles relaxing and mind finally calming down. God, this feels amazing.

By the piano, a guy with red hair has joined the two lovebirds, a glass of champagne in his hand, saying something that makes the others burst out laughing. They don't look my way.

"Surprised?" Arsène asks with the hint of a smile. When I don't answer, he continues, "Your brothers have accepted you, mon papillon. You are part of the Alpha

Fraternarii now. And aside from ordering commoners on how to behave and what rules to obey to, we like to enjoy the pleasures in life.” His groping hands lower toward my back, firmly demanding for my muscles to yield and to give in. They do, slowly softening under his touch and becoming more pliant. He hums at that, content.

“What’s going to happen now?” I ask.

“Now now? Or from now on?”

“I mean, people will know. They will have seen me, tied up...” Like bait, I want to add, but I swallow the word instead.

I like that feeling. And I hate it.

“Now you are mine to play with,” Arsène mumbles, his warm hands trailing down to knead my lower back. Everywhere his skin touches mine, my flesh tingles, my entire body even more relaxed in its sweet capitulation.

“You’ll live with me in my dorm. Meet my friends and family.” He continues to massage the back of my legs, releasing me from the thread as he does so. And with every knot he pulls smooth, my chest constricts a little more. I can’t explain the way I felt safe with him, it’s ridiculous. I — I shouldn’t feel this. I hardly know the guy! But to be held like that, to feel warm skin brush against mine, plush, wet lips claiming mine, fingers exploring the most sensitive spots on my body...it made me feel something I have never felt.

Perhaps Arsène is right. Perhaps I am set free.

“We’ll make sure you graduate, and then decide what you want to do. Our family empire is vast with over fifty different brands in our holding. I’m sure we can find you something you like.” Golden Mask approaches us, silently aiding Arsène in

unravelling the silk off my naked body.

“No more spider butt plugs.” I scrunch up my nose, and both men puff out a laugh.

“Oh, I’ll be the boss of that, pretty boy. Now—” Arsène grabs me by the hair and pulls me back up until I’m awkwardly leaning on my knees, my ass practically sitting in his lap as he presses behind me. He sniffs my throat greedily, then murmurs, “Why don’t you introduce yourself to your new family.”

I swallow. It’s not a question, but a demand.

Golden Mask leans in, and with Arsène holding me tight and my legs still wrapped up in thread, I watch him hover closer until his nose is practically touching mine. His eyes are pitch dark as they flicker between me and Arsène. Waiting for permission.

“Go ahead, brother,” Arsène rasps.

My ears buzz when Golden Mask’s mouth captures mine, and my eyes snap wider open with the first sweep of his tongue.

“Open up for him, papillon,” Arsène whispers, voice thick with desire. His breath tickles the skin on my neck, and I realize he has leaned in to watch us kiss. I do as he asks, my lips parting like a flower in bloom. Golden Mask’s tongue slowly sweeps inside my mouth, licking and sucking. My hands, no longer tied, fly to reach out to Arsène’s dark strands as I let Golden Mask deepen the kiss. Flutters awaken in my stomach, despite my fatigue and I bask in Arsène’s strong hold on my shoulders as he keeps me close.

A tongue laps at the tender skin of my neck, and I realize Arsène is participating, his grip sliding up to my nape where it tightens as he brushes his nose up and inside my hair, his wet mouth on my earlobe.

“That’s enough, brother,” Arsène clips. Golden Mask hums, leaving my mouth with one last peck, and then Arsène angles my face toward his, our foreheads and noses touching. He doesn’t kiss me, just stares into my eyes. My chest is rising and falling more rapidly, I’m clearly out of breath. “Felt good?” His fingertips stroke my cheek.

“You made me do that!” I spat out of habit, though my words lack real bite.

“You can be honest. It looked good from where I was standing.” Arsène pulls back and looks up at Golden Mask. “You pleased my chosen one, brother. Soon you will get to have yours. Who knows? Maybe we can play some more once you have claimed your guy?”

Then, with a final pull of the thread, Arsène unravels the remainder on my legs, freeing me entirely. “There. Now we can head back to our dorm.” He rubs my ankles and calves with the oil, then helps me get up. “Let’s get some sleep.”

“Wait.” Golden Mask says. When I turn, he’s already staring at me, a challenging shimmer in his inky gaze. Who are you? “Do you need help escorting Robin upstairs?” He asks Arsène, ignoring my prying eyes.

His voice, those eyes... something clicks into place. “I know you,” I blurt. This time I do snarl as fear crawls up my spine. “You are that guy who made that other guy—”

“Say it and I’ll stick more into your mouth than just my fingers,” he sneers, eyes flashing aggressively.

“Edouard...” Arsène hums. A warning.

So he has a name. This brother. This...

“Connard. You’re an absolute asshole. That poor guy, that—tell me something. What

did you carry tonight?” Arsène squeezes my shoulder warningly, but I shake him off, because my guard is up and my prickly self has made its appearance, in its full glory.

Edouard grins, then holds up the knife. The Damascus pocket knife with a rosewood handle looks vintage and deadly. The tip of the blade is painted with red splashes, no doubt of blood.

“Were you out there to kill?” I growl. “Again?”

“No, we’re here to play,” Edouard hisses, not sounding amused anymore. His eyes flash. “We’re here to win. Your guy won you tonight, so be a good pet and please him.”

“What did you say?” My eyes have turned to slits, voice going low, hands turned to fists. I am so ready to take this arrogant fucker down. Forget fatigue.

Edouard lets out a laugh, pats Arsène on the shoulder, and walks away.

“Let him go,” Arsène says when I take a step forward. “He’s a hothead. Just ignore him.”

I turn over my shoulder. “I’m not your pet.”

Arsène laughs, shaking his head. “No, you aren’t. I already have enough of those.” His digits clasp around my wrists and he hauls me up and against his chest. “You’re my lover, papillon. My prey. My toy. Want me to continue?” Wrapping his cloak around my naked frame, he pulls me close, then snakes one of his hands around my nape. “And Edouard is frustrated, because there’s this guy he wants, but can’t have.”

“Why not?” The dark silk feels like bliss around my limbs, and once more I feel like I’m nearly collapsing.

“The tranquilizers, still?” He asks. I shake my head and give him a shaky smile.

“I’m just tired.”

“Then let’s go upstairs and to my room. We can talk about this tomorrow. Besides, I want you to meet my little friends.” Caged in, I let Arsène walk me away. There are only a few torches left alit, and even fewer people. The Deverauxs and their lovers are gone, the only two people left are masked and standing by the door. They tip their heads when we make it outside. Zin and Enzo are also gone.

“Your little...” Nausea bubbles up in my chest as I realize what he means. Spiders. “I, no.” I try to struggle out of his hold, but Arsène just sniggers. “No,” I repeat, but even to my own ears, it sounds pathetic. His grip tightens and he practically pulls me forward and toward the stairs.

“Si. You’re mine now, papillon. Mine to take care of. Ours to play with. Come on,” he pouts when he catches my glare. “Don’t overthink everything. Have I hurt you just before?”

I snort as we climb the stairs. “Aside from the drugs, the chase and the fuckery?”

“That was playing. Well?”

“You—You haven’t,” I admit in a sigh. Turns out the big, bad Arsène de Noailles is nothing but a spoiled child who wants to protect what’s his. Histoy. My stomach tightens at the thought.

“Exactly. So, come on. Let’s go home.”

Home.

We climb the next set of stairs, the large, floor-to-ceiling windows broadcasting our interlaced shadows with the outside darkness as we reach the first floor. The castle is abandoned, with students gone for Pentecote. I shiver involuntarily before I drag my gaze to the row of doors we're moving toward.

"You saw me the first time in the library, but I first saw you in the canteen," I hear myself say.

My hand finds his and he squeezes. "And?" He teases. "You didn't like what you saw?"

I let out a scoff. "Because you were one of the elite? One of the snobs? Absolutely."

Arsène huffs out a chuckle. "I figured as much. I mean, you always carry a scowl, but you seem to have a special version for me."

"What did you think?" My face flushes at the question, and my snappiness retreats, leaving me feeling awkward. Of me? "I mean—" I flush.

What did you think of me?

"Mesmerizing," Arsène interrupts, then pulls in our joined hands until he can drop a kiss on mine. "Prickly, unpleasant, secretive, lonely, smart, troubled, and so very sexy." He throws open a door and yanks me inside. I've barely set foot over the threshold when he kicks the door closed and pushes me against it, immediately followed by his larger, toned body. "I knew immediately that I wanted you, Robin." The fingers he brushes through my hair are soft, but his crotch, rocking and grinding against my hip, is anything but. Nor are his teeth nipping at my neck, sharp and unrelenting, as he once more has me under complete control.

"Relax, mon papillon," he murmurs. "I'll be generous, and curious, and protective of

you. I'll take good care of you."

Gazing over his shoulder I recognize the easel and set of brushes that are mine. I blink, scanning the other wall, and come to realize that it's filled with a lot of my things. My black suitcase, backpack, computer bag, and the large duffel I use for my paint. It's all there. He wasn't kidding when he said that his people would move all of my stuff here.

"You—"

"Sshh," Arsène brushes his lips over mine, taking the slightest of openings to enter my mouth, his tongue licking inside and creating a spill of moans coming from my throat. My stomach clenches with instant lust, which shouldn't be possible after the number of orgasms he's already given me tonight. Or is it morning now? I've lost track of time. My knees buckle when he deepens the kiss and tilts my chin in the exact angle he wants me in. "My lover," he breathes against my lips. "You have come home. Now look up—" His brown eyes glitter wickedly as he lets his fingers brush under my chin. Flutters dance in my stomach, knowing that he has me completely enthralled. I'm under the spell of this devilishly handsome, privileged guy. He smiles playfully, because he knows it too. "To see the welcome committee. They've also been waiting for you." His fingers press a little deeper into the sensitive skin and I let out a hiss, fresh arousal sweeping through my cock despite our earlier coupling.

"Regarde," he whispers, and I do. Tilting my head back, I look up at the ceiling. And freeze.

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Robin's eyes widen slowly, fluttery, dreamy. While I'm still grinding my cock against his hip, my greedy stare craving to take in everything. I want it all.

I want him to yield to me, that stubborn mind of his, want his body to give in and let it be dominated by me, and me alone. Although...alone?

“What the fuck...” He gasps. “What’s that?” His gray eyes are huge, bewilderment laced with shock and a hint of fear. Fucking delicious.

Without looking up, I dip my chin to the crook of his neck, then inhale deeply and let out a satisfied purr. He smells good, my Robin, of sweat and forest and a touch of incense. Of desire and sex.

“H-how many of them are there? Can they—” Robin flinches at the thought and I chuckle against his ear. “Can they get out of there?” He squeaks. “Oh my, that one’s...” He shudders, and I lick my lips before nipping at his earlobe. He hisses as he attempts to push me away, failing, pouting, “this is not funny.”

“Oh no, it’s not.” My hand slides down over his white shirt, easily opening the buttons on my way down to the waistband of his school uniform. “Serious business, indeed,” I murmur, slowly rubbing his hard-on over the material.

Robin whimpers and instinctively coils back, though there’s no way to hide from me. With his back plastered against the door—the only exit from this room—my body is glued to his, teasing him slowly, carefully, in order to make him lose his mind with desire. He is trapped. Just like I want him to be.

“And to answer your question—no, they can’t get out, unless I want them to.” I give the glass ceiling one sweep that confirms my suspicion. My glorious wolf spider has come out to show off, slowly prancing over the glass as she makes her way across the ceiling to where I have kept the two darkened corners for my larger pets. They don’t enjoy the light much, and will only come out when I have a snack for them, such as a grasshopper or a bunch of ants. Occasionally they will hunt down other spiders I keep up there, their chase for prey a true pleasure to look at.

Robin freezes. “When you want them to?”

I lick a trace from his ear to the corner of his trembling mouth. “I don’t want it now, papillon. Right now, I want you naked, bouncing on my lap, in my bed, riding my cock.”

“I thought we were going to sleep?” He mutters, but his treacherous body shivers. I wonder what makes his body react most. Judging by the way his cock jolts against my hand, I’d say it’s my words. But up against the ceiling, my baby girl seems to be equally starving and has started her chase after a smaller spider I only recently added to the collection.

“Is that the same spider as the one I had in my ass?” He squeaks.

“Hmm.”

“And is he going to...” Robin swallows.

“She. It’s a she. And yes, she will eventually kill the smaller spider. But it will take time. Come on, stop worrying. They can’t get out, and even if they could, I’d protect you from them.” I expect some witty snarl, but when I look at him, he seems genuinely afraid. “Viens.” Grabbing him by his hand, I take him to my bed. Robin continues to steal glances at the ceiling, and in reply, I dim the lights and draw the dark green sheets back. He hesitates, because of course he does, he is the most

stubborn guy I've ever met. I flop back and onto the mattress, land on my ass, kick out my shoes, then shimmy out of my cloak, leaving me in a Henley and tight boxer briefs. It shouldn't be possible after all the action we've already had tonight, but I'm still hot for him. I still crave more. Robin must feel it too, this unbridled hunger, because he licks his lips, his attention now fully focused on me.

Spiders forgotten, I inwardly grin.

"You..." He lets me reach up, roll off his jacket and tear open his shirt, the discarded clothing dropping to the floor in a pool around his legs. "Did you go out like this tonight? Half naked?"

"Hmm," I look up at him, making sure to flutter my lashes. Judging by the way his cheeks flush, he likes what he sees, and it does something to my insides. They jolt and cheer and make me a little dizzy with the speed my arousal pools through my veins, throbbing and pressing for more. "I did. It was all there for you to grasp, but you had to go and get yourself trapped in my web." I slide down his pants and underwear, enjoying the way he looks down at me with pupil-blown eyes.

"Where's my moody, snarky Robin now?" I whisper, rolling his balls in my palm. He whimpers, then clears his throat. Fuck, I love the way he's trying to defend himself but has temporarily forgotten where his arms are. When he doesn't reply, I use my free hand to land a slap on his ass. He jolts forward. "Where is he now?" I ask again, voice sharper this time.

"He's...I'm right here, you son of a bitch," he snarls, snapping out of wherever he was lost. Trapping the tip of his cock between two fingers, I gently pull his foreskin back, then spit a string of saliva onto his glans.

"Fuck," he chokes. I can see how he has fisted his hands by his side, how his knees are trembling, how his body is fucking begging for this. Swiping my index finger through my spit, I look up at him. His eyes are hooded, lips parted, face flushed.

“Ask me nicely, papillon,” I purr.

His chest is heaving, but I don’t miss how his jaw tightens. “Ask you what?”

I shrug. “Oh, I don’t know. You seem to have lots of questions, have had them for the entire night. Why I chose you, what would happen now, I recall you even accusing me of making you kiss Edouard...” I make a show of suckling the wet finger into my mouth, then add more saliva onto his glistening cock. This time Robin lets out a moan and watches me play once more with the head of his weeping erection.

“I can sit here all night, papillon. I can wait here, while playing with your cock. Driving you to madness, only to prevent you from spilling. Making you desperate, and enjoying every single minute of it.”

Robin pants, the words clearly hitting home despite the glare in his gray eyes. I see it for what it is now. A tantrum, fed by frustration. But though I can understand that, considering where he’s coming from, it needs to be tied up and kept within the boundaries of my control.

I narrow my gaze, feigning impatience. “Well?”

“You brought my stuff here,” he rushes, sounding out of breath. His cock trembles against my palm, the head already sticky with a mixture of pre-cum on top of my spit.

I lean in forward, closer to the flushed skin of his dripping slit, opening my mouth. “I did.” My tongue darts out, lapping over his crown.

Robin takes in a sharp breath. “Wh—why?” He stammers.

Making sure to not break our physical touch, I look up at him through my lashes, my tongue still against him. Robin’s chest is heaving violently now. Now that I have his full attention, I slowly swipe my tongue around his crown, enjoying the strangled

sound that falls off his lips.

“Do you want me to ask for it?” I mumble against his hot flesh.

“Ask me what?” He lets out, voice high-pitched. It’s adorable.

“For you to stick your dick inside my mouth so I can suck on it like the treat it is?” I give him another flutter of my lashes, feigning innocence. Robin shudders. “Or for you to climb the bed onto your knees, straddle my thighs and ride my dick?”

“Arsène...” He choaks, and fuck, does my name sound good on his lips.

“For you to lay by my side every night from now on in this bed? Be mine?”

Robin rocks his hips a little forward, and I don’t even know if he does it on purpose—those glassy, wide eyes don’t seem to register anything—and I don’t hesitate. Suckling his dick right into the back of my throat, he cries out, limbs shivering with need.

“Fuck, that feels good. Oh, so good,” he blabbers. He does too. His cock feels velvety soft and mercilessly hard at the same time, his tip once wet with my spit, now pouring the salty flavour of pre-cum freely into my throat. Fucking delicious. Cupping his balls with one hand, I let my mouth do the work around his shaft, licking the underside of his dick, spoiling his sensitive crown with flicks of my tongue, altered with kisses and soft, teasing nips.

Who would have thought that Robin is a noisy lover? A flutter of a memory of his presence in class teases me, making me smile inwardly. So moody, so prickly. Who would have thought that he’d be so sweet and submissive? His cock pulses inside my mouth, another flow of his arousal coating my tongue before it makes its way to my throat. My own dick is throbbing inside my briefs, and with his dick buried deeply inside my throat, I reach down and grab hold of my shaft, giving it a few strokes to

release the pressure.

Then I pull my mouth off of him. “Come here, baby.” Ignoring his needy whine, I drag him onto me and crawl backwards onto the bed. “Grab the lube for me, will you? Top drawer.” He rushes off to do just that, and I watch him lean over with a possessive hand on his hip. So that’s the key. All I’ve got to do is keep him on edge and hungry for me, and my pretty boy will do just what I say.

I’ve got to remember that one.

Handing me the bottle, he carefully sits down onto my lap, just like I want him to.

“Lift my hips and roll my underwear down.”

His hands shake a little when he does what I ask, but once more, he surrenders to my will. When my underwear is down to my hips, my cock juts out, brushing past his. We both hiss at the sensation. I reach out around his hips and with his eyes still on mine, he starts to move.

“I’ve got zero patience right now,” I grit out, slicking my fingers with lube. “I need to be inside you.”

“Again?” He teases, but his dark, dilated eyes give him away.

“Oui. Encore une fois.” Et encore, et encore... I could fucking always be buried in that tight, hot ass of his. I prepare him quickly, one finger turning into two, then three, as I stretch and scissor his quivering hole. He mewls all the time, the sweetest of sounds leaving his full lips as he sits on me, waiting for me to guide him through. When I deem him finally ready, I slowly pull my fingers and tap them against his hips. “Lift up, baby. Show me how badly you want me.”

Robin lets out a choked moan, then does what I say.

“Fuck, the perfect sight,” I growl. It is. Looking at how his lithe, sculpted body slowly slowly, carefully absorbs my cock, taking my throbbing flesh inch by inch into his greedy hole, is mesmerizing. Sweat prickles his forehead, and I swipe the camel-coloured strands to the right, admiring his large eyes and those sweet, pouty lips, parted once more from the effort of taking me in.

“That’s it,” I praise. “You’re doing so well for me.”

Robin doesn’t speak, just lets out a strangled hiss. And then I’m fully inside of him, our balls snug together. Grabbing hold of his waist, I mumble, “Vas-y papillon, vole.”

Spread your wings and fly.

Lifting his hips, he lets my cock slide out of him just that little bit, before he slowly sinks right back onto me.

“Fuck, that feels good,” I mumble encouragingly. He smiles down at me, a genuine smile, followed by a nod and a broken “ouiii.” Then he repeats the movement, faster this time. Slide, sink, slide, sink. My grip on his waist tightens, and on the next roll of his hips, I gyrate mine up as well, taking over. He lets out a gasp when my cock sinks in deeper, his large eyes turning glassy.

There.

“You like that, baby?” I purr.

“Y-yeah.”

Picking up speed, I do it again, thrusting up in rapid succession, making sure to hit that bundle of nerves that make him cry out for me. His head tilts back, exposing his throat to me.

“From right now, you’re mine,” I growl, keeping the pace steady.

He just moans. His cock slaps against his belly with every roll, and I grab my hand around it, stroking it in sync with our lovemaking.

“From now, you’re under my protection. And I know I’m a sadistic fucker.” Behind glass, I see how my wolf spider has found her target. From the limp state of her prey, she has already injected it with venom. Smart girl. “But I’ll take good care of you. Would you like that?”

Robin turns his head back to mine, eyes vacant, a furious blush on his cheeks. And I know what he’s going to ask even before the word tumbles out of his mouth. “Why?”

“Parce que je suis fou de toi.”

Fuck, it’s the easiest thing to admit in the world.

Because I’m crazy about you.

“You are…” He hisses when I swipe my thumb past his wet tip. “I’m going to come. Fuck, I—” A shudder ripples through his body. Our eyes meet. In that moment I see him exactly for who he really is—innocent, lonely, sweet. He looks vulnerable and unguarded, those glorious eyes with their long eyelashes and curvy brows. His lips have parted, and he licks his bottom lip while he mumbles something unintelligible.

I’m so hungry for him. My own cock throbs in desperation, the mere thought of climaxing into that tight, sweet ass enough to nearly lose it on the spot.

And then Robin explodes. Hot and frantic, shuddering and moaning, his release leaks through my parted fingers and right onto my palm and stomach. I’m right behind him. With only a few thrust left to give, my balls draw up and I climax inside his tight, hot ass.

Perfection.

For a moment there's nothing aside from the buzzing of my ears and the feeling of smooth, hot skin against my own. Robin's still sitting on my lap, chest heaving, his shallow breaths the only sound filling the room.

"Ugh, that's gross," he mutters. "Is he..."

My eyes flick open and right at the ceiling to where the wolf spider is now feasting on its paralyzed prey.

"She. And yeah, she's going to have a special meal tonight. A bit like how my night started with you." I draw up my knees and give him a gentle kick in the back that destabilizes him enough to plummet forward and onto my chest. Robin lets out a surprised giggle that turns into a satisfied hum when I press him close.

"I'm dirty with cum and sweat," he complains.

"We'll take a shower shortly. Let's...let's just enjoy this moment. Then we'll enjoy the rest of what's to come."

The end.