



Vile Heart (Vicious Valentine)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Cor Night is upon us.

It's the one night a year when even the school encourages the Black Harts to act out on their vices, and more than ever, Camren Ryka is ready to break open the memories that have been kept stored in the back of his heart with lock and key for way too long.

There are rumours. But rumours can be tricked. There are lies. But lies can be bent. Not Camren—he won't yield to anyone. He has come out tonight to reclaim who's his.

Davian Mink. His best friend, his everything, his secret crush. From a young age they shared their life, until two years ago, when Davien threw Camren out. Out of his home and out of his life.

Davian is stubborn, and proud. He's also afraid. Because the mess he calls his life has been created by his own hands. What's worse? He secretly hopes that the Black Hart will come for him tonight and honour the promise he made when they were friends. But such honour always comes with a price. After all, there's only one rule for Cor Night.

Be vicious with your vices.

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Traditions. As cursed as they were by most, they never failed to create a frenzy. And a frenzy might be nothing more but a string of rumours, but still. Who can stay away from rumours?

Everyone wants to be part of where it happens.

And it happens to be Cor Night at Sacrum Cor University, the biggest party of the year. So here they were, dressed up and excited. Students of Cor. Ready to see and be seen. Ready to hear and be heard.

Sure, the party was mandatory, but that wasn't why they'd all come out. A presence could be faked, even with the way security scanned every multi-slate, identifying the party-goers.

Sure, Cor Night officially was a party to celebrate love. But all the students knew what really happened in the shadows.

A frenzy.

A chase.

A battle for power.

Cor Night was a massive party that lasted from night until morning. Promoted as a night of romance and celebration of love and friendship, it was more like an

invitation to partake in debauchery and sin.

It was the night the Black Harts chose their red heart.

Camren swept past the line of waiting students to the double doors, aware that all eyes were on him. The excitement was palpable in the air, and students had recognized him before he could reach his guard with an impatient click of his tongue. “Andry.”

The burly guy who stood waiting by the entrance, looked up, his scowl transforming into a professional smile, followed by a quick dip of his chin. He’d been in service of the family for as long as Camren knew. “Mister Ryka.”

Camren tipped his head to the foyer. “And?”

“He arrived about half an hour ago. Came in with his cousin.”

Camren gritted his teeth. “Cousin? He came with Jaro? No one else?”

Andry shook his head. “Just the two of them.”

“Did he—” Camren stopped himself. How did he look? He was going to find out shortly. “Good. What time do you finish?”

“In an hour, sir.”

“Come and find me.”

“Absolutely.” Andry hesitated. “I’m sorry about what happened earlier, in the embassy. We’re doing all we can to make the Helion population calm down.”

“Thank you.” Camren repositioned the cuff of his dark crimson uniform jacket. Even during events like this one, every student wore the same outfit, though they were allowed to wear whatever colour shirt they liked beneath it for Cor Night. Which was black for Camren. He looked good in black. It made his tall posture and slick, black hair drip into one splash of ink, the gaze in his almond eyes even sharper as he peered inside the foyer.

Andry pinned the black heart to his chest. In the center, a red light glowed, the illumination matching the bright specks on the others. They’d recognize him for who he was. A Black Hart.

Their worst nightmare.

“I’ll see you soon, Mister Ryka. Have a good night.”

“Have a good fight , you mean,” Camren muttered to himself as he stepped inside the party. Light knew he could use one.

Tonight, he felt on edge, caused by a mixture of worry and anticipation. By a desire to claim back what had managed to creep out of his life the moment he’d been vulnerable. Camren balled his fists, feeling adrenaline pumping through his veins. That idiot of a cousin Zavy would do.

He looked up at the railing of the foyer, a wolfish grin sliding across his face when he spotted his friends. A grin that turned into a full-blown smile at Ilya’s scowl as he peered down at the wave of students that came in. Someone was unhappy about being here tonight. Next to him stood Ryker and Devyn, whose red eyes flashed as he took in the view.

“Drink first,” he muttered to himself. They’d have to wait.

Making his way through the foyer and into the large room that hosted the party tonight, Camren headed for the bar. He ignored the prying gazes that followed his every movement and leaned in to get the barman's attention. The drink gave him the much-needed time to relax.

Andry was right. There had been unrest over the past days outside his father's office. A killer was on the loose on the streets of Helion, and as the ambassador of Helion in Ustun, worried families had flooded the building and begged for news on their loved ones. They'd wanted the truth.

The truth . Camren scoffed and polished off his glass.

The truth walked around here tonight, pretending not to care. The truth had been carefully avoiding Camren over the past two years, and he had let that happen, had trusted that he'd know when their moment would come.

Well, the truth would come out tonight.

The moment had come.

"I'll have another one," he demanded, shaking the ice cubes in his empty glass. Turning around, he leaned his back against the bar and took in the view, when a small hand touched his.

"Hi." A mousy girl watched him, a hesitant smile on her face.

Camren gave her a slow once-over, gaze lingering on the red heart pinned on her chest. He quirked an eyebrow. "Do I know you?"

"No, but I thought—" Even in the dimmed foyer with its shiny sparkles, he caught her blush. She cleared her throat, then picked herself up. "I know what will happen

tonight.” She gestured to the black heart pinned to Camren’s chest and shrugged with a nervous chuckle. “If you need any volunteers, you know, I’m available. Should you, I don’t know?—”

Camren held up a hand and the girl snapped her mouth shut. His eyes narrowed as he took her in and his lips ticked up when he caught her fidgeting with her hands. “And you wanted to volunteer?”

“Haellen!” Someone pulled on the sleeve of her blazer, making the red heart glimmer brightly. “Come on.” Still, she hesitated.

Camren suddenly yanked forward and she yelped and stepped back, eyes wide with fear as she finally let herself be dragged away by her friend, “You don’t have the right tools to satisfy me, baby girl,” he called after her, grinning until the duo disappeared out of view. Oh well, it was time to get this party going.

The foyer was even more crowded when he stepped his way back inside. Up at the railing, Ryker and Devyn had gotten into a fight. Other students were gaping when Ares and Zar stepped up to separate them.

“Hotheaded fools,” Camren murmured. Planting his empty drink into the hand of a random student with a, “Here. Put that away, will you?” Camren straightened his blazer. It was time to go and say hi. Ryker had quite the reputation, though he was surprised to see Devyn being ticked off so easily. It was because of Cor Night, of that he was sure. It did something strange to them all. Such as causing a fight between friends. Or bringing up the one thing that had been stored in the back of his heart. Camren wanted his friend back.

Usurn was a planet in the Seastea galaxy, rooted in history and custom. Continuing legacies and rights of passage were big deals, especially for families with history in

the

founding of their culture's rich heritage. Camren was half Usurian, half Helion. His mother's Usurian family held strong ties with the founding families of this planet, whereas his father had his with the Imperial family on Helion. A planet he'd never visited despite his mixed origins. A planet he could have moved to had he accepted a place at the prestigious Helion Academy. Camren hadn't wanted to move though. His life was here. His friends were here.

His truth was here. His lying, little mouse.

Camren made his way to the railing of the foyer through the concert of bright flickers of light. Everyone, including professors in attendance, wore red hearts pinned to their chests that had a light inside. The brightness was by design since the true meaning of the night revolved around those pins and their ability to be spotted.

Aside from the red hearts, there were only a handful of Black Harts who wore obsidian pins. Camren and his friends. The richest families of Usum. The leaders of the Praeda.

And his prey was already at the party, trotting around somewhere with that asshole cousin of his. Camren's fists clenched.

Suddenly the audience gasped collectively, then Ryker stormed past him and headed for the entrance, leaving Camren gaping after him halfway on the stairwell. Whoever he had spotted, was in big, fucking trouble.

"Where the hell have you been?" Ares asked when he joined his friends.

"Around," Camren replied noncommittally. "Anything good come through yet?"

Illya shook his head.

“It’s not like you can’t just have your pick on any given day,” Ares stated.

“What’s your excuse then?” Camren teased. “Too busy with your fake lovers to bother

catching real tail?” It was always so easy to rile Ares up.

“Don’t be jealous that I have something interesting to occupy my time.”

Camren didn’t deny it while clicking his tongue. “If you’re that into him, why don’t you just find the guy?”

“He’s not real,” Illya reminded them, but Ares ignored him.

“The character is a voice actor, right?” Camren shrugged. “So? Find him. Next best thing, am I right?”

“No, that’s not—” Before he finished his sentence, Ares paused, head slowly lifting from his screen to stare vacantly across the room.

Camren narrowed his gaze, not missing how Illya cursed under his breath.

“Gotta go.” Ares headed down the red-carpeted stairs without further explanation.

“Did you seriously just do that?” Illya’s glare made Camren grin.

“What? He was going to come to that conclusion on his own eventually. I just helped him along, that’s all.”

“And when he’s on the news for kidnapping?”

Camren held up both hands and took a deliberate step back.

“You’re a real piece of work.” Illya went back to watching the students as they arrived.

Camren tried to ignore all the longing glances they were getting from

the crowd beneath them. Fortunately, they weren’t all as forthcoming as that girl had been. Praeda wasn’t exactly a secret. Everyone knew what tonight truly meant, and what it meant for them if they happened to be chosen by one of the Black Harts. That didn’t mean he wanted them tugging on his sleeve. He’d already made up his mind, after all. “Where’s Ellery? Why isn’t he here yet?”

“No clue,” Illya shrugged. There were eight Black Harts this year, and Ellery was the youngest of them. “He’ll show up eventually.”

“Oh,” Camren motioned with his chin. “Speak of the devil.”

Ellery stepped through the doors and accepted the pin from the female student

working the front counter. Then he took another and passed it off to someone behind him.

“Who’s with him?” Camren tried to catch a glance, but Ellery kept his companion completely blocked from sight until they’d made it to the side of the room to the landing of the stairwell. From the corner of his eye, he didn’t miss the way Illya

straightened the second Ellery moved aside and caught the first look at the brunette at his side.

“Hey, are his eyes the same color as your hair?” Camren nudged his friend.

“Dibs.” Illya just stared right at the brunette, eyes flaring with a foreign emotion.

“Dude.” Camren grinned. “Why the sudden interest? Pretty sure he came with Ellery, so...”

“So?” Illya lifted a brow. “It’s Praeda.”

“Yes, it is.” Camren’s brown eyes flitted over the growing crowd. His friend was right. The night had begun and his prey was somewhere down here, in the lobby or any of the adjacent college buildings. Glitter balls set the otherwise dark space of the foyer in speckles of flames, the music sweeping up anticipation. It was time to search for the truth and bring it where it belonged. Clasp ing his friend on the shoulder, Camren straightened his black heart pin and watched how it shone brightly.

Red. the colour of blood. The colour of love.

“Well, if you’ll excuse me,” he tipped his head with a lazy grin. “Hunting season has begun.”

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Making his way down the stairs, Camren turned over his shoulder and winked at Illyas and Devyn. “Enjoy your own hunt!”

“If you need a hand, let me know,” one of them called out, but he flipped them off.

“Nah. I won’t need any help.” Camren sauntered through the foyer. Everywhere around him, red hearts waved through the air. He was going to take back what was his and no one would stop him.

Scurry scurry, little mouse...

Avoiding the searching gaze, he trailed through the busy lobby. Around him, people were dancing and having fun. Some of them he knew, but none of them were him. When he’d made his round, Camren headed for the rectangular courtyard that was enclosed between the different university buildings. Icicles had frosted against the lancet windows, and when he stepped outside, the gardens welcomed him through a layer of snow. It was surprisingly quiet out here as if the entire scenery had been stilled.

Camren took in a deep breath of fresh air, contemplating his next move when a new sound made him look around. He was still alone, yet...

The door of the adjacent library had been left ajar. Crossing the courtyard, Camren pushed open the glass door and peered inside. A group of six students sat around a table, heavily engrossed in a game.

“It’s your turn!” A girl called out.

A scoff. “No, it’s his. I’m not doing that.”

“But it’s your command.”

“But I chose a question!”

“Okay, I’ll go. What’s the command?”

One of them stood up with a theatrical sigh that turned into a surprised yelp when he saw Camren watching. Eyes darted from the black heart up to Camren’s face.

“Uhm...”

“Kiss—” The girl looked up, her grin widening when she saw Camren. “Him.”

Realization washed through the guy’s shocked expression and he slowly shook his head. “No fucking way.”

Camren stared right back, a sly smile on his face. This was the part he enjoyed most. The bewilderment. He cocked his head. “What? You won’t kiss me?”

“I—”

“If you don’t fulfill the command, you’ve got to drink,” the girl said.

The guy reached back and blindly grabbed for the closest bottle, still staring at Camren. He took a large gulp from the whiskey, eyes tearing when he swallowed. He never blinked.

“Ouch.” Cameron approached the table, where all the others had now finally noticed

him. “You just gave my ego a hit.” He grabbed a chair and turned it around, plopping down with his chin propped against the backrest. “So, what are we playing?”

His question was met with silence.

Camren looked around, his smile widening when he recognized the guy he’d wanted to fight ever since he’d set foot at the party.

Jaro Mink had grown since Camren had last seen him. He was still small in comparison to his own size, but it appeared the annoying, vibrant kid had turned into a geek. He’d tried to style his hair a little too much and the thick frame of his glasses took up much of his entire face. But the scowl he sent his way was deliberate.

“We’re playing questions and commands,” someone answered.

“He’s at the party,” Camren said instead, holding Jaro’s gaze, “but not here with you?”

Jaro got up. “I’m no longer playing.”

“Sit down,” Camren barked.

No one spoke. Tension rose as Jaro hesitated, his lips pressed in a stubborn pout.

“I want you to text him and tell him to get his ass here. Now .”

“He doesn’t want to see you.”

“I know.”

Jaro glowered. “You’re no longer friends.”

“I know.” Camren tipped his chin to Jaro’s multi-slate. “Now.”

“He has a girlfriend.”

So the rumours were true. Camren forced a lazy grin. Anything to quench the heat that rose in his chest. “Oh, does he now?”

Jaro faltered. He looked around, but the other students just sat, sipping from their drinks, clearly sitting this one out.

“If I have to tell you one more time to sit your ass down, this night won’t end well for you.”

Jaro threw his hands in the air, then finally sat back down. “What do you want with him anyway?”

Ohh...Camren knew exactly what he wanted. “That’s none of your business. Text him.” His cock twitched in his slacks, blood pumping south. He hoped the others wouldn’t notice. “We’re playing games here, right? I haven’t seen my old friend for way too long. Let’s find out how the hell the Mink cousins stayed in the shadows for the past few years.” He threw his gaze to the girl who’d given out the command earlier. “Why don’t you set us all up for another round?”

“Sure.” She got up and inspected the bottles of liquor.

“We’ve got whiskey and rum...”

“Rum’s fine, yeah?”

The others mumbled their agreement.

“He’ll be right here,” Jaro grumbled as he looked up from his multi-slate. “He’ll hate me for this.”

“Don’t worry about that.” Camren grabbed one of the cups and tilted it to his lips. “It’ll be a good reunion. So much catching up to do. Now, start the game. I’ll begin.” Leaning forward, his eyes flashed with sudden fury. “Where the fuck were you if it wasn’t on campus?”

Jaro was a good sport, Camren could appreciate that. Lifting his chin defiantly in the air, the other guy glared right at him. “We did most of our classes online. We were needed elsewhere.”

Why? Camren wanted to ask. But no, he’d wait. He was a patient man after all. He knew where they’d been. Andry had been dutifully reporting over the past years. He just didn’t know why. The real fucking why. The kind of why that came from the heart, and not from actions. “Hmm, interesting.”

“Anything else?” Jaro growled.

Camren folded his hands in front of his chest and leaned back. “No, that will do for now. I’ll let you guys play while I wait.”

Jaro scrunched his gaze, genuine surprise when Camren didn’t push him.

“Okay, who’s next?”

The rest of the game was boring. Camren had hoped for some juicy questions or obnoxious commands, but since he sat right in their middle with his feet planted on the table, the group visibly softened their level of spice. The only reason why his dick still stirred and the flutters in his stomach were persistent, was because of the anticipation of what was to come.

When they finished their first round, he made a show of glancing at his multi-slate, lifting an eyebrow. “Where does he need to come from, Jaro? From home?”

“No,” Jaro pressed his lips in a fine line and pushed the words out, “he’ll be right here.”

“You know what I think?” Camren swung his legs off the table and got up from his chair, kicking it against the wall. “I think you’re lying.” He yanked a taser out of the pocket of his pants, a small yet powerful instrument he always kept with him. Everyone gasped in shock. “What do you think guys?”

“I think I want out of here,” the girl muttered.

Camren smirked. “That too. Don’t worry, I’ll soon ask you to get the hell out. But what do you think? Is he—” He pointed the weapon back at Jaro and tilted his head. “Lying?”

“Yes,” someone mumbled.

The others carefully nodded, gazes darting between Camren and Jaro, who sat whimpering on his chair.

“Don’t piss yourself, Jarosh,” Camren taunted. “Isn’t that what he used to call you?”

“Not anymore,” Jaro sneered. “We’ve grown up.”

Those words ached more than they should. Ignoring the way his chest tightened, Camren pointed the tip of his gun toward the others. “You. Get the fuck out of here.”

They didn’t need to be told twice. Chairs clanked to the floor as the group rushed out, leaving a clattering echo that was followed by silence. “And you—” Camren tipped

Jaro's chair backward until it nearly toppled over, making the other man squirm in his seat. "You've got one last chance. Ruin it, and your life will be over. He's got five minutes. And remember, I want our reunion to be a warm welcome for him."

Jaro ticked away on his multi-slate while Camren repositioned the chairs back at the table, throwing cups in the bin. "We still have some drinks left." Putting the bottles in the middle, he made sure everything was tidy.

"He's nearly here," Jaro uttered.

"Good." Camren crooked a finger. "Come and sit at the table. Let's play another round."

Light footsteps left the snow and then the door to the library opened. "Jarosh?" Blond hair swept out his face, showing sharp facial features and curvy, dark eyebrows. Cheeks were flushed from his haste to get here in time. Eyes, large and innocent, darted over the table, surprise painting his expression. A tongue peeked out between full, plush lips. "Cousin?"

And then their gazes clashed.

"Davian, it's been such a long time since I saw you," Camren purred, sliding out of the shadows. "Come and sit with us. We're playing Questions and Commands, aren't we, Jarosh?" He raised the taser and swept it over Jaro's head, making the other man blow out a string of pleas. "Now."

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Davian's eyes were wide when he took in the scene. The red heart he wore shone brilliantly in the dim light as he moved closer to the table.

"Drink?" Camren pointed the taser toward the bottles on the table. "Jarosh, serve us two glasses of rum and coke." He pushed the other guy out of his chair, smirking when Jaro nearly bumped into the table.

"No." Davian held up a hand. His blue stare met Camren's. "I won't drink with you. I came here because I was worried about my cousin, not because I wanted to see you."

Liar.

"That's too bad because I want to see you. Sit."

"Why?" Davian shook his head slowly, lips pursed into a stubborn line.

"You know why. Because it's been too long." Camren watched Jaro fill up three cups with shaking hands. He hadn't asked him to serve himself, but he'd let it slide for now.

Davian carefully pulled out a chair, metal scraping the wooden floors. He dismissed the drink his cousin slid toward him.

"Drink," Camren ordered.

“No.”

“Drink.” Camren pointed the taser at Jaro’s temple.

A muffled curse spilled past Davian’s lips, but he lifted his cup and took a sip.

“Good. Now, we play. Who wants to go first?”

“I’ll go,” Jaro proposed when Davian didn’t answer.

“Oh yes, your cousin has already revealed some pretty interesting details.” Camren’s lips curled into a lazy grin. “Since I was curious why you disappeared after our final get-together.”

Davian’s gaze slid to Jaro, an unfamiliar glimmer in those blue eyes. Interesting .

“Question or Command?”

“Question,” Jaro muttered.

Camren’s gaze snapped to Davian. “You’ve got a question for your cousin, or shall I go?”

“I, yeah, uhm?—”

“Too late.” Camren’s smile widened as their stare continued. “Jaro, why did you and Davian switch to online classes?”

“Don’t tell him,” Davian snarled.

“He’ll find out anyway,” Jaro sighed and turned Camren’s way. “Because we were at

home. Combining classes while trying to save the family's business."

"Hmm, interesting." Just like the way Davian looked away, a soft blush coating his cheeks. "So one day, right after our...fall-out, you decided to avoid coming to campus? Just like you avoided my hundreds of messages begging you to return my calls?"

Good Light, he hadn't intended to mention that. But fuck, if that hadn't hurt. To be ignored by the guy he'd spent every free minute of his life with.

Davian at least had the decency to look embarrassed, that cute blush deepening.

"He lives his own life," Jaro threw in. "I don't know what happened that day, but he didn't want you in his life anymore, Cam, and then...things happened, and we were needed at home. That's all."

"That's fucking not all," Camren snarled. "You're not telling me everything."

"And why should we?" Davian got up out of his chair, looking glorious with his flushed skin, bright, blue eyes, his kissable lips pulled into a sneer.

Camren sank deeper into his chair, chuckling. "Ouch. So touchy. You used to smile so much. Clever, warm, faithful. You used to speak the truth." The word lingered. Davian's gaze wavered blue glistening with a flicker that was gone when he blinked. "I'm trying to figure out what kind of situation we have here," Camren downed his drink, wiping his mouth with his hand. "So...who's next? No volunteer? Davian, it's your turn. Sit down, baby."

Davian scoffed but didn't look away. Slowly he sat back, making Camren's dick tent his pants. His desire was battling with his patience, which started to run thin.

“ As my best friend, you are my second self, ” he murmured, air quoting. “Remember those words?”

Davian flinched as if the words physically stung.

“ It is not so much your help that helps me as is the confidence of your help. ” Their eyes met. “That was my promise to you.”

“Empty words,” Davian scoffed. A fine trickle of sweat ran down his temple, their gazes still embracing in a silent challenge.

“Ahh, are they? I think I’m starting to understand the situation here.”

“Cam, cut it out,” Jaro exclaimed. “He doesn’t want to see you.”

“Liar.” Camren didn’t take his eyes away, not missing how Davian’s blue gaze widened.

“It’s true,” Davian finally uttered. “I don’t know what kind of game you’re playing tonight, and I only showed up at the party because my—” His lips snapped shut.

“Oh yes....how could I forget?” Camren cocked his head, using his outstretched hand to scratch Jaro’s cheek with the taser. ““Someone’s missing at our party.”

“No, there isn’t,” Davian gritted through his teeth. “Times have changed. And your promises are empty.” He dragged his chair back and tipped the content of his glass down his throat. “We’re done here. Let’s go.”

“Sit. Down.”

“No!”

Camren yanked his chair back and threw it against the wall, tipped up Jaro's head, and pressed the taser onto his skull. "You've got three seconds."

Davian's gorgeous eyes widened with shock as they darted to his cousin. "Why are you dragging him into our fight?"

"Don't worry, it will soon just be me and you. Now, be a good boy and text our missing lady. I heard that you have a girlfriend, baby?"

Davian's lips pressed into a fine line. He didn't deny it, much to Camren's annoyance.

"Question, Jaro? Does he fuck this lady friend?"

Jaro spluttered in his hold.

"Jarosh," Davian warned.

"Get her here." Camren's hand dug deeper around Jaro's neck, and he grinned when the other guy struggled as he fought for air. For a hesitant moment, it looked like Davian was going to refuse. His eyes shot daggers and he shook his head in disbelief. Then he finally relented, typing a quick message on his multi-slate. It dinged almost immediately with the response.

"Someone's eager," Camren joked.

"She's on her way," Davian ignored him. His voice sounded gruff.

"Good." Camren kicked back his own chair and let go of Jaro, who wheezed as his hand moved up to claw at his neck. He plopped down into his own and grabbed his cup. "Let's wait for her—what's her name?"

“Galya,” Davian said reluctantly. “Galya Haerlo.”

The name didn’t ring any bells. Camren quickly texted Andry for a background check.

“She’s a junior.”

“And how long have you been together?”

For the first time, Davian dropped his gaze and stared at his hands instead.

“Well?”

“For some time,” Davian said cryptically.

“Jaro?”

“A few weeks, I believe.”

“What a coincidence.” Camren inwardly purred. The same time as when the Mink shop had gone bankrupt. Yes, he’d been fucking right about this. He could feel every nerve-ending activate. False promises, huh?

It is not so much your help that helps me as is the confidence of your help.

Davian was asking Camren for help in his own clumsy way. The guy’s heart was a danger to himself.

“Your turn,” Camren smirked. “Question or command.”

“Question,” Davian said through gritted teeth. Fucking finally. With the way he stuck

his chin in the air, he was looking for another fight.

“Very well,” Camren pretended to contemplate. “I met you when I was four and you were three. From that day, if I recall well—and please correct me if I’m wrong—we spent every day together. Best friends. We had our first judo practice together. Spent our first night out together. First time drunk. First time in high school. First time in love—” He halted for the wanted drama effect, stomach fluttering when that cute blush on Davian’s cheeks flared. “And then, one day, boom. You threw me out.”

Davian looked away. “You know why,” he mumbled.

“Remind me.”

“Times have changed.”

Camren raised out of his chair and leaned forward, planting both hands on the table. “Don’t give me that fucking bullshit!”

Davian flinched but didn’t move. His blush had crept up to the tips of his ears. “You k-kissed me.”

“Oh, yessss.” Jaro spluttered at the words, making Camren’s grin spread even wider. Fuck yes, tell it to the whole world, baby. “That’s right.”

“And I didn’t like it.” Davian tilted his head back and his slick, blonde hair cascaded over those hot ears and framed parts of his temple and cheeks. He licked his lips and flared his nostrils. Something flashed in those blue eyes. Something that made Camren lean further, closing their distance, dipping his gaze when Davian swallowed to catch the way his Adam’s apple bobbed.

Beautiful.

“No, you’re right, you didn’t like it. You fucking loved it. Craved it.”

“Davian?” The glass door to the library opened, bringing a fresh wave of ice-cold air. A girl walked inside, halting when she took in the situation. “Oh.” Her eyes darted to Camren’s black heart.

Camren kept his eyes on Davian. “I presume you are Galya?”

“Uhm, yes?”

“Why don’t you invite her in, Jaro.” It wasn’t a question.

“Come and sit with us,” Jaro rasped. “We’re playing a game.”

Slowly rising out of his seat, Camren circled the table until he’d reached Davian, who still sat stiffly in his chair. There was no way any one of them could miss the tent in Camren’s pants, which was part of the fun. The other part was to grab Davian’s throat and lean in, flicking his tongue against those sweet, soft lips in a fleeting movement. “I’ve missed you,” he whispered. Then he released Davian and walked back to his chair. Plopping back, he asked, “Question or command, Galya?”

“I know you.” She said instead, looking at him in pure agony. “You’re one of the Black Harts.”

Camren grinned. “Clever girl. So, question?”

She nodded hesitantly.

“Do you love him?”

Galya blew out a breath, brushing a hand through her ginger curls. “Yeah. Yes, of

course, I do.”

“She doesn’t sound convincing,” Camren turned to Jaro, “do you think?”

Jaro bit his lower lip. “Why don’t we just go back to the party and have some fun there?” He tried.

“Has he ever fucked you?”

Galya flinched, eyes darting around before it swept over his black heart. “He’s my boyfriend.”

“Your boyfriend ?” Camren grinned. “Oh sweetheart, I think you are mistaken.” Tipping down his drink. “You and little man, enjoy the party. Davian, unless you want to make a scene in front of every single student at Cor, meet me at my favorite spot in the building.” Tucking the taser back into his pocket, he didn’t wait for the others to leave and walked out of the library.

Camren made his way back through the foyer. One glance at the empty railing confirmed his suspicions—despite their complaints, all his friends were gone, in search of their prey. The thought made him horny.

Davian's wide stare. Those big, blue eyes. Full lips. Blond, shiny hair. His determination to fucking say 'no' to Camren.

How dare he. He was Camren's. Camren's best friend, the one he'd discovered everything in life with before the other Black Harts had made their wicked appearance. One by one they had corrupted his darkened soul a little further.

Maybe he was in need of redemption.

Being privileged was awesome, but it didn't always make things easier. He and his brother had always gotten what they wanted. They were close with their parents, and aside from the recent political unrest his father had through his work, they'd never had to worry a single day in his life.

For Davian, things had always been different. His angel of a friend had grown up in a working-class family who struggled to keep their utility shop for as long as Camren had known. His meeting Davian when they were toddlers had been a stroke of luck, a birthday party of someone both their parents happened to know. It had led to so many playdates. Playdates had become hang-outs in the park, nights out, and when Davian turned out to be an ambitious student, Camren's parents had opted to pay his college fees.

And then, when they were freshmen, everything had collapsed.

The party was in full swing. White and red balloons had been put together in a large, glass cubicle, waiting to be released. Red hearts flashed everywhere. He wondered if Davian was close by, searching for him. Was he already on his way to their next meet-up like a good boy? The thought was maddening and made desire pool in his stomach. The way he'd refused him, stubborn and proud and so, fucking sexy.

Camren headed for the bar. As he waited for his drink, a large presence appeared next to him.

"I finished, Mister Ryka."

"Andry." Camren gestured to the barman. "Make it two."

"Thank you, Mister Ryka."

"Well, I figured we could use a few tonight."

They drank in silence.

Then, as if a light was switched on, Camren caught sight of Davian. He stood on the dance floor, Galya's arms wrapped around his slender frame. She was only a little smaller than he was, but Camren growled at the way she took possession of him. Davian let her, hips jerking uncomfortably as he moved to the rhythm.

"Shouldn't he be somewhere else?" Andy deadpanned, taking a sip.

"Yeah, he should." But fuck, if that defiance didn't make him hard.

They watched the couple until the tune morphed into a sexy slow one that made

Camren's hand fist in his pocket.

Had Davian fucked her? Either way, she was going to pay for it. The dance floor turned into a wave of grinding hips that all blurred to the background as Camren stared at Davian, who tried to pull himself free from his girlfriend's hold. She tilted her head back and laughed, tightening her grip around his hips possessively, grinding into him. "The bitch. He always was too gentle," he growled.

"Perhaps we need to remind your man to go where he has been summoned."

"Perhaps we should." A plan formed in Camren's devious mind. "Andry, I need you to go to the sports wing. I'll be texting you the details in a minute, but in the meantime, make sure to keep everyone out there."

"Of course." The large man finished his drink and planted the glass back on the bar. They watched as two more of her friends joined in, and then the little group swayed to the beat, leaving Davian dancing by himself.

"Enough." Camren marched onto the dance floor, ignoring how tens of red hearts fluttered as they watched him pass. His arm snaked around Davian's waist, who stood with his back to him, and he pressed their bodies close.

Davian jerked in surprise, and Camren tightened his hold as he rocked their hips together. Spreading his fingers, he let them rest on Davian's lower stomach, teasingly close.

The girls gasped. Galya glared at him, and he smirked back and pressed his mouth against Davian's soft hair, inhaling greedily. Fuck yeah, this was his.

"Cam," Davian struggled to free himself.

“Ssshh,” Camren’s lips slid to Davian’s ear. “You don’t want to make a scene, now do you? Because I can promise you, if you want one, I can give it to you.”

Using his hand to keep them close, he led Davian’s rigid body to loosen up and move to the rhythm of the music. Slow circles drawn by their hips, Camren’s mouth hot on Davian’s temple. That scorching, flushed skin his lips caressed drew to him like candy.

Slowly, Davian’s movements started to match his, and Camren could use his fingers to discover other parts of the guy who used to be his best friend. The curve of his waist was strange, yet familiar, and his fingertips easily found their way under the white shirt Davian wore under the crimson red blazer. Here too, his skin felt hot.

“Stop.” Davian’s breath was ragged, his tone void of its earlier sharpness. The tender flesh of his throat pulsed when Camren pressed his lips against it, inhaling his woodsy scent.

“No,” he growled, then dug his nails into the skin of Davian’s stomach.

Davian jerked back against his chest, ass cheeks offering the perfect place for Camren’s dick to rub against. Davian’s confusion created licks of fire in his groin, making him hard as fuck.

“People are watching.”

“Of course they are. So, your girlfriend...” Camren pressed his lips against Davian’s temple, not enough for it to be a kiss but enough for it to stake a claim. Despite Davian’s protests. “Does she know about your current situation?” Suddenly he spun Davian around until they were facing each other, hands slotting around the other man’s waist and pressing their groins together.

Fuckkk ...Camren inwardly groaned. Davian was hard too.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I’m glad you didn’t tell her.” Camren brushed a blond strand out of Davian’s face, making the other man flinch. “That it’s just me you’ve reached out to. Really, fucking glad. You knew I’d come, didn’t you?”

“Cam...” Davian looked away.

“Yes, baby?” Camren crooned, making their cocks throb against each other. “Tell me, that was your intention of coming out here tonight, wasn’t it? Tell me what happened.”

“Fuck you,” Davian growled.

Camren’s hand slid down over the curve of Davian’s abs, rounding the shape of his hips until he reached back to his ass. He squeezed, making Davian hiss and his cock jolt. “We haven’t quite gotten to that part yet.” He smiled sweetly. “But if you want, I can show you what’s on the menu for tonight?”

“No!” This time Davian managed to push him away, teeth bared and blue eyes wide with anger and fear. That same fear that had ruined everything for them, and Camren would be damned if it would ruin their future. Yanking on Davian’s hand, he pulled him in, his lips nipping at Davian’s hot ear shell.

“Remember, you don’t want to make a scene. Now, be a good boy and head to my favorite place. If you’re not there in five minutes, I’ll hunt you down and bring you there myself.” He jutted his chin toward the gaping crowd. “And I’ll let them all watch. Every. Single. One of them.”

Davian's cheeks blushed and his eyes spat fire. But his lips...those kissable lips...they trembled. "You wouldn't."

"Perhaps," Camren grinned, clenching a hand around Davian's cheeks and pressing tight. "But are you willing to take the risk?"

Davian glared back at him, then shrugged himself free and disappeared into the darkness.

Camren watched him leave. Soon...He dragged his gaze away. "Galya."

The ginger-haired girl gave him a reluctant nod.

He crooked a finger. "Come with me."

The crowd parted like they were afraid to get in the way.

As they made their way to the sports wing, Camren read out loud from his multi-slate, "Galya Haerlo. Twenty years old, a mediocre student on a scholarship, resides in one of the student accommodations here on campus. No criminal record—" He squeezed her hand, "Yet."

She gasped but didn't reply. Clever girl.

"Tell me again, do you love him?"

Galaya tried shaking her hand free, but Camren's hold was too firm. "I've told you already, that's none of your business."

He pushed her against the wall, smiling when he caught the fear in her wide eyes. "You see, there's the problem. That is my business. Anything that involves him, is

my business.”

She tried to shove him away. “You arrogant pig. You think that I’m afraid of you?”

“You’re either very brave or very stupid.” He cocked his head as she finally relented, shoulders slumping. “That’s it, brave girl. Some people, you can’t beat. I’m one of those people. Now, since we don’t want you to get into any problems with law enforcement, just do what I say. It’s simple, short, and you can return to the party. Alone . Because you and him are over, understand?”

“If he wants to, then yeah. But I won’t let you force yourself on him.”

Ignoring her blabbering, Camren checked for the remaining background information Andry sent. “Ouch, your file might be clear, but your brother...”

“Don’t.” Galaya crumbled. Finally. Still, she tipped up her chin. “But promise me you won’t hurt him.”

“Has he ever fucked you?”

Slowly she shook her head. “It wasn’t like that between us. I wanted to, but—he’s not into me in that way. I’d like to remain friends with him though.”

Camren took her in with flared nostrils. That news had made him fucking happy. Although now he wondered if Davian was still a virgin. Good Light, he didn’t know what to do with a virgin. He’d probably break him in two.

Galaya shook her head, reading his expression. “He’s had some experience in bed. A little,” she chuckled. Still, a little was better than nothing.

“Alright.” Suddenly tired of the conversation, Camren dragged her toward the end of

the hall. “Yes to staying friends. If you don’t fuck this one thing up...”

5

Davian still couldn't believe it.

Camren had barged back into his life as if nothing had happened two years ago. As if their previous lives hadn't just completely vanished, taking all those precious moments they'd lived before in its wake.

Leaving Davian struggling for himself.

He'd done that. Davian was fully aware of that. He'd thrown Cam out of his life, had been so shell-shocked when his best friend had reached out to him and had propositioned him...

What? A relationship? Davian scoffed into the silence of the corridors. A guy like Camren Ryka wouldn't do relationships. He'd simply fuck. He was realistic enough to understand that wasn't an offer that had been on the table back then.

But he'd wanted it. With his entire existence, he'd wanted Cam. His hero, his safe haven, his best friend.

As my best friend, you are my second self.

Those words. When Cam had sprinkled them over his infatuated self? They'd meant the world to him. But rare beauty like that didn't exist, Davian had learned that a long time ago. And with the influential Ryka family paying his tuition fee, Davian's entire family had looked up to him. Poor kid making it big. He couldn't afford to screw up.

Times had been rough over the past years, their family business barely surviving. Being hungry had become second nature, much like the ice-cold temperature the Mink's residence was blanketed in, when heating bills hadn't been paid in time. His parents bickered a lot, and threats and shouts had left their mark on the sense of safety Davian felt at home. He felt lonely, most of the time. Even when he was surrounded by family.

And now, two years after he'd refused Cam's romantic advances, his former best friend was back, more determined and more dangerous to him than ever. Because Davian had slipped up. Cam was right—he had called out for him. But there was a big difference between hoping that Cam would save him, and the Black Hart showing up. What's worse was the Black Hart knowing that Davian wanted to be saved.

During Preada.

Davian walked aimlessly around college, with absolutely no intention of going to Cam's favorite place, the sports hall. He'd left the party behind but wasn't sure where he was heading. He shouldn't give in this easily, despite Cam's threats. It would make him look desperate. Weak.

It was the truth though. He felt vulnerable. Tired of fighting on his own.

The earlier events played through his mind like a broken record. In a black and crimson red, with that inky-black heart pinned to his chest, the light reflecting in those almond eyes, Camren had looked sinfully handsome. The way his arms had wrapped around Davian's hips, pressing their bodies together. Davian blew out a heavy breath, ignoring how his body thrummed with heat, the recollection enough to make his cock lengthen in his pants.

This was madness, yet there it was, knocking at his door, because of him. Regret smothered his aching heart. He should have never let things go that far, destroying

their family's future like that. But truly, their chances had become slim years ago, when Usurn founders had introduced the mass stores. Their parents never were true competition, and though they'd never wanted to admit it, they'd been overrun by the wealth. Per usual.

A surge of anger rolled through his stomach. He should stop this madness. He shouldn't crawl back to Cam. He should grab Jaro instead and go home. They'd managed these past two years. He should fucking forget Camren Ryka and admit that he'd let the store go bankrupt.

He was in love with a Black Hart.

The admittance tasted bitter on his tongue. Much like the fear that went hand in hand.

He'd done the right thing by kicking Cam out of his life, he knew he had. The Ryka family controlled his life. When they had proposed to pay his tuition fee, Davian had been so excited to follow Cam to college. Never in a million lightyears would he have thought that he'd be going to study at the university. They only differed one year, and during those first months of their time here, life had been as usual. They'd spend every free moment together. Playing judo, gaming, or just hanging out. Cam's carefree, wicked character never failed to balance out Davian's hesitant, serious nature. He would have become a nerd of the same caliber as Jaro had it not been for his best friend.

But then, one evening in December, after a marathon of playing video games in their pyjamas while eating pizza-as-much-as-you-can-eat, the lines had blurred. Davian had often wondered afterward if he'd done something to provoke Camren. He didn't think so, but couldn't be sure. With time, the memory had blurred into something that had never happened, but that had kept him up many a night, furiously jerking off.

That night, when they'd been sprawled on Camren's king-size bed, controllers in

hand, holo screen lit up with both their games, Davian had felt so fucking good.

And then Cam had fucked everything up by kissing him.

Davian stopped and looked around. He'd been so lost in his thoughts, that he hadn't realized where his feet had taken him.

To the sports wing. It was one of the largest departments of the college, with many different fields and pools, both indoor and outdoor.

His multi-slate dinged, the holo screen showing Galya's face. "Babe, come and join me in the judo room?"

"The judo room?" Davian frowned. "Why would you be there?"

She flashed a smile. "I'll show you when you get here."

"Uhm—" He hesitated. Cam's favorite building on campus had always been the sports wing. And he'd told Davian to meet him here. What were the odds of walking into him? He didn't want that, right? He'd told himself he'd go home. His chest clenched at the thought. Still, what the hell would she be there? "Is it empty?" He asked instead.

She giggled. "Aside from me, yes."

"Okay, yes, sure." His mind rattled. "It's just that I'm not sure we're allowed in there tonight."

Liar. He squeezed his eyes shut, shame burning his insides.

"No one's here, babe. Besides, I can lock the door. Come." She winked, crooking her

finger.

They had only been together for a few weeks, but aside from a few kisses, they hadn't exchanged any heated moments. Good Light, he couldn't even get his dick up when she touched him. She'd never mentioned anything, but he knew she knew. And it was embarrassing.

Did she want to try again?

The fact that she had to show initiative, made him feel like such a loser.

Entering the sports wing, he could blindly find his way to the judo spaces. How often had they not wrestled here? But Cam wasn't here. Davian tried to suppress that awful feeling of disappointment.

His favorite place on campus might have changed over the past years. Times had changed. Those were his own words. Even though they hurt.

"Galya?" He called as he made his way through the corridor. On his right were multiple practice rooms, the left was reserved for the changing rooms.

"In room three!" She called out.

Pushing open the door to the room, he was met by emptiness. And a chair, set in the middle. "I'm sorry if I wasn't clear. I love your creativity, don't get me wrong. I'm just not sure if I'm ready to take things further." He winced at his own words. That sounded awful. Swirling around, his gaze searched for her fiery hair. "Galya? You here?"

The door slammed shut behind him. When he spun around, he found himself face to face with a beast of a man, dressed in a black suit.

“Who are you?” Davian asked.

“You know who I am.” The man nudged his chin to where the chair stood. “There are two ways we can do this. Either I drag you to that chair or you go and sit your ass down. Which one’s it going to be?”

Davian’s jaw clenched as he took in the room once more. “She’s not here, is she?” He huffed at the silence that followed. “Of course. I’m too stupid for my own good. So what’s going to happen now?” He stalked toward the chair, sure to keep his head held high. The situation was nerve-wracking, but he wouldn’t show anything. He plopped down onto the chair. “See? Here I am? Now what?”

“Now—” Ropes were pulled out of his pockets, “I’m going to tie you up.”

Now that...Davian’s heart sped up. That was downright terrifying.

“No one’s going to get hurt. It’s Cor Night, remember? Spread your legs.”

Davian obeyed, dumbfounded. Should he fight the big guy? “She texted me, you know. She was going to be here.”

“And she will be,” was all he got.

Davian fumbled with his emotions as he watched the big guy tie him up. “Just don’t leave me here, okay?”

“There. Finished.” A flash of a smile, then he walked away.

Davian had to fight the panic that surged through his insides. He bit his lower lip, but it didn’t stop the bitter taste of fear filling his mouth. His breathing sped up and then...the lights went out.

Davian's eyes furiously blinked as he gazed around the black air. "Calm down," he muttered. He knew this place. He'd worked out countless times in the judo rooms. But the place felt different in the pitch dark. Especially when tied up. His multi-slate dinged, but his wrist was tucked behind the chair. Jaro...his cousin would search for him. He'd find him. They'd have a big laugh and head back home. Swipe up the scatters of destruction he'd caused. Forget about the past. Forget about...

Footsteps.

Davian scrunched his eyes while his mind tried to focus. Where did they come from? They were light and fast. No...he bit his bottom lip in concentration. They were heavy. There were multiple footsteps. That guard probably.

"H-hello?"

"Davian." A soft hand brushed his hair.

"Galya?" Davian released his breath in relief, blabbering, "fuck, you really scared the shit out of me. Why is it so dark in here? Who's the guy who tied me up? You know how scared I am of the darkness."

Fingers ran over his shoulder down his chest, then disappeared back into the darkness.

Davian blinked in confusion. "Galya? Babe?"

"Don't worry." She sounded too far away.

"What do you mean, don't worry? Where are you going?" Davian thrashed in the chair, but the rope didn't give way.

The click of the closing door created a deafening sound in his head.

This had all been a game. It was Cor Night, after all. How had Cam bribed his girlfriend so easily? Davian signed. Everything was easy for a Black Hart. Now he had another problem. Slowly reality kicked in. He sat tied up on a chair in the darkness. And he wasn't alone.

"Is that you?" He whispered.

Fingertips trailed down from his forehead to his cheeks, lingering where they traced the shape of his lips. Davian opened his mouth, but the fingers moved away, continuing their soft perusal down his chin. He swallowed, and the caress followed the bobbing of his throat. "I shouldn't," he muttered to himself, voice sounding unnaturally hoarse. "Fuck, I really shouldn't—" His breath hitched when those fingers tweaked a nipple through the thin material of his white shirt.

Another pair of fingers stroked his other nipple, and Davian tilted his head back and groaned. His pants tightened uncomfortably as blood rushed south. He stared up into the darkness when those fingertips started unbuttoning his shirt, caressing the naked skin of his lower abdomen. "Is that you?" He tried again. The fingers had reached his pants. "I shouldn't want this." His protest was weak, the sensations sizzling through his veins. "Fuck," he moaned when they traced the outline of his stiffened cock. His head lolled back and his hips thrust up out of their own volition. It had been so long since someone had touched him. His pants were rolled down and left at his knees, and Davian stared through hooded eyes in an attempt to see. Fingers kneaded the insides of his thighs, and Davian shuddered when they reached his balls.

"I might blow before you even begin." His body thrummed with a need that was new to him. Davian thought he heard a chuckle, but then all sounds were blocked by the loud buzzing of his ears as a warm mouth engulfed his exposed slit. Davian jerked on a grunt and he could only gasp through quivering lips. "Good Light, you feel so

good,” he babbled. “I never knew it could be like this. I—” Heat enflamed the tips of his toes and worked its way up to his groin, where that sinful mouth was now taking Davian’s cock to the back of a throat. He lifted his ass in an unbridled roll, words of plea spilling past his lips. Hands rolled his heavy balls in their palm, and that heat spread out through his abs up to his chest, tightening his muscles as he prepared for release.

That vicious mouth kept on sliding up and down his shaft, tongue darting out to lick at his wet tip, cleaning up the pre-cum that kept on oozing out.

“I can’t stop,” Davian murmured. The muscles in his arms hurt from the effort to be released. “Oh, fuck, you’re going to make me come.”

Hands were everywhere. Cupping his sack, wrapping around his girth, keeping him still when Davian wanted to thrust, faster and faster, in search of his climax. He couldn’t think anymore, his usual restraint completely cracked. He could only moan when that mouth gave him the perfect suction, lips closing tight around his dick and sucking him slow and deep. Davian came on a howl, his entire body shocked from what was the most intense orgasm he’d ever experienced. And that mouth kept wrapped firmly around him until he was fully milked, only then leaving lazy laps to clean him up.

Davian stayed like this, body trembling, mind numb. That mouth went to leaving wet, open kisses on his stomach, onto his pubic hair, and softened cock. Then Davian’s cock was nicely tucked back into his briefs together with his pants. His shirt was tugged back inside his waistband, the buttons still open. More kisses were dropped onto his stomach and chest, and then Davian held his breath because that mouth was just inches away from his own. A finger touched his lips, tracing the shape of his mouth once more, accompanied by those lips, as if they were testing its firmness. Soft kisses were dropped to the corners of his mouth, causing goosebumps on his neck. When they pulled back, Davian searched for it with his own lips, craning his neck in

an attempt to drag it back in. On his own mouth.

This was madness, he knew it. And yet, he craved the sensation like a starved man.

Intimacy. Safety.

Isn't that what he'd come for tonight?

Davian had never felt so exposed.

Sitting here, tied up, with the intensity of this mouth caressing him, taking care of him, made him want to huddle up into a ball and cry.

"Untie me," he barked instead. "I don't know what you're playing at, but it's not funny anymore."

The light switched on. He winced, blinking furiously, then froze.

Camren sat between Davian's spread thighs, a mischievous glint in his dark eyes. "You have an interesting definition of fun." He smiled. "Hot as hell perhaps, or forbidden, or sexy as fuck?—"

"Stop." Davian's nostrils flared. He wasn't sure if he could keep those tears inside.

"Baby, with the way you tremble and moan and then fall apart on my tongue? Hmm." He grinned, looking smug. "I've only just begun."

Davian looked around. Panic threatened to boil over. "Where's Galya? What have you done with her?"

"She left after she was requested to lure you in. As to what I'm going to do with

her...” Camren cocked his head. “I haven’t quite decided. I’m no fan of people who touch what’s mine.”

“I’m not yours!”

Camren’s easy smile vanished, eyes flashing with anger. “Stop Davian. We both know the truth.”

Davian’s lips clamped shut. He felt his cheeks warm with embarrassment. Had he been so obvious when he’d destroyed his family’s business? Had everyone known? Good Light, he’d been desperate for the entire world to see.

“The real question is, are you ready to give in?” Camren slid his hands over Davian’s clothed thighs and pressed a kiss on the outline of his softened dick, making it twitch with interest. “I mean, your body is. But it’s your heart I’m after.”

“No.”

“I will make you.”

“You don’t have to.”

“Why did you do it then?” Camren dragged his glare over Davian’s face, making him shudder. “Why did you ruin everything if it wasn’t for me coming back to you, and keeping my promise?”

Davian pressed his lips into a fine line, mind rattling. Cam was right. And he wanted it. Wanted it so badly that he—his heart thundered. But he couldn’t give in. Couldn’t sign his life away like that. “Times have changed,” he tried. The words sounded good, but they were meaningless.

Camren tipped his head back and laughed. The sound was a low, warm ruffle that made Davian's heart rate pick up. "You keep on saying that. But I don't think you understand." Camren's hands tightened on his thighs, sliding up and over his hardening dick. Despite the mind-shattering orgasm, Davian's arousal flared once more. "Tonight's Praeda."

Davian's gaze shifted automatically to the black heart that was pinned onto the expensive material of Camren's blazer. He barely registered the rest of that phrase.

"...meaning that I get to hunt you down. Make you mine."

He flicked up his gaze. His mouth had gone dry.

"You heard me well enough." Camren leaned in and pressed his lips on Davian's, reaching behind him to untie his ropes. "I don't know what's holding you back, but I will find out. Tonight's your night. Enjoy yourself. It's your last night alone."

"What? Last night a-alone?" Davian echoed, shaking his freed hands and feet. It's what he'd wanted. And yet...

"You know what I mean, baby." Camren's fingertips traced the shape of his lips, inky-black gaze focused on what he felt. "No matter what shitshow you have caused, we'll fix it."

Davian snarled, snatching a finger between his teeth. Camren laughed, shaking his head. "You always were afraid of speaking your emotions. Don't worry, we'll work on it together."

Davian let go of Camren's finger and broke out of his chair. "I'm not some fucking toy you can play with." He walked toward the door. "I'm going home."

“Baby...” Camren tutted. “Remember what I said before? Don’t make a scene, unless you want the whole student embodiment to watch as I bend you over and fuck you raw.”

Davian felt his ears burn, grunting when Camren let out another one of those annoying sexy rumbles.

“You’re taking me for a fool.” He reached for the door, grabbing the doorknob to keep his balance. Suddenly he felt light-headed.

“Really? And what about your?”

Davian peered over his shoulder. “What about me?”

“You’re a walking contradiction. Always have been. Even when we were just friends, you’d complicate your life. Too many choices and no courage to say ‘no’.”

“If you didn’t want to be my friend back then, why stay? You could have gone.”

You could have exchanged me. The words formed a heavy pit in Davian’s stomach.

“Why would I do that? You were my best friend. You were everything I wanted.”

“But you...you ruined it,” Davian’s voice broke.

“Did I? Do you remember how many messages I left you after you’d kicked me out?”

Yes, he did. Davian sniffed, but no sharp retort left his throat. Instead, he felt raw with the sudden reunion of these bitter feelings from the past.

“Two hundred and thirty,” Camren voiced his thoughts. “It took me nearly three

hundred messages in four months to understand that you'd really thrown me out. That you'd lied to me."

"I never—" Davian cleared his paper dry throat, but the lump that had formed was too thick. He was lost for words.

"Thing is, you're right about one thing. Times have changed. I have changed."

Camren approached from behind him. "A few years ago, you surprised me. You hurt me. You threw me out like I was trash. You reaching out for me today? It means that you haven't forgotten me. And I sure as fuck haven't forgotten you. So you can snarl all you like, but before this night is over, I'll have you hauled back to where you belong. Ohh..." Camren's hand brushed through Davian's blond strands. "You like that, don't you? When I claim you like this? When I tell you what I'll do with you once you're back in my grasp?"

"No." But the denial sounded strange in Davian's ears.

A low chuckle, then Camren pressed his nose in Davian's hair, inhaling deeply. "Liar. Beautiful liar. Go now and have fun—" Davian couldn't help but squeak when Camren swatted his ass, "because in the end, I will hunt you down."

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Source Creation Date: August 4, 2025, 10:30 am

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Davian fled. Out of the studio and through the corridors. He was panting, his mind swimming, his body struggling to comprehend what the fuck had just happened.

Finally, he made it back to the foyer, where a few students peered at him in astonishment.

“You alright?” Someone asked.

“Yeah.” Davian brushed a shaking hand through his hair. “I’m good.” Sweat dripped down his temple and landed on his flushed skin. He was still breathing hard when he made his way to get a drink. A familiar man leaned against the bar, eyes already fixed on him. Davian shivered in recognition. It was the guy from before.

“A piece of advice?” Leaning in, the man murmured, “He won’t let you go. Never has. I’d just surrender. It’ll go faster.”

“What do you mean, lever let me go?” Davian flattened his lips as if to prevent the flutters in his stomach from flying away.

The other guy shook his head, chuckling. “I’m Andry, by the way. I work for the Ryka family. I’ve seen you around. Before . I’m sure I’ll see much more of you after tonight when he has you back in his clutches.”

“You’re wrong. I won’t be anyone’s property. I’ve worked my ass off to be where I am.”

Andry pressed his lips in sympathy. “Life’s unfair, isn’t it? Even your hard-working ass is controlled by the rich. If his parents decide tomorrow that they won’t pay your tuition fees anymore, your future is—” Andry clicked his fingers, “gone up in smoke.”

“I won’t have him control me,” Davian sneered into his glass.

“Now that’s just a paradox, isn’t it?”

Davian sighed. The constant internal battle was tiring. Even Andry knew what his game was. Clearly, he’d been more obvious than he’d thought. He thought of the dark judo room he’d fled just now. Of how his body had come alive, of how his mind had filled with flutters of hope and love and—he bit his lower lip at the memory—arousal. Good Light, he’d never been that hard before. “How much do you know?”

Andry shrugged. “Like I said, he’s never let you go. Though he wouldn’t come near you. That honor was all mine.” He pinched the bridge of his nose. “Your fall-out? It hurt him deeply. But that boy is tough as nails. Wanted me to follow your tracks and report back.”

“You’ve been following me?” The thought was terrifying. The idea that someone had witnessed from up close what he’d done, how he could have let those things happen to his family. And all that, because he’d?—

Davian’s shoulders slumped. He’d been a fucking fool.

“Yes. Though I didn’t tell him everything,” Andry said. “There was something about you that made me think of my younger self. Like you, I once had ambitions. Unlike you, mine were shattered even before I could graduate. You will be fine, Davian. Camren is—” Andry straightened his jacket and propped himself back up against the

bar, increasing the distance between them as his gaze morphed into his usual professional stern. “Remember, he’ll come hunting you down. He won’t let you go.”

Davian didn’t have to be told twice. He pushed himself away and toward the dance floor. He had no idea where to go. Despite the size of the academy, many places were locked up tonight. Around him, people were dancing and drinking, ready to party until sunrise. They didn’t notice him staggering around, limbs rigid and mind caught in the memory that had haunted him for the past two years.

What are you doing?

As my best friend, you are my second half.

Cam...

Just relax, Davian, I want to make you feel good.

Cam...

Does that feel good, baby?

The DJ gave him a surprised glance when he staggered toward the mixing table. He hadn’t meant to end up there. “Songs can be requested via your multi-slate.”

“I—yes, thank you.” Davian jerked away and turned over his shoulders but couldn’t see Camren.

Does that feel good, baby?

“Go away,” he growled to the recollection.

Because yes. Yes, it had felt good. Sinfully good. It had felt so good that right there, on Cam's king-size bed, surrounded by his games and snacks, entangled in those strong, warm arms, Davian would have happily lived for the rest of his life.

But that would have meant becoming fully dependent on the Ryka family. Becoming a slut for their money and for their son, while his own family suffered.

The utility shop had gone bankrupt. He had let that happen. After years of hard work, devotion, keeping ends met, of helping each other, he had made the utility shop go bankrupt. He was an awful person. He'd hurt the two people who'd always provided for him.

His multi-slate dinged with a message.

"Meet me at the bar."

The hunt continued. This Praeda.

Davian's chest clenched, and his teeth chattered when he slowly stepped back to where he'd stood with Andry just before. Giving in to desire was so hard. Davian's mind ordered him to grab Jaro and go the fuck home. But that would be the cowardly decision, the decision he always took. This time...

This is what he'd hoped for, it was stupid to pretend. He'd hoped to attract Camren.

He'd wanted to be saved.

But this...accepting to become Cam's willing prey was terrifying. He'd make him pay, of that Davian was sure. Just like he'd done before. Tying him up and feasting on Davian's dick...the chill of anticipation that ran through his veins was a traitor.

However, when he got to the bar, there was no sign of Camren. The bouncer had left as well.

“There you go,” the barman slid two shots his way.

Davian frowned. “What’s that?”

“It’s jagx.”

“I didn’t order that.”

“You didn’t,” drawled a familiar voice. Camren pressed his chest against Davian’s back and planted his hands on the bar, caging him in. “But I did.”

Davian’s body went rigid, goosebumps coating his neck and arms and his dick thickening in his pants.

“I’m glad you came by yourself, baby.” Two fingers tucked under Davian’s chin and Camren tilted his head back until their cheeks touched. Davian grimaced at the sudden ache from being stretched. Camren’s hair tickled his temple when he leaned in and left a trail of kisses on his throat, making Davian groan and his cock throb. “I checked some things on my end,” Camren continued, “Mink’s utility shop went bankrupt after the accountant’s final checks. It appears that said accountant also found suspicious transfers.”

Davian gasped when teeth scraped his throat.

“Your parents could get arrested for that.”

“I know,” he stammered. “I’m?—”

“Don’t. It’s too late for apologies. It’s time to fix things. Open.”

Fingertips tugged on Davian’s lower lip and the cool glass was pressed against his mouth. His gaze got lost in those almond eyes, that endless darkness that looked straight through him.

“Drink.”

The alcohol burned his throat, his swallow was traced by fingertips. Davian’s glass was snatched away from him and before he could object, he was spun around, his back pressed against the bar and locked in Camren’s grip.

“The shop,” Camren barked. “What is it that you want?”

Davian licked the lingering scent of anise from his lips. “My parents are unhappy. They don’t know what I’ve done. They—” He cleared his throat and straightened his shoulders. “I want the shop to reopen.”

“That’s it?”

‘I—yeah.’

“So why let it go bankrupt in the first place?”

Davian’s cheeks heated. That was a low blow, and Camren knew it too.

“Hmm?”

“It wasn’t working,” Davian began, “we ended up in red each month. We couldn’t compete with those large corporations.”

“Then why have it reopened? If it’s not self-sustainable.”

Davian licked his lips, his heart hammering in his chest. “I have some plans. If you want, I can show them to you? I’d be looking for investors.”

“Investors, huh?” Camren’s eyes roamed over his face as if to check if Davian spoke the truth. “Very well. I will invest. Whatever it is you need. As for your payment...” He pressed a chaste kiss on Davian’s mouth, then pushed him to his knees.

Davian sputtered when he hit the ground with a thud, and he looked up, eyes wide in surprise. “You’re not going to ask me to—” His panicked gaze darted around. “Everyone can see.”

“Hmm, that’s right.” Camren brushed a few blond hairs from Davian’s face. His smile was dangerous. “If I let them, that is.” He popped open the button on his pants and rolled down the zipper. Fishing out his flushed, hard cock, Camren brought it to Davian’s mouth, swiping the wet head over his lips. “Come on, baby. Suck it good for me.”

Davian’s face flamed with embarrassment. He should get the hell out of here, he should?—

Camren clicked his tongue. “It’s too late for any of that and you know it. You wanted to be saved by me, so here I am. Feeling fucking elated to have you this close. Saving you in my own way. Meaning, I’ll have all of you, starting with you on your knees, for me.” He looked away, but pressed his cockhead firmly against Davian’s lips, making them part for him. “Ah, Andry, just the guy I was looking for.”

Davian inhaled deeply, battling emotions of shame and desire when he inhaled that foreign musk scent. It made his mouth water and his cock to throb painfully in his pants, despite the earlier orgasm. Slowly, he gave in, allowing that velvety, hard flesh

to penetrate his mouth. It felt incredible. Fingers trailed his flushed cheek and temple, wiping away the sweat that lingered. Davian raved in the praise, inhaling deeply and letting him be carried away in the moment. He heard Camren talk, the sound of his self-assured, warm timbre as he conversed casually with Andry.

Davian's lips were entirely stretched as Camren's cock nestled inside the tight heat, and spit dribbled past his chin when his head started bobbing.

He wanted to please Cam, wanted him to be proud of him. The realization struck through him like a shuttle. Even when they were younger, he'd always wanted to impress his super cool, super rich, best friend.

Davian sucked harder, and when he heard Camren grunt, his insides glowed with delight. Feelings of doubt swirled through his mind, but they couldn't stop the way his insides curled with pleasure when Camren's hand landed on his head. The touch was soft, yet firm, his intentions clear. Davian's head was yanked back and he whined when that thick cock slipped out of his mouth. He wanted more. He wanted... Swearing, he tried to compose himself. Suddenly he was pulled up to his feet and spun around, his back pressed against Camren's chest. Fingers opened his pants and rolled his pants down over the curve of his ass, exposing his naked flesh.

"Use your hand to keep them above your knees," Camren growled.

Before Davian could protest, wet fingers probed at his entrance. They slid down his rim and circled his hole, teasing their way until Davian had to stifle a groan.

"Have you ever been fucked here?" Camren murmured against his ear.

"I've used toys," Davian admitted, ears flushing with shame.

"Dildos?"

“Yes.”

“Good. That doesn’t compare to a real cock, but at least you’ve been stretched before. Now, listen to me.” Those fingers took their sweet time playing Davian’s rim and cheeks, while he hung forward, pants in hand, leaning against the bar, unable to keep the moans from spilling. “Mink’s shop has been saved. They received a financial injection from the Ryka family.” Camren’s wet finger dipped inside Davian’s hole and Davian wriggled, panting as he tried to get accustomed to the intrusion. “Your payment was a great start. Loved having you on your knees,” Camren hummed. “Yes, I could get used to this. Waking up every fucking morning with your mouth on my cock, drinking me down.” He pressed in another finger and thrust them inside Davian’s ass, massaging his walls as he went deeper.

Davian groaned. “Everyone can see us.”

“Look around you. Nobody’s watching.”

He was right. Around them, everyone was staring up as the glass cubicle clicked open, releasing hundreds of red and white balloons that carried white notes filled with wishes.

“I wonder what your wish would be, baby?” Camren crooned.

You.

Davian shrugged, then gasped as the fingers were replaced by a throbbing, hot, cockhead.

They both stared as the fluttering balloons filled the air under a loud applause from every single partygoer. “I bet you wished for me to come and save your scattered life. I bet you wished for it when you tore everything to pieces, but you didn’t know how

to ask for me.”

Davian lowered his head as he focused on Camren filling his hole, inch by excruciatingly slow inch. It felt full, and the more he thought of what he let Cam do to him, the more thoughts threatened to fill his mind and the more he tensed. The more it hurt.

Camren kissed his nape. “Don’t worry, baby, I’ve got you. Relax for me now, it will make this so much better.”

“I’m scared.” The words poured out of his mouth and made Davian shudder.

“I know you are.” Teeth nipped at Davian’s throat, and his exhale echoed through his mind like a defeat. “You can let go now.”

“I didn’t want to say goodbye,” Davian admitted.

“I know. But you did.” Camren’s nips carried more teeth now, and he split tender flesh and swiped the blood away with his tongue, humming.

Davian’s cock swelled against the remainders of his clothes—of his dignity—and his hand. “I’m sorry.”

“I know you are. And I’ll forgive you, you know that. After I understand everything.”

Panic made Davian’s chest clasp tight. He should have known it wasn’t that easy, not with a Black Hart.

Placing his hand on the bar as if to physically steer himself, he grumbled, “What else do you want to know?”

“Well, you haven’t told me much, have you?” Camren slowly pulled out his dick, until his cockhead was the only part still buried in Davian’s ass. “Fucking perfect. Look at that, the way your hole flutters around me.” The unmistakable sound of a click had Davian jerk his head over his shoulder.

“Did you just take a picture?”

Camren grinned, but he carried that dangerous glint in his eyes Davian recognized. He was looking for trouble. “Do you have a problem with that?” Ignoring Davian’s glower, he focused on his ass, slowly pressing the rest of his dick back inside while he let out a long, satisfying moan.

Davian’s dick reacted with a hungry jolt, but his mind was spinning. “How dare you!” He spat. “How dare you use me like I’m some fucktoy.”

One almond eye slit open, followed by a lazy grin. “Fucktoy? You?” Camren laughed. “I was going to say, that’s ridiculous, but maybe...” His gaze dipped back to Davian’s ass, but before he could pull back again, Davian growled, “Leave it in.”

Camren’s eyebrows raised in question.

“I mean, you can leave it in, unless —” Good Light, he wasn’t sure where he wanted to go with his words, “you don’t want to.” He clapped his mouth shut.

Camren’s brows raised to his hairline. “You want me to keep on going?”

“I don’t want you to take any more photos.”

“But you want me to treat you as a fucktoy? Or as my boyfriend? I can assure you—” Camren leaned in and licked over Davian’s cheek, down to the corner of his lips. “I’d treat you like a prince.”

“I don’t want it,” Davian shrugged his face away.

Camren’s hand slid down to his lower spine. “Too bad you just signed your life away.”

Fuck. With the way Davian's ass felt around his dick, Camren was in heaven. His sass, and his desperation to defend his crumbling walls, were a huge turn-on. Davian had always been emotionally challenging, and had always tried to keep to himself when times were rough. But to see him now, blond hair sticking against his flushed cheeks, nostrils flared, those blue eyes filled with that haunting fear, and those lips...

"Hmm." Camren pressed his lips against that beautiful mouth. "You are the greatest gift in my life. Every single part of you." He thrust slowly inside Davian, not wanting to rush this moment. The dark side of him wanted every fucking student to see how he claimed his property, but he knew Davian would be embarrassed.

Davian was always embarrassed. Except when he had to present difficult, intelligent stuff. Then he was in his element.

What was new was his fear. The first time Camren had caught those pupil-blown eyes was right after he'd kissed him. He'd thought it was because his best friend wanted it too, but then his muscles had become rigid and he'd thrown Camren off and away.

He slapped onto a bare ass cheek, making Davian hiss. "Very nice and firm indeed, and blushing so beautifully."

"I'm no toy," Davian snarled.

Fisting those blond strands, Camren yanked his head back. His lips brushed against his pierced ear. "If I say you are a toy, you are a toy. My toy."

Davian struggled in his hold, panting and snarling.

“Touch your dick. I bet you’re hard and leaking.”

“No, you fucking?—”

“Touch it.”

Davian lowered his hand and started stroking his cock.

“There we go. Does that make you feel good?” He didn’t miss how Davian’s shoulders slumped, how his head sagged forward. A faint nod. “Now tell me, I’ve reopened your family’s store so that part is covered. But I also have questions, and I’m going to need you to spell it out for me. You came to me tonight because you trusted in the promise we made when we were best friends. Is that right?” His hips rolled slowly against Davian’s perfect cheeks, his dick buried deeply inside that tight ass. Camren wanted to come but needed to hold it just a little. “Is that right?”

He craved the truth.

Davian shuddered. “Yes.”

“Good boy. Did you miss me, baby?”

He’d barely spilled the words, when Davian balked. He snarled and snapped his hips back in an attempt to free himself.

“No,” Camren kept Davian’s head back to feel that swallowing Adam’s apple against the pad of his finger. He rolled his hips faster, bucking into Davian with fast, deep thrusts that made both of them moan. “No more hiding.”

“You’re such an asshole.”

“Ah yes, that I am. But not to you.”

That was the truth. Camren didn’t get it. Sliding his hand around Davian’s cheek, he made him peer up his way, then captured his mouth in a bruising kiss. Davian moaned in surprise, and Camren caught the moment he wanted to flee by pressing Davian tighter against his skin. By nipping at his lower lip and tugging it even closer, before swiping his tongue over the trembling flesh. Davian panted against Camren’s lips, and when he gave Damian the lead, he hesitantly took it. Swiping his tongue over Camren’s parted lips, he made his entrance, inviting Camren into a game of seduction. And he felt like he was a king. It was the first time Davian took initiative, the first time he showed Camren that he wanted it too. It felt like fucking victory.

With one hand curled around Davian’s face and the other one with a bruising hold on his hip , Camren kept on slowing the pace, heart trashing in his chest. Not yet. He pulled his mouth away, not missing how Davian chased his.

“So answer me, baby, did you miss me?”

“You know I did,” Davian grumbled. “Fuck you.” His hand slid back and squeezed Camren’s.

“Here. Feel your own ass. Feel how soft your skin is.” Directing Davian’s fingers, he guided them to where they were connected. “Do you feel my dick? It fucking loves being inside you, claiming you.”

Davian shivered.

“But this is not how this works, baby. You missing me, calling me for help, me saving your family. It’s not complete. Something’s missing, and you know what that

is, don't you? I need you to share your fears with me. I need you to fucking allow me to keep you. Because you're right in one thing—" rocking faster, Camren felt his climax approach. Releasing that warm cheek, he slid his hand down to where Davian's trembling hand was still working his own weeping dick. He took over, pumping Davian fast. "Look around you."

They both peered up, temporarily pulled out of their bubble. Balloons were still fluttering around, though most students had moved on from the entertainment. Some of them stared openly at them from a safe distance. "See all those eyes? They're on us. On me . Because I can have every single one of them here. But I don't want any of them, do I?"

Davian's muscles tensed and Camren knew he was close. When he let out a desperate mewl, Camren was done for. Eyes rolling back, he buried his head in Davian's blond hair and howled as come erupted from his cock and inside that glorious ass. "It's you I want," he murmured, the words dimmed when Davian came on a string of moans, dick pulsing with cream.

The barman's outreached hands offered tissues and two shots of jagx without the man as much as gazing their way. Camren quickly wiped Davian clean. Davian, who looked exhausted with red, puffy lips and drooping, brilliant eyes. Once they were both fully dressed, he cupped Davian's face and brought them close, swiping their mouths together. "I'm not the kind of guy who begs, but for you, I fucking will. I want the truth. I want to know what the haunting look in your eyes is, what is your fear. So like you, I'm going to have a fucking great night. And if you want to talk? Just come and get me."

"Davian!" It was Jaro, calling out from the crowd.

Camren fisted Davian's hair and tilted him back once more, licking a line down his throat. "But don't get me wrong. Even if you don't come to me, you will come home

with me tonight. I bought you. Though the choice is yours—you don't talk? I'll take you out of here like my fucktoy , kicking and screaming. You come clean? I'll bring you home as my boyfriend, with your head held high. I promise you, either way I'll have a fucking good time with you. It's you who might have a reputation to uphold, so I'd think carefully if I were you."

Davian left with a huff and sweeping up his scattered honor while he stamped toward Jaro. His cousin's eyes flared Camren's way, but he just sent him a blowing kiss. He chuckled when the other guy scowled even more.

"What?" Camren mouthed.

Jaro growled at him. Yeah, he was looking for trouble. Flipping him off Davian when he tried to grab his cousin by the shoulders, no doubt to cool him down, Jaro stalked his way instead. Squaring his shoulders, Camren made himself comfortable against the bar and raised his glass for another drink, dark eyes taking in every movement Jaro made.

The barman had impeccable timing, finishing his top-up at the very moment Davian's cousin reached within earshot.

"And? Did you put a wish on any of those lovely red balloons?" Camren tipped his glass to the ceiling, where they hung cluttered together like a wasp's nest.

Jaro didn't look up but grabbed Camren by his shoulder instead. "Just let him go."

Camren's gaze lowered to where Jaro's fingers touched his blazer. "I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Jaro reluctantly let go, but the moment his hand pulled back, Camren's fingers snapped around his neck and he pushed him into the bar, looming over him. Jaro's

back arched as he prevented his head from landing into the shot glasses, and wheezed for breath, face reddening. “L-let him go!”

Giving him a cool once-over, Camren tipped his drink back before leaning in. Their foreheads touched.

“Oh no, you’re misinformed. I’m not letting him go.” He grinned when Jaro’s fingers scratched on his hold in a silent plea to be released. “You know, I’ve been wanting a fight this entire night. And now you’re here. Isn’t that just a beautiful coincidence?” Cocking his head, his grin turned into a full-blown smile.

“Wow, dude,” a voice broke the spell.

“What .” Camren cast his gaze aside. “How are you not enjoying your own party?”

“Because yours seems more entertaining,” His brother Emeryx grinned, eyes going from Jaro back to Camren. “I’ll have whatever he’s having,” he told the barman.

The clawing became more urgent and Camren gave Jaro more space, watching as the other guy took in a few desperate breaths. “Fuckhead,” he wheezed. “Just let him the fuck go.”

“Is that the second time I’ve heard him begging?” Emeryx frowned over the rim of his glass.

“Someone has been eavesdropping. But yeah, he’s not very clever.” Camren turned back to Jaro and increased the grip on his throat.

“Just—” The rest of Jaro’s words were muffled as his oxygen was once more cut off.

“Uhm, we’re getting quite the audience,” Emeryx remarked. He was right. Around

them, students gasped as they took in the show. “If you don’t want to kill him, I suggest you let him go.”

Camren pulled back with a sigh and took the offered glass, watching as Jaro struggled to get away from the bar and the awkward position he still was in, caught with his back between the bar and between Cam’s spread thighs. He finally succeeded by dropping and crawling through Camren’s legs, but he wasn’t fast enough. Camren kicked him in his fleeing ass that made him sprawl right onto the floor. Everywhere, students laughed.

“You’re an asshole, Cam,” Jaro let out.

“And you’d better not forget that.” Planting his boot on Jaro’s back, he pulled the other guy from the ground, inhaling his pained growl. “How long has he been sleeping at your place?”

Jaro regained his grip on a bar stool and slowly got up. “Go and fuck yourself,” he growled.

Emeryx whistled. “Dude’s got character.”

“He’s stupid, you mean.” Camren pulled his boot back.

“That too.”

Jaro huffed as he placed his back against a bar stool, facing Camren. He was panting. “You can literally have anyone else here. Why my cousin?”

Because he was mine before.

“Go and hunt a willing prey down.”

And he's mine again.

Camren's fist shot out to Jaro, halting right before the other guy's cheek. He chuckled when Jaro flinched. "Fuck, you are no fun." Pulling back, Jaro took that occasion to scramble away, crawling away through the crowd like a goddamn coward. "Hey, hey, come back you." He followed him through the crowd, Emeryx hot on his tail. The fucker was just there for the juice.

"Why are you still here?" He asked his friend. "How about you chasing down your own prey?"

"Why would I do that?" Emeryx chuckled. "You know, I've always wondered what went sour back then between the both of you." Like Camren, he wore a black shirt beneath his crimson blazer. They strolled behind Jaro, and Camren regretted not having brought his drink. From the way Emeryx booted him down on all fours every time his cousin tried to get up, this was going to take a while.

"Enough!" Someone shouted. Davian .

Maybe not.

The crowd gasped.

"Uh oh." Emeryx's chuckle flared to an obnoxious laugh, revealing the psychopath that lived rent-free in his mind. "Someone's going to be in trouble." He was loving every second of this.

Camren shrugged. "Yeah? Well, this is where the fun ends for you. Go and bother your own person. And don't forget—" He patted his friend on the shoulder, throwing Emeryx a wolfish grin, "you owe me, brother. You bet I'll have a ticket on the first row when you get your cherry popped."

Emeryx flipped him off, making his disappearance through the crowd, but Camren didn't miss the mischievous glimmer in his brother's eyes.

Meanwhile, Davian walked through the crowd, until he stood facing the both of them. "When did you become such a bully, Cam?" He held up his chin in defiance, looking sexy as fuck. And angry. Oh, so fucking angry. "You used to be caring, and sweet."

"To you, yes." Camren wiped off the invisible dust from his suit and threw him a casual shrug. "But you were always blind to how I treated the rest of the world. Why was that, Davian?"

"You know why," Davian replied, but his eyes darted between him and the rest of the world, who was curious, and amused. He was nervous.

Camren's lips twitched. "Don't say you were afraid of me."

Davian's cheeks flushed and his eyes shot daggers. "No."

"Then what, baby? What made you so blind to see the obvious?" Without waiting for an answer that wouldn't come, Camren looked around and shouted, "Ladies and gentlemen of Cor Night. Who agrees that I'm an absolute asshole?"

No one answered.

He raised an eyebrow and chuckled. "No one? Oh, come on. Really?" He winked at a student who stood close by. "See? I'm a good guy."

Still no answer.

"So you were blind," he drawled, dragging his attention back to Davian. "And you know what I want, don't you? I want no fucking room for ambiguity. Tell me exactly

why you threw me out of your life.”

“You know why,” Davian snarled.

“I’m gonna need you to spell it out for me, Davian, baby, I told you this. Because one moment we were playing video games and chilling, and the next you threw me out. What happened there?”

“Asshole,” Davian snarled through his teeth. “I’m not doing this.” His blush had leaked down his collar, and when he swallowed, the tender skin of his Adam’s apple bobbed.

Fucking beautiful.

“That’s not exactly what you said when I tried to kiss you,” Camren smirked, proud of those words being shared with the whole damn campus. “You said, and I quote, ‘don’t. I can’t have you control every part of my life.’”

“Cam...” Davian warned, shaking his head.

Camren cocked his head. Rage licked his insides, stirring a fire. “But you were wrong, weren’t you?” His voice had dropped, the words a mere scrape through the silence. Even the music had stopped. Camren took a step forward. “Because you couldn’t stay away. You threw me out, then angled me right back in, like a fish on a hook. You fucked up, so I could fix it for you. And I have baby, I’ve fucking fixed everything for you. I always would have and I always will. But you know what I want in return, right?”

Davian’s gaze floundered and he blinked, body sluggish when he stepped back.

“No? You’re not going to give me what I want? Oh, come on now. What’s it going to

be...toy or boyfriend?”

Davian glared, only looking away when Jaro threw him his coat.

“Here. Let’s leave.”

“Oh no. No no no.” With one flick of Camren’s finger, Andry plucked the coat out of Davian’s hand. “You’re not going anywhere. You can enjoy the party, drink some more, and have fun with your friends—I’m generous. But you’re leaving with me. And you, little man, you still didn’t answer me. For how long has he slept on your couch?”

“For three weeks,” Jaro admitted.

Camren whistled. “No wonder why you’re so wound up. My poor baby hasn’t had a decent bed for way too long.” He turned back to the student who cracked a hesitant joke, “Seems like you’ve got that part covered,” he said.

“True,” Camren hummed. “Though from the looks of it, I might need a leash to take my man away.” When Davian balked, he burst out laughing. “What do you think, friend?”

This time the student didn’t reply.

Yeah, Camren wanted to yank Davian by his collar and force him down onto his fucking knees, fill his mouth with cock, and let him drink it all down. But he wouldn’t. And despite his show of supremacy—because that’s what it was in the end, a show—he needed to give Davian space. Whatever process his former best friend was going through, was his. All he could do was promise him the stars and protect him with his life. Davian was his.

Turning around, he slowly made his way back to the bar through the space the crowd had created. “We’re leaving in an hour, baby. Don’t worry—we’ll find you and take you where you need to be. Now, come Andry, let’s get a drink.”

They polished off another round of jagx.

“So, how’s everyone else enjoying their Praeda?”

“Everyone’s doing just fine.”

“Hmm.” Camren winked at Emeryx, who had found his way back to the bar. His eyes darted around, taking in everything and everyone. “Got to admit, that man of yours is sexy as fuck and a good hand of trouble. Just how I like them.”

Camren let it slip with a good-hearted chuckle. Coming from Emeryx, the words weren’t a surprise. He was batshit crazy like that. Emeryx’s eyes peered into the crowd and he froze. He hummed, then fisted his glass, blindly gulping it down in one go. He cleaned his mouth with the sleeve of his blazer, then hopped off his chair, eyes never leaving his target. “Alright, I’m off.”

And just like that, he was gone.

Camren shook his head, knowing that whoever his brother had found, was in deep fucking trouble. Tonight was a good party. He hadn’t lied though. He wanted to leave. Wanted to fuck Davian’s fine ass into their future together, wanted to have Davian naked and spread on their new bed. The bed he once fled from.

After their kiss, after their sudden rupture, Camren had concluded that Davian hadn’t wanted his advances. Hadn’t wanted him in his bed, despite the intimacy they frequently sought. Camren had been furious when Davian just disappeared like that. Yes, he could have barged into Mink’s utility shop and demanded to speak to Davian,

but he hadn't lied before—Camren didn't beg. And though his feelings had been crushed, that was a bridge he couldn't cross. He'd trusted that one day, Davian would be back.

“Where the fuck is he?” He muttered to himself, peering into the darkness and right at the flickering, red hearts. Which one was his baby?

Davian was either extremely proud or extremely afraid, Camren wasn't sure. The embodiment of a good boy. He studied hard, played sports, and treated others kindly. He'd created the perfect image, nicely tucked in the shadows of the top performers—The Black Harts. He was good, but not remarkable. He was a solid reason for a solid future.

Camren's eyes fluttered at the thought of Davian's body, trembling against his in the darkness. The recollection of Davian's hoarse moans licked fire at his insides, already driving him to the brim of desire. Davian's hot, tight ass, clenched around his cock. Camren had made him fall apart twice tonight, and had destroyed his defenses. There was no way he'd make it home without sinking his fat dick into that tight hole one more time.

Davian had been afraid and miserable. He had missed Camren. Now it was time for the full truth to be revealed.

9

Camren stood lingering by the dance floor. He watched Galya having fun with her friends, his insides all over the place. He'd come here tonight to have a good time with her.

Liar.

He looked aside to where Jaro stood talking with one of his classmates, his coat wrapped around his arm, ready to leave. He blew out a breath. He was sick and tired of his own denial. Cam was right. After two years of combining remote classes with a job in the production plant of their family's business, something inside Davian had just cracked. He'd missed Camren. Had wanted him back in his life. And yes, he had fucked up everything because he trusted Camren to be true to his promise and come and save him.

But Davian was scared.

Poverty wasn't a choice. It was a destiny. For as long as he could remember, the Ryka family had owned his past, his present, and his future.

What if he'd disappoint Camren? What if his dark devil got tired of him and threw him away? Replaced him with some handsome guy?

"Darling, you look troubled."

Davian jolted. He hadn't heard Galya approach. The arm she slung around his

shoulder made him wince, but he tried to shrug it off, trying to swallow the forming bile. He was so fucking confused. “Are we still together?” He blurted.

She threw back her head and giggled. “And find myself getting buried six feet under? Absolutely not. Sorry babe, but your man is trouble. Look at him staring me down with those gorgeous eyes. If looks could kill...” She gave him a peck on the cheek. “He’s yours for the taking though. So just go for it.”

She was gone before he could protest.

Davian squared his shoulders and took in a deep breath, nerves suddenly fluttering through his stomach. This was fucking insane. Tonight, Camren had already sucked his dick, had fucked him against the bar. And yet... it was hard to let go. To accept being dependent. To risk being thrown away. Then again, there was no other choice. His heart had begged Camren’s return and now he was here, Davian was incapable of running any longer.

Turning over his shoulder, he caught Camren staring at him over the rim of his glass, while some guy was talking to him. A pang of jealousy made Davian’s chest tighten and he had to take in another deep breath. Then he made his way to the bar.

Camren’s dark, almond-shaped eyes glared as he watched Davian come closer. When he nearly reached them, he held up a hand, making the other guy stop in his tracks and look over to Davian. He was gone before Davian could set another foot down.

“Hi.” Davian cleared his throat as a sudden feeling of discomfort blanketed him. He chuckled it away. “I, uhm?—”

Camren didn’t say anything, just kept on staring him down, a light frown between his perfectly arched, black eyebrows.

“So I was afraid,” another nervous chuckle, “as I told you. You were my best friend. I

looked up to you. You were fearless, awesome—” Davian looked away, skin burning from embarrassment. “I grew up wanting to be like you. And the more I liked you, the more I started to worry about what my life would be without you. Like, uhm, I’d be insignificant again, while you—” Davian pointed at Camren’s black heart, “would go off and continue being so cool. When you kissed me, I, I—” His heart had burst out of his rib cage. His cock had hardened so fast Davian hadn’t known how to hide it. “I got scared. But that look on your face...that haunted me for the rest of that night. I never meant to hurt you. I never meant to reject you. But once it was done, I knew that things would never be the same again, and so I thought it best to disappear. For my h-heart.” Davian pressed his hand against his chest. It clenched under the gray material of his shirt.

Camren still didn’t say anything, the blinking of his eyes the only proof he was still there, listening.

“But I missed you,” Davian admitted. “When my parents proposed doing classes online so I could help out the business, I thought it was for the best. You’d be out there doing your thing with the guys and I wasn’t ready to see you with someone else. So, yeah.” He took a deep breath through his nose, expanding his chest in an attempt to shake off the hurting.

“And?” Camren finally asked.

“And what?”

“Was it worth it?” He took another drink and pointed his chin to Davian. “Hiding away?”

Davian shook his head.

“Knowing how easy you have me wrapped around your finger once more? Was it worth all the heartbreak? You, of all people, should know that fear doesn’t keep me

away.” A lazy grin cracked through, making those lush lips curve up. Davian could only stare at them. He had to shake himself out of it. He had to— Camren reached out and cupped his chin. “Don’t.”

Davian’s eyes flicked up. “Don’t what?”

“Don’t overthink everything. Don’t hide yourself. What’s the real problem here, baby? You don’t like me?”

“I do.”

“Don’t want to be with me?”

“I do.”

“Can’t make up your mind?”

Davian frowned. “What do you mean?”

Camren smirked. “Boy or toy?”

“Oh, fuck off,” Davian growled.

“Then make up your mind and do it fast.” Camren leaned in, those dark eyes filled with a dangerous glint. “You’ve got fifteen minutes.”

“Boyfriend,” Davian snarled through heated skin.

Camren leaned back, grinning. “Clever boy.”

“You think you can just control me.” The words spilled past Davian’s lips before he could stop himself. He clamped his mouth shut.

Camren raised an eyebrow in question. His smirk widened, making Davian grind his teeth in fury. “So that’s what this is about.” The words weren’t more than a whisper, but Davian heard them loud and clear. They cut through his self-esteem and rolled around his stomach. “You’re afraid of me owning you, baby. Of me keeping you in my house, bringing you to school, feeding you, looking after you, satisfying every one of your single fucking needs.” Camren’s hand shot up, long fingers curling around Davian’s neck. He pressed. “That’s what this is about, isn’t it?”

“I’m not afraid of you,” Davian sneered, but the words were half-cut and came out breathless. Camren dipped his gaze until their noses brushed.

“Good. Because it’s not your fear I want. It’s your love. Your devotion. Your every breath, baby. So what do you need from me?”

Davian swallowed. His eyes pricked with unwanted emotion. Camren brushed his nose against his, his breath tickling Davian’s mouth. He smelled sweet, like anise from the shots he’d been taking. “The family business,” he started, mind rattling. “I told you about my plans. I want to expand. I want my family to be safe, and I want it to be in my name, so if ever you don’t want to be with me anymore, I have something in life.”

Camren’s eyes darkened, and Davian thought he was going to refuse. Then he nodded. “Agreed. That’s not much, baby. We’ll think of some more things, once we’ve left and I’ve fucked your perfect ass again.”

Davian’s cock jerked from the filthy promise, and when Camren smirked, he realized the look on his face must have been obvious.

“You like that idea?” He teased.

“Yeah.” Davian reached out and he licked the arrogant curl of Camren’s lips.

“Hmm. Then let’s get the fuck out of here.” He grabbed Davian’s coat from Andry and tossed it at him. “Now .”

“I don’t recall you being that bossy,” Davian commented but put on the coat regardless.

“That’s because before, you and I didn’t fuck. Now, let’s get going.” Wrapping an arm around Davian, Camren let them out of the foyer. When they made their way toward the elevators instead of the exit, Davian hesitated.

“W-where are we going?”

“Up. I need to fuck.”

“What ?” Davian spun in Camren’s hold, but he’d already guided them inside the elevator. His lips landed on Davian’s spluttering ones, shutting him up in a husky kiss that had them both panting for more.

Davian moaned when Camren’s hand wrapped around his dick, filling his palm as it lengthened.

“I’m taking you to bed, baby. And then we’ll continue the party. And then, later, when we’re tired, I’ll take you home, to our bed, where you’ll be sleeping for the rest of your life. How does that sound?”

Davian replied with a kiss.

“I’ve never been up here,” Davian said when the elevator finally stopped, eyes wide as he took in the adorned walls and rich, thick carpets.

“Correct. Black Harts get special treatment. This is a private level for us to rest and relax between classes.”

“Why the fuck would you nee—” The rest of Davian’s phrase was cut off when Camren pushed him through a door. A beautifully decorated bedroom came into view. The place itself was filled with antiques, but it was the bed that caught his flaring eye. Fuck...yes. “Undress yourself and lie on your stomach, baby. Don’t—” Camren snapped when Davian opened his mouth. “Just do what I say.”

Watching Davian give in and obey his command, was as satisfying as seeing all that pearly white skin being revealed. Inch by inch, a blush deepening to perfection. And then Davian positioned himself onto the bed, offering the most perfect view of those curves and that round ass.

“Spread your cheeks for my mouth, baby.”

Davian shuddered, then did as he was told.

Camren, undressed, settled between his legs onto the bed, and lowered his face until he could smell the enticing scent of Davian’s flesh. Tracing a line on his quivering flesh, Camren’s nose teased that rim, inhaling deeply as he moaned against Davian’s hole.

Davian shivered, mewling.

“Are you already hard for me?”

“Y-yes.”

“Good.” Flicking out his tongue, Camren dove in, treating Davian’s ass with licks and nibbles, moans and kisses. “You are so good,” he murmured. “So hot.” Poking deeper inside Davian’s hidden pleasure, Camren dug his nails into those delicious cheeks that made Davian moan and writhe. Licks of desire seared his insides. “Your hole is so sweet, baby. So tight.” Lubing up a finger with the tiny bottle he always kept on him, Camren searched for Davian’s prostate. When his boyfriend bucked his hips

with a moan, he smiled against the tender skin of his crease. “There we are.”

Davian replied with an unhinged moan.

“What’s that? You want more?” Letting his tongue run over the glorious curve of Davian’s ass, he used two more fingers to open that tight hole up for him.

“Cam—” Davian groaned, humping the bed sluggishly. ‘If you continue like this, I’ll blow too soon.’”

“Oh no, you wouldn’t now...” Camren pinched the skin on his lower back, “would you?”

Davian whimpered. “I’m sorry, I’m just so horny.”

“Yeah?” Camren preened at those words. Pulling out his fingers gingerly, he tapped Davian’s ass. “Let’s get you on your hands and knees for some proper fucking.”

Davian hushed to comply, his ragged breaths and impatient snarls filling the space when Camren didn’t fill him immediately with his cock.

“Fuck, baby, look at you, begging to be pleased. You need it, don’t you?” He slid his hands over Davian’s trembling back, reveling in the slight curve as he embraced his ass. “Your hole winking at me, craving me. Beg for me, best friend, beg for my cock.”

“You’re so filthy,” Davian moaned.

“I know. Now beg, baby.”

“Please—” Davian let out a breath. “Please fuck me.”

“No,” Camren tutted, “there’s a better word for this. Come on, be a little creative. What does Cor Night represent?” Hovering over Davian’s crawling position, Camren placed his own hands next to his, then used his mouth to drop open kisses onto Davian’s shoulder blades and spine. Blond hair adorned his arched nape, cascading down over those pierced ear shells.

“Make love to me,” Davian whispered. He whimpered when Davian mouthed the back of his head, inhaling the vague flowery scent of his shampoo.

“Oh, yes, baby, I will.” He slotted their bodies together, covering Davian’s smooth back with his chest and blanketing his ass with his cock. Dribbling spit onto his erection, he fisted his dick, humming in pleasure when his wet slit made a mess of Davian’s fair skin. “I can see you’re ready for me.” He snug his nose in the curve of Davian’s throat and his teeth came out, nipping at the tender skin. Davian lowered his chin and their mouths brushed and rubbed, and their lips parted as their tongues sought each other in this game of seduction.

This reunion.

Guiding his dick into Davian’s waiting hole, Camren kept dominating the kiss. His head was filled with those sweet, soft gasps that spilled from Davian’s mouth and fell into his, that utter surrender as his boyfriend finally gave in.

With slow, deep thrusts, his cock filled Davian’s tight ass, and they both panted at the connection. Then Camren started moving. He’d meant to make it matter. To make it last. To mark some goddamn milestone in their lives. But fuck him, if he wasn’t aroused as hell. Pulling himself up, he planted a foot next to Davian’s thigh for leverage and placed both hands on his ass. “I’m going to fuck you so hard you’ll remember who you belong to for the rest of your life,” he promised.

Davian turned over his shoulder and through his blond strands, he stared at him with darkened, glassy eyes as he gave him a sweet, love-drunk smile. “You do that.”

Fuck him, he was in for a show.

Camren thrust with precision, making his rolls sharp. They hit their mark, judging by the way Davian moaned as he clawed into the sheets.

Grabbing a handful of that gorgeous hair, Camren tipped Davian's head back until they looked at each other. They were both out of breath, with cheeks flushed and parted lips.

Camren's toes curled when Davian moaned, eyes rolling back. He wouldn't be able to hold much longer. "Touch yourself," he growled. "And tell me you fucking love me."

Davian's hand slipped between his legs, breath stuttering as he furiously stroked himself. "I love you, asshole," he growled.

Camren laughed. His heart filled with thousands of butterflies. "Fuck you, baby. Never leave me again. Never."

"Never." Davian's rasp sounded urgent. "I can't?—"

"Come, baby. Show your new boyfriend how you come apart."

Davian did. He sputtered and moaned as he spurted all over the bed, arching his neck back for Camren to see that sensual curve. Mindlessly, he leaned in, wrapping himself into the embrace of where Davian's throat met his clavicle. His thrusts had become sloppy, pleasure tingling his insides, spurred on by Davian's release. He howled against Davian's skin when his hips jerked and hot come shot inside Davian's ass.

"Good Light," he gasped.

“Yeah,” a hand wrapped around his. “I know.”

They collapsed onto the bed, done for.

“So, this is the deal.” Camren rolled onto his side, tipping up Davian’s chin, wrapping his arm tightly around those slender shoulders. Blue eyes stared back at him. “Aside from the shop, you think of what you want to do without me in life. I’m talking business —” He added when Davian let out a laugh. “All the rest will be punished severely.”

“Really?” Davian wrinkled his eyebrows. “How would you do that?”

“Another time I’ll gladly tell you more. Believe it or not, you have worn me out.”

“I’ve worn out the great Camren Ryka?” Davian smiled, but there was something humble in that shimmer.

“Always, baby. You always did and you always will.”

Davian looked away, blushing.

“Hey.” Camren brushed a lock behind his ear, fingertips lingering on those piercings.

“I can’t slay your wolves if you don’t talk to me.”

“I know.” Davian shrugged, his smile bashful. “I’m just really happy that you’re back in my life.”

“...And? Come on, there’s something else there, I know it.”

“Not really.” Davian rolled onto Camren, making him huff out a breath in surprise.

“Fuck, you’re heavy.”

Davian's smile widened. "I'm not."

"Yes, you are. Now, go and tell me what you need. Need me to spend more coin? Make me a poor man."

Davian smiled. His kiss was soft, and Camren stilled as he let him take the lead and place open kisses and teasing licks on his lips and cheeks. "I want you to be nice to Jaro."

"I'm always nice."

"That's what I used to think."

Camren huffed out a laugh. "Okay okay, I'll be a good boy."

"I want you to come down and have a drink with me at the bar. Like the good old times, you know? When we'd hang out."

"We never went to bars."

"No, but...you know what I mean."

"I do." Camren pressed a kiss to Davian's nose.

"I'm glad you're back," Davian admitted. He shuddered. "Really fucking happy."

"I'm back to stay, baby, remember that. Back to fucking stay with you whether you like it or not."

Davian nudged him, but he smiled. He was happy too. And that made Camren really, fucking happy.

“Let’s go,” He helped Davian get up from the bed, and then watched him get dressed. When they were both ready to go, he reached out his hand. “and find some trouble.”