Trust Fall
by Shy_Squirell

Summary

Slow burn Kandomere x reader insert, based after the events of Bright.

On the run from the Inferni, the reader turns to Kandomere for help.
Chapter One

Chapter Notes

Posting this here and Tumblr. Hope all you fellow Kandomere fans enjoy.

The gloomy doorway hid you well as you waited, bag in hand, for your target. It had been just over a week since the shit storm in Vegas and you’d run out of time and resources, you need help and you need it now.

The myriad of lights glaring out of the nearby elf district obscured the natural glow of the stars above causing an unexpected pang of nostalgia for the oasis in the desert that had become your home. You’d never meant to settle in Vegas and hadn’t thought yourself overly fond of the place until now, but being made into a fugitive had you pining for the dazzling lights of the Strip and the peeling wallpaper of your bedroom.

Cowering in your hiding place on the deserted street four blocks away from the elven border point, you shifted your backpack to your shoulder and checked your watch. You’d been here hours already with no sign of him. As the hands slid lazily towards one am you were beginning to lose hope. There was no guarantee he would drive this way but you’d had to start somewhere. The online map had said this was the quickest route from the MTF building to the elf district and from all accounts he was nothing if efficient, so it had seemed logical to try this route first. With a sigh, you resigned yourself to trying the second route tomorrow night… If you lived that long.

Closing your eyes, you rested your hooded head against the steel metal door behind you, praying the building it led to, was as empty as it looked. You were exhausted in every sense of the word, unable to recall the last time you slept for longer than two hours. Running on adrenaline and fear it was only a matter of time until you made a fatal mistake, if only you could sleep. If it wasn’t the nightmares waking you, it was the ever constant threat of the Inferni or Shield of Light as they closed in on you.

A sleek black car pulled your attention from your discomfort and you squinted down the street to try and make out the model. Your heart accelerated as you realised it matched his.

Doubt seized you in its icy grip and a shiver ran down your spine. Should you do this? Was this the best plan? There were so many unknowns you couldn’t be sure how he’d react let alone if he’d help. At this point it wouldn’t surprise you at all if he simply took out his gun and shot you dead on sight.

Chewing on your bottom lip you inhaled a shaky breath and stepped out into the middle of the otherwise deadly quiet road. If it was him he’d see you well before the beam of the headlights illuminated your disheveled, hunched body.

As if on cue, the car decelerated and came to an abrupt stop.
Your palms were clammy with sweat and your heart thundered inside your ribcage. Please don’t shoot, please don’t shoot you chanted silently, holding your hands up in surrender.

Blinking against the bright car lights you watched uneasily as your target put his vehicle into park. You’d seen photos of him but non did justice to the sheer terror he invoked as he swung open his door and stepped fluidly out into the street. His dark blue, pinstripe, three piece suit adorned with silver chain, leading to what you guessed was a pocket watch, and his gleaming gorget screamed opulence and extravagance. The perfectly styled blue hair fell effortlessly at his shoulders and framed his attractive face - at least it would be if not for the glowering, narrowed eyes.

Despite your growing terror you hold his gaze, “You know who I am.” It comes out as a whisper, not that it matters, he hears you clearly and dips his head slightly in acknowledgement. “And you’re Agent Kandomere, Special Agent in charge of the Vegas case.” It’s a statement but he nods again anyway. “I need your help.” You state bluntly.

His eyebrows raise slightly and you get a better look into his silvery bright eyes. They stare at you with a calculating look that does little to calm your strung out nerves.

“I’m unarmed” Raising your hoodie, you turn slowly, allowing his superior eyesight to check for weapons. “Please, I know… I know this is,” a wry smile pulls at your lips and your head shakes. It’s fucking messed up and crazy beyond words. “You got the memory card I sent?”. 

“Yes.” His voice is smooth and low, and predatory with a hint of an accent.

“I need…” You drop your chin to your chest as every last ounce of strength seeps out of your broken body. What you need is for this entire debacle to never have happened, to still be in Vegas having never had anything to do with the Inferni, Shield of Light or Mia. Only you never get to finish your sentence. The elf is on you before you even manage to take another breath, using your lapse of concentration to dart forward, snatch your wrists and pin then tightly behind your back, forcing you to drop your bag. Pushing you towards his car he snatches up your backpack, marches you down the road and shoves you on to the hood, face down.

“I’ve been waiting for you.” You state, fighting the ache in your shoulders as he raises your arms to keep you under control, despite the fact you aren’t struggling. “I wanted to come to the MTF but it’s not safe, they’ve infiltrated everywhere, you can’t trust anyone.”

“Oh good,” he mutters with a heavy air of sarcasm, “you’re one of those.”

This irks you and a flash of anger renews your waning energy. “Yeah, I’m a conspiracist, thats why I’ve spent the last nine days sleeping rough, eating nothing and avoiding anyone I thought could help.”

Something soft winds around your wrists, pulling against your skin, binding your hands together. When the agent is satisfied you’re contained he moves away, encouraging you to stand by tugging your upper arms backwards. Spinning around to face him, you narrow your eyes as you realise he’s restrained you up with his expensive tie.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Your tie?” You spit.

He doesn’t answer, instead the corner of his mouth lifts in amusement. Taking a firm grasp of your arm he leads you to the passenger door and opens it. Raising an eyebrow his eyes move from you to the seat and back indicating you should get in. Huffing indignantly you acquiesce, this wasn’t how you’d hoped it would go down but you could work with it. Moments later, the elf slides into the driver seat having stowed your bag in the trunk, well away from you.
“Ok, hear me out. I get why you think I’m a nut job and I totally understand your eagerness to follow MTF protocol but just take one second to consider the implications of your preferred course of action if I’m telling the truth.” You rush out. “I’m asking for ten minutes of your time, out of the public eye and away from your organisation. I’ll tell you what you need to know I swear, just give me a chance before you throw me to the wolves.”

His stoic mask doesn’t change as he heads towards the elf town border crossing and you feel your hope fading.

“Agent, please. I came to you specifically. I know you’ve profiled me by now so you’re more than aware of my integrity… Please, Kandomere.”

Your plea falls on deaf ears. “You have until we reach the MTF building Miss Y/L/N.”

Gritting your teeth you turn awkwardly to face him. “My roommate, Mia was one of the human casualties in the photos. The Inferni used her to try and recruit me. They aren’t targeting randomly, they’re using DNA to source the most likely candidates. They’re looking for Brights.”

He’s intrigued, you can tell. Although his outward appearance has hardly altered you can see the interest in his eyes as the speedometer shows the car slowing. He mulls over your words carefully. “Why? They have plenty of Inferni, why the need for Brights?”

“Two reasons. Primarily as wand search and retrieval teams, they’re scrambling to reclaim lost ground now that the MTF have Leilah’s wand. They need to cover as much ground as possible so they’ve split into factions, each taking a state and attempting to find Sargon’s ancestors—“

At this, Kandomere fixes his gaze on you, his mouth set in a hard line and brows creased. He doesn’t even try to hide his disbelief at the words coming out of your mouth.

“I know.” You shrug your shoulders. “I know it sounds crazy and everything I’m saying is solidifying your original opinion of me, but I swear I’m not mad, just stay with me on this. So the story goes that Sargon blessed himself with magic, making himself immortal and that he fell terminally ill from a magic curse that ravaged his body. The wands—“

“I know the myth of Sargon, Miss Y/L/N.” Kandomere says quietly. You’re losing him. Ignoring his lessoning interest you plough on.

“As I was saying, the wands are supposed to have been made from his body after he died, but has anyone ever offered an explanation as to where his curse came from?”

“Fairy stories don’t typically lend themselves to logical underpinning.”

“Okay why are most Brights elves?”

He offers no answer and its clear he’s no longer willing to continue with the game he thinks you’re playing.

“The curse came from an elf, Sargon’s lover, she thought she could take his magic and to a point she did, but it didn’t pass to her. Instead it transferred to her unborn children, laying dormant in her blood. Children she bore to Sargon. That’s why the Inferni are so interested in DNA, they’re trying to track Sargon’s descendants because they carry the highest chance of being a Bright.”

“Three minutes until we reach the MTF building.”

“The Inferni are radicalising humans, promising them a place of standing after the dark lord
returns, in exchange these humans are to get the DNA of as many humans, orcs and elves as possible. Once they find a possible dependent they pair them with a babysitter! Someone to watch over them and subtly try to brainwash them into joining their damn cause. The disaster in Vegas... that hell..."

Your eyes slip closed as you recall the harrowing screams of the people the elves rounded up, the scent of scorched human flesh still tainting your worst dreams.

“Kandomere, you can’t take me to the MTF. It’s too dangerous. There are both Inferno and Shield of Light operatives who have access. Please. I can’t do this on my own, I can’t stop them all, I need your help.”

“Oh, you’ll get the help you need.” He smiles to himself causing you to sigh heavily. It’s time for the big guns.

“Check my pocket.” His eyes look almost luminous as he glances across. You nod encouragingly and angle your body so he has easy access to your hoodie pocket. Caution makes his movement slow but he does as you ask, withdrawing a photo you hoped would seal the deal. Init you’re holding the item that slaughtered a large group of humans and four elves, the magic dripping down from the wand in a frightening display of power. As he skims the image his jaw flexes and the car speeds up. He tucks the critical piece of evidence into his inside pocket

“I’ll die at their hands before I tell you where I hid it, but only if you take me to your offices. Please, Special Agent Kandomere, let’s go somewhere safe and talk. Let me help you end this.”
Chapter Two

With your camera in hand you’d smiled at the newly wed couple and positioned them as best you could outside the tiny back street chapel, not an easy task when they’d clearly drank their body weight in liquor. “C’mon guys look at the camera.” You chuckled as your friends lumbered around, trying to support one another without falling over. “Seriously, you want to be able to remember this, you’re gonna have to hold still long enough for me to take a photo!” Their happiness is infectious, as is their laughter and you find yourself swept away in the joy of the moment.

For a blissful, fleeting moment, it was going to be a perfect memory, until it all went to hell. The shutter clicking had seemingly signalled the start of the apocalypse as the street filled with people. As things descended into chaos you spotted your roommate Mia. The friends you’d been photographing guffawed loudly as the new group drew rapidly closer only for their giggles to die abruptly when they noticed the blood and panic written on the faces heading their way.

Without thinking, you clamped your finger on the shutter button and held your camera in the direction of the oncoming nightmare. It wasn’t a conscious action and you had no idea what possessed you to do it amidst your rising panic, it was like your arm was working independently.

The people running towards you drew closer and you raised your free hand you try to catch Mia’s attention but before she can see you, you’re swallowed by the horde of terrified people as they run by. Stepping back to avoid being trampled you press yourself against the grimy wall behind you just in time to see the first of the elves. The two males strode calmly around the corner, following the fleeing group of humans, their movements measured, unhurried and impeccably graceful. Their hard ethereal gazes fixed on the terrified group scrambling to outrun them.

A howl at the opposite end of the small street had you whipping your head and camera in the other direction to see two more elves, one male, one female and one unmistakable glowing, dripping wand. A slew of profanities fell quietly from your lips as you ducked down into the shadowed doorway next to you. Stepping out of the glare of the streetlights you knew the elves could still see you but it offered a momentary reprise from the horror unfolding before you. This was it, your number was up.

“Miss Y/L/N!” Kandomere snapped as another glare was aimed in your direction. With a jolt you’re ripped free from the harrowing memories back to the dreary twenty-four hour cafe. The sickening fluorescent light above the table flickers and you automatically shrink back into the vinyl covered booth, your tepid coffee in your now unbound hands, forgotten.

Kandomere sits opposite you, his tie back in place and looking unaffected by the late hour. “You test my patience.” He growls flashing his pointed teeth, purposely trying to intimidate you. The dingy diner-styled cafe was situated in the darkness of an underpass close to the territory of a well
known orc gang and you couldn’t fathom why he’d brought you here. The orcs running the place had shuffled nervously when the agent had marched you in, their eyes watching his every move with distrust. He was clearly not welcome here.

“I said somewhere safe!” You hissed, glancing over his shoulder to the staff behind.

“We are perfectly safe here.”

“You’re impossible!”

He pushes his cup aside and folds his hands on the table, he means business. “You've had your time and you’ve given me nothing more on the artefact or the organisations I’m hunting. I’m unsure as to what more you hope to gain out of putting off the inevitable.” His very nature is intimidating but when he narrows his eyes and allows you to glimpse his deadly teeth you find yourself running through the reasons why you’d come to him specifically.

Having spent as much time in any given place you dared, researching the magic feds, you’d concluded he was the most likely candidate to help. You’d assumed that his well documented hatred of magic would fuel his desire to help you stop the Inferni, his case records proving his ruthlessness when it came to his enemies but that very determination and blind fury was putting you both in danger right now. Leaning forward you close the space between you and drop your voice to barely a whisper. “It’s hidden and seeing as no one has been successful in tracking me since Vegas I’m confident it’s safe.”

“You were testing us.” His now expressionless face gives nothing away.

Your head cocks to one side. “Yes. If you and all your tech and resources couldn’t track me then I figured they couldn’t ether.”

“If you tell me where it is—“

“Kandomere,” you growl, your patience thinning, “I already told you, your organisation isn’t as safe as you’d like to think. I give you the, you glance around the coffee shop again, “book, you’ll take it straight to them.”

He reclines against the back of the booth, crossing his arms over his chest, giving off an air of relaxed confidence. It only serves to frustrate you further. Resting below his tie knot, his gorget gleams in the headache inducing lighting, snaring your attention. You knew what it said, hell every knew what the Övüsi script said - Elves above all, above all Elves - so why was he, a supposed unbiased law enforcer wearing it? Was it possible that you’d monumentally fucked up for a second time in two weeks? Perhaps Montehugh had been the wiser choice after all.

Kandomere brushes your concerns aside easily with a wave of his hand. “If that were truly the case, why haven’t they taken the one we confiscated?”

Wearily you scrub a hand down your face. “It’s been cursed. It was used to kill it’s rightful heir and since Lei — she — has no children her lineage has ended. Anyone else using that particular… book, will suffer the same fate as its owner.”

“And how is it you know so much? For someone who professes to be so against this,” he smiles tightly, “book club you seem to be highly educated in their practices.”

“Take me somewhere safe and I’ll fucking tell you.” You hiss, narrowing your eyes to slits. You expected him to be difficult, disbelieving even but this was verging on suicide. “I can’t talk openly here.”
“It’s here or my offices, your choice.”

You lower your head to the table and inhale a long, deep breath in an attempt to quell your rising anger. “I can’t decide whether it’s your ignorance, stubbornness or elven pride that will get me killed.”

“I can assure you—“

You snap back up, venom clinging to your words. “No offence, Blue, but your assurance doesn’t mean shit to me now. I was wrong to come to you. I shoulda stuck it out on my own.” Cursing yourself for your stupidity you push away from the table and stand. “It’s been a colossal waste of both our times and I’m done. See you around, agent.”

His answering chuckle is low and deadly. Shifting positions he braces his hands on the table, palms down, ready to move. “You seem to be under the impression you can leave.”

It’s your turn to laugh. “And you seem to be underestimating the woman who evaded your best for well over a week. Sure I can’t physically outrun you but I doubt you’ve memorised the sc—” A movement has you clamping your mouth closed and your gaze flicking to the door. Two male orcs enter the coffee shop and survey the area. They spot you looking and sneer, a clear warning that their tolerance of a human and elf presence in their neighbourhood was little to non. Gritting your teeth you willed your heart to slow down as they called out their order, choosing to sit three booths down. This could get ugly and fast if the two newcomers decided they wanted you gone.

“Fuck.” You shoot a hard glare towards your companion. “This is your fault on so many levels.” His brows crease in confusion and for the first time his carefully composed mask slips. You act fast throwing yourself into the booth next to him gracelessly. The move catches the elf off guard and you lean in close before he can cringe away, “We have company, pretend I’m your escort, ask about payment, anything then let’s get the hell out of dodge.” You whisper.

If he has any reservations, he doesn’t show them. Instead he stares into your eyes for a second and then announces, “That seems an agreeable amount. Care to make good on the arrangement now?” His gaze never wavers as he searches your eyes, apparently convinced of your honesty. You’re so relieved you could cry.

“No time like the present, sir.” Grabbing his hand you eagerly pull him out of the booth. As he raises to his full height, lording it over you somewhat, he squeezes your hand tightly, a silent threat to let you know he isn’t about to let you out of his impeccable sight. Hand in hand you bid goodnight to the orc who served you and head out Ito the night. “Kandomere—“

“I recognise those orcs,” he interrupts, “my team have been monitoring them for some time.”

“Shield of Light?” You ask with trepidation, unable to rise to any other challenges. The adrenaline is fading out of your system and your nervous system is crashing fast.

“Yes.”

“Fuck.”

“Your fondness for that word is—“

“Would they recognise you? Do they know who you are?” You haven’t time to listen to his petty chastising. If the orcs knew who he was, it wouldn’t take them too long to connect the dots and figure out who you were and why you were in his company. If that happened, no where was safe
with the elf.

“No. They would not recognise me.”

The world suddenly tilts and you grip onto Kandomere’s strong arm for balance. Thankfully your hand is still clamped in his as the edges of your vision blur. For a moment all you hear is the blood rushing through your veins.

“Miss Y/L/N?”

Forcing down a lungful of air you let it out slowly, awaiting the return of your senses. This isn’t the first time this has happened and it won’t be the last at this rate.

“Y/N? If this is a ploy…”

You catch the end of his sentence. If only it was a ruse. “No sleep, no food. Gimme a minute.” You manage choke out.

You’re still moving and you can only assume that Kandomere is dragging you towards his car. When you finally get full use of your faculties you’re being shoved unceremoniously into the vehicle, the door slamming closed behind you. In a flash, the elf settles into the driver seat and locks the doors before pulling away and joining with the sparse traffic. You take your time getting your body under control. Tilting your head back you allow the seat to bear your full weight. Relaxing against the soft leather and praying that your chauffeur doesn’t take any sharp corners, you allow Kandomere to just drive. You don’t know where he’s taking you, you can only hope he’s finally seen the light and understands the precarious situation he’s now in.

The car slows before stopping all together and the whir of an electric window reaches your ears.

“She’s with me, official business.”

At the elf soft spoken words your heart plummets. You don’t need to open your eyes to know where you are. He’s brought you to the one place you’d spent so long avoiding. As his window closes you suck in a shaky breath.

“You just signed my death warrant.”

“How so?” His tone is light and shocks you enough to open your heavy eyelids.

Your heart lurches as you see the unmistakable wealth of the elf district. Gold barriers, immaculate grass verges and spotless glass fronted sky scrapers stretch as far as you can see.

“What the hell are we doing here?” You’ll stick out like a sore thumb here, so much so that it would take only minutes for the Inferni to swoop down and snatch you, federal agent or not.

“I’m taking you home.” Kandomere states simply.

It takes you a full minute to process what he’s said. As understanding finally dawns your body stiffens and your jaw drops. “Are you fucking mad?” The second your foot hits the pavement you’ll be noticed, there was no way on this earth you could get into his home without at least a dozen cold, detached eyes seeing. It wouldn’t take long for word to spread, the fact that a federal agent was quite obviously taking a bedraggled human back to their place would be hot gossip in a town like this.Fuck! Pinching the bridge of your nose you can’t help wondering how Kandomere had acquired the reputation he had when he was clearly an imbecile.
“Open your eyes, Y/N, we’re here.”

Reluctantly you did as he asked to find yourself in an underground car lot. He pulled the car into a space near an impressively polished elevator door and threw you a condescending smile.

“Who is underestimating whom, now?”
Chapter Three

The ride up to Kandomere’s apartment was thick with tension and silent. He’d positioned himself close, his hands tucked into his pockets, again looking relaxed but you read the unstated threat. *Don’t try anything*. Reacting to his close proximity you stood rigid, in fact your muscles were wound so tight you were surprised they hadn’t snapped. In other circumstances it might be comical, but given recent events you found it hard to smile.

The plain concrete parking lot had not prepared you for the extravagance of the elevator and you couldn’t look any more out of place next to the mahogany panelling and plush carpet if you tried. A fact that is shoved down your throat every time you look into the mirrored doors and see your reflection. Man, you look rough. However it could be worse. Your wrinkled clothes hide the fact that you’ve lost weight and your unkept hair manages to fall in such a way that it disguises the pale sallow colour of your face. It does little to help with the purple shadowing beneath your dull eyes though.

Then there’s Kandomere. His three piece suit is tailored to perfection, the vest beneath his jacket clinging to his torso, emphasising just how well built he is. And his blue hair which falls perfectly, partially tucked behind his ears, never seeming to tangle or knot. You’ve yet to see even a single wisp out of place. There was no wonder so many of your human friends had fetishised the elves when they constantly looked like they’d stepped out of a magazine. It’s a relief when the doors roll open and you no longer have to suffer the insecurities that come with standing so close to an elf.

Kandomere points to your left and you exit the elevator with the agent breathing down your neck. “Enough already, you can back off, there’s no where for me to run.” You grumble under your breath.

“I’m not willing to take that chance.” Comes his amused reply. Damn his superior hearing. Once you reach the door he crowds your personal space, leaning close to your back as his key slips into the lock. You’re sure he’s doing it intentionally to unsettle you and it’s working. “Seriously?” You glare over your shoulder, annoyed that he’s able to get under your skin so easily. The door is opened for you and a hand at the small of your back nudges you inside the apartment. “Please.” He nods for you to follow the glass sided hallway as he closes the door, locking it and pocketing the key.

Turning your focus from him you walk forward, angling right and emerging into the main body of the apartment, your eyes widening at the sight before you. The open planned living space is minimalistic in design and very impressive. The whole place boasts floor to ceiling windows that lead out onto a covered terrace which wraps around the entire floor. Directly in front of you stands a long, onyx dining table, twelve matching leather backed chairs tucked neatly under it. Above, a
tasteful, delicate chandelier offers a disused, ambient glow. Off to the side is a kitchen worthy of any top chef, all white marble and chrome appliances. Beyond the dining area, the living ‘room’ holds two white couches positioned perpendicular to one another, between them and the windows, a pristine glass coffee table is nestled in the centre as a focal point. The whole arrangement is set on a plush, highly expensive white rug, overlooking the vista of elf town, inviting you to sit and watch as the world goes by.

Unaffected by his surroundings, Kandomere strides confidently past. You follow him with your gaze as he pauses to shrug out of his jacket and hang it on the back of one of the dining chairs. Continuing on, he settles behind the kitchen island and stares back as he undoes his sleeves and rolls them up his muscular forearms. Next he discards his tie and gorget before popping open the top two buttons of his shirt.

“Talk.” He commands.

Nervously, you tug your sleeves down over your hands and lower your head. “I think you probably already figured out what happened from the photos. At least, what happened to the humans.” Once again your reminded of the scent of burning flesh, making your stomach heave. Shaking your head in a futile attempt to clear it you continue, “I don’t know exactly why the elves were attacking those humans…” In your minds eye you watch as the people were rounded up in front of you, their terrified expressions etched into your psyche for eternity. “Mia, my roommate, she was one of the casualties. She… She was screaming at them, begging for her life, she knew them but they wouldn’t listen. They showed no mercy and even less remorse,” you shook your head and level your gaze to his curious eyes, “no, worse, the elves were enjoying it.” A cold shiver wracked your frame, whether from exhaustion or the memories, you didn’t know.

“Come, sit.” Kandomere points at a stool at the end of island, his tone brooking no room for argument. Obediently you drag your aching body into the seat and rest your head in your hands, elbows leaning on the marble top.

“They made it into a show, a sick, twisted display of power.” You gaze landed on his gorget situated just a few feet away. Tentatively you reach out and drag the silver item closer, lightly tracing the engraved script with your index finger. “Elves above all, above all elves.”

“So why are you not dead?”

Why indeed. Part of you wishes you’d died that day too, if for no other reason than to be free of your constant nightmares. “They wanted me alive.”

“Why?”

“Because they’d figured out I was probably a bright and they wanted to test the theory.”

The sliding of a plate across the marble makes you jump. You hadn’t realised he’d been preparing you a sandwich. “Eat something before you collapse, again.” Despite being ravenous, you hesitate. “There is nothing wrong with the food, Y/n, I’m simply ensuring you remain conscious long enough to finish your explanation.” He opens the fridge and selects a bottle of water, placing it next to the plate.
With trepidation you pick up the bread and take a reserved bite. It’s been far too long since your last meal but pride refuses to let your hunger turn you feral. The elf hums, and you discern the smallest of smiles tugging at his full lips. Swallowing your bite you take a sip of water, enjoying the brief semblance of normality until his low voice interrupts your short reprieve.

Please continue.”

You sigh. “The female, Kierdrin, she was in charge, she had the wand. She…” Screams echo through your mind as you’re once again forced to relive the horror. “She wanted me to see the power of the wand, what it was capable of, and she wanted to scare me. I’d said no when Mia asked if I could ever envisage joining the Inferni, so Keirdrin wanted to make sure I knew what I was going up against.”

They asked you to join them?

“No not exactly.” You take another bite, using the time to order your thoughts. “Mia was into history, specifically history surrounding the Inferni, Sargon and the Shield of Light. At least that’s what I thought. She used to ask me to help with her research – she knew I couldn’t resist the fantastical – and it was interesting. We spent hours piecing it all together and asking hypothetical questions. It was a game.” A huff forces its way past your tense jaw as you berate your naivety again. “Only it wasn’t. She was trying to recruit me, reporting my answers back to Kierdrin.”

“I see.”

Shoving your hood down, you tug your hands through your messy hair, roughly grabbing at it in a futile attempt to stop the onslaught of guilt, humiliation and regret. “I, I don’t know what made me do it, I didn’t even know I could but watching Mia burn alive, seeing Jack and Alice clinging to each other as the flames ate through their flesh, they’d only just said their fucking vows… I grabbed the wand out of her fucking hands and–” You shuddered. The magic had pulsed up your arm and taken root in your soul. It had been exhilarating and terrifying in equal measures.

“You killed the elves?” Kandomere breathes, taking a step back, his silvery eyes wide and horrified.

“Inferni.” You corrected quietly, the gleam of his gorget warning you to tread carefully. “Elves, human, orc, it shouldn’t matter, they were Inferni who had just murdered over two dozen people.” He recovers himself quickly but the damage has been done. He’s proven himself to be biased. You push away the food, unable to swallow down any more of his sandwich or bullshit. “Elves above all.” You mutter, your heart heavy from the loss of your friends and the implications of confessing to a prejudiced law enforcer. Rising to your feet you stand there, bereft of hope. There was no where to run, no where to hide, you’re completely at his mercy, of which, you were certain, he had non. Your legs trembled as you shuffled away from the kitchen, towards the sliding window that led out onto the terrace. This would be your last look at freedom and how ironic that it was looking out over the elf district. Footsteps approach you from behind, the unmistakable click of expensive
Italian shoes against polished hardwood floor. “You’re right, it shouldn’t matter.”

*Shouldn’t, but it does,* you thought bitterly.

“Here, you need to eat.” You blink in surprise as he reaches around you, offering up the plate with the rest of your sandwich on it. Shock has you spinning around, only to come face to chest with the imposing agent. He’s much closer than you’re comfortable with, so close you can make out the shattering of hair disappearing below his shirt. His lips curl into a genuine smile, softening his moonlit eyes as he looks down at you. “I apologise for my initial response, I did not mean to give you reason to question my integrity. You’re perfectly right, they were Inferni, elven kind or not, what they did,” his head shakes gently, ruffling his hair so that the tapered tip of his ear is momentarily hidden.

“I… Can’t see!” Your vision deserts you, followed shortly after by your ability to stand. The second your knees give way you wish you’d finished the food but it’s too late for regrets now. You hit the deck with a loud smack, bringing your arms around your head in time to cushion the blow.

Once the surprise of the collapse is over you’re aware of the elf sighing. “Are you still conscious?” His tone is terse and unimpressed. Anger bubbles in your chest. He could at least pretend to care. You grind your teeth. “Fuck you, Blue.”

“I told you, you needed to eat.”

Opening your mouth to spit out an insult, your words die as he fastens his arms around you and lifts you to his chest. Far more gently that you’d deemed him capable, he lays you on one of the soft couches. You want to comment on his unprofessional behaviour but bite your tongue. You’re in no position to start an argument, especially as you’re the one who begged him to ignore protocol in the first place.

“You can sleep here. We’ll continue this discussion when you’re rested enough to stay vertical.”

Blinking rapidly you wait for your now faded sight to return. “Fine.” You bite grudgingly, watching his blurry outline settle onto the matching couch.

“Goodnight Miss Y/L/N.”

“What? You’re just gonna sit there and watch me sleep?”

He chuckles. Its soft and breathy, and catches you off guard. “Of course not, I have paperwork to catch up on.”
Paperwork? “What about sleep?” You yawn, succumbing to the lull of comfortable cushions.

But he’s done talking and you’re left to contemplate the last couple of hours in silence. It could have gone better, he could have listened to you off the bat and saved you both a lot of hassle, but at least you weren’t in a cell… yet. Besides, there were way worse places to spend the night than resting on a plush sofa in the penthouse of a federal agent. You decided to throw caution to the wind and settled down to get some much needed rest.
Your eyes snap open just before the magic hits the grinning elves and the sudden change of location short circuits your frazzled brain. Your heart is hammering and a slight sheen of sweat clings to your body, not that you notice any of that. Your attention is wholly focussed on the vastness of the sky outside the humongous window. It’s all you can see. The mesmerising hues of blue fading into black announce the oncoming dawn, meaning that you’ve slept for a good three hours if not more. It’s the most rest you’ve had in days but your eyes still ache with tiredness. Three deep breaths calm you, and ready you for the new day. The events of last night seep back into your mind like tendrils of smoke, and you recall Kandomere bringing you back to his apartment. You’re safe, at least for the time being.

Stretching out your limbs you’re pleasantly surprised to find them ache free for once. Sitting up, you roll your shoulders to ease out the lingering tension and smile as your joints pop. There’s no doubt in your mind that it’s going to be another long day, and you’re certain you’re going to need your wits about you now more than ever, but for the time being you’re going to enjoy the peaceful environment.

You’ve yet to acknowledge the elf nearby but you sense his piercing gaze on you. Taking in the view your mind drifts to the agent and you’re curious as to whether he’s had any sleep. Turning your head you lock eyes with his. He’s in the same spot you remember him settling into, his clothes still somehow wrinkle free. How does he manage it? Around him are several files that he quickly gathers and stacks neatly on the glass table. It’s then that you spot the half eaten sandwich on the white plate in front of you. Wasting no time you lean forward to snatch it up, having absolutely zero desire to collapse in the agents presence a third time.

Unblinking and mute, he observes you, readjusting his position so he can sit back. After a short while he clears his throat. “Shall we continue where you left off, hm?”

Straight to business it is. Fine, you can eat and talk at the same time. “Okay, where was I?”

“How did you kill the Inferni?”

“Oh yeah, dead elves.

“Straight in at the deep end huh?.” Dread settles in the pit of your stomach. “After the people, the humans, after they stopped thrashing and screaming and burning I couldn’t move. I just stood there. Kierdrin, the female elf, came to stand next to me. Like she hadn’t just murdered innocent people. She told me the Inferni had been watching me for a while. Said not to get too upset over Mia, that she’d only been my friend to further their cause.” Avoiding his scrupulous gaze, you examine your food before taking another bite. Its suddenly dry and hard to swallow. “She told me what I’ve told you. They wanted to recruit me, I’d been ear marked as a bright and they wanted to test me. I’d either succeed and join them or die.” With the sandwich finished you finally meet his eyes. “I had no idea what I was doing when I grabbed that thing. The elves were laughing at what they’d done and I just, I reacted. Whatever phrase Kierdrin said had made the wand work so I

Chapter Four

Chapter Summary

Warnings: Language, Slight Violence
repeated it and pointed it at them. No doubt you’ve seen what it did. I couldn’t watch. Despite what they’d done the noises they made, I can’t ever hear that.” You shudder. “I ran, as soon as the wand stopped spitting out light, I shoved the thing up my sleeve and I ran. I knew what the Inferni wanted, I’d done enough research with Mia to figure out what came next, so I disappeared. Grabbed what cash I could find, stuffed some clothes into my bag and caught the next bus out of town. I posted the memory card on my way.”

“Hm.” He cocks his head to the side. “Why did you send the photos to my department?

“I’m in over my head. I need help.” A shrug raises your shoulders. “Like I said, I’d done research with Mia, that included looking at you magic feds. At this point I’m caught between a rock and a hard place so I took a chance on the lesser of three evils. It was either you or the damn Shield of Light and I trust them about as much as the Inferni. Figured you guys were the only ones who wouldn’t try and kill me, at least not straight away.”

Kandomere shifts position, resting his forearms on his thighs he leans towards you. “What makes you think the Inferni have infiltrated the MTF?”

“Something Mia said.‘ You sigh loudly. “She joked that the feds weren’t as pure as they’d hoped, unlike the Inferni. That they probably weren’t as highly skilled and untouchable as they thought either. I believe her exact words were ‘how else would the Inferni stay three steps ahead?’”

“The wand you took,” he blinks slowly and you can see him piecing all the information together in his quick mind, “You killed it’s owner, like Leilah’s—“

You can see where he’s going with his train of thoughts and step in. “No, it’s not that simple. Leilah was a coven leader, her wand was bound to her. This one was free to be claimed. Each wand is different, each one is… Leilah’s wand, it wont stay unusable forever. Given time wands lose the, I dunno what to call it other than, memory, of who they belong to. It’s like the longer they remain unused the more they forget the binding. Eventually Leilah’s will do the same and the next bright or Inferni who comes along can wield it. This wand, its forgotten it’s previous owner, it isn’t bound.”

“You know this, how?” This was dangerous territory again. Nervously you chewed your bottom lip. “Y/N, what makes you believe this wand is unbound?”

“I just know.”

He scoffs at your vague answer. “Miss Y/L/N, I have been more than accommodating but you are testing my patience.”

Your hands slap your thighs and you incline your body towards him angrily. “I felt it, okay? When I used it, it took over my mind. I could hear it, whispering, begging me to claim it.” Heat rushes up your neck and into your cheeks. You’re fully aware of how ridiculous you sound and you know that the agent is going to have a tough time taking your word on this one. “Look I know, all right? This is a conspiracist wet dream come true. I know! But I swear I’m telling you the truth.”

He’s on his feet and pacing, his long legs striding up and down as he clasps his hands behind his back. “You expect me to take you at your word?”

In a flash of unbridled fury you’re closing the gap between you and the elf. “Why the fuck would I come to you? Why the hell would I risk my life if I wasn’t telling the truth? What the fuck, elf? Are you naive or just stupid?”
As you reach him he lunges, twisting and pulling you roughly until your back is pressed against his chest. He moves impossibly fast. Reaching around, he has no trouble gripping both your wrists in one of his large hands, clasping them just below your chest and using them to pin you in place. His other hand snakes around your neck, clamping down to keep you still.

“Do not forget your place, Y/N, you are here at my discretion and will give me the respect I deserve,” he snarls, holding you in place with hardly any effort.

The past nine days have seen you running for your life, hiding a weapon of untold destruction, living on the very edge of existence and you’ve taken all you can. You’ve worn your frayed nerves so thin you’re able to pinpoint the exact moment they snap. “No!” You grunt. “Drop the ego and superiority complex, get over yourself and fucking understand what I’m saying.”

Your defiance does not go down well. The solid wall of muscle behind you tenses and pulls you even closer, the hand at your neck squeezing hard enough to restrict your ability to breathe. “I am not above forcing the answers out of you, Chiquita,” he warns, his breath hitting your cheek as he manoeuvres your head to the side.

You should heed his warning, you know you should but since when have you ever backed down from a challenge? “See, this is what happens when you don’t get enough sleep. You get grumpy and irrational.” You’re poking the bear. Its stupid and reckless but his answering growl is so satisfying to hear. The hand at your throat moves to your waist and he hoists you up, striding towards the door as if you weigh nothing. “This is a joke to you? People are dying—“

“No fucking shit! I was there remember?”

Another blink and he’s spun you around to pin you against the wall, your hands now above your head and your neck once again fastened in his vice like grip. “Where is the wand?” His face comes within inches of yours, eyes blazing with wrath.

It isn’t going to work though, you refuse to submit. “Do your best, Blue. Beat me, kill me, I don’t care, I’m not telling you where it is.”

His lip curls up, giving you an unwanted, up-close view of his sharp, gleaming teeth. “You’ll tell me”

“You’re not listening!” You cry. “Your job isn’t to retrieve the wand, it’s—“ His fingers curl around your throat and you’re unable to finish.

His face morphs into amusement, a smirk adorning his full lips. “Shall we see if blue suits you as well as it does me?” He asks. Your eyes water but you still manage to roll them mockingly at him, refusing to let him break you. You’d taken on the Inferni and lived, you weren’t about to die at the hands of an unhinged magic federal agent. Gritting your teeth you focus your spotty gaze on his, waiting for him to make his next move. Eventually he releases his grip enough for you take a shallow breath.

“Now,” his face is so close that his hair is tickling your cheek, “shall we try again? Where is the wand, Y/n?”

“Can’t remember.” Your voice is rough and scratchy.

Kandomere releases you, allowing you to slide to the floor and catch your breath. He backs up, hands folded across his chest. “No more games! Tell me.”

“And if I tell you? What will you do to protect it?” Your husky tone belies your seething
determination.

Slowly he bends his knees, balancing on the balls of his feet to crouch down to your level. “That is non of your concern. I’m taking you in, I’ve had enough.

“For fucks sake, Kandomere we’re going round in circles.” With the heel of your palm you rub aggressively at your eyes. “I tell you where the damn thing is you’ll take it in. The Inferni will take it from under your nose and you’re back to playing hunt the bad guys. It’s not the wand you need!”

“Y/n—“

“Exactly!” He frowns, not comprehending your outburst. “Look, I don’t want to do this, but it’s the only viable option I can see. You need to forget about the damn wand and concentrate on me. Let me,” you laugh mirthlessly and shake your head, “let me work with you. Let’s be smart about this. The Vegas coven will be searching for me. The coven leader no less. You could — I can’t believe I’m saying this — use me as bait. Put a plan together, make sure as hell it’s air tight and bait that bitch into a trap.”

As you talk you can see his brain evaluating the merit of your suggestion. His face remains scowling but his eyes soften and you dare to hope he’s actually listening for once.

“You said you wouldn’t go to the MTF building.”

“No, I asked you not to take me there last night. Or today either for that matter.” You rush to include. “Take me in when you’ve figured out how to do this, just use a shit ton of caution because I guarantee, and with my life, that you have moles.”

A gentle hand cups your chin and tilts your head upwards. “You played your part well, Miss Y/L/N, but the charade ends now. You’re either my ally or my enemy and everything I’ve heard leads me to believe you’re the latter.” Your mouth opens and you stare up at him in abject horror and disbelief. He’s not done yet though, he’s got one last trick up his sleeve. “I’ve called two of my best men, they’re downstairs waiting to accompany you to our building. Maybe a few hours in a cell will loosen your tongue.”

Every ounce of blood rushes to your feet. “You can’t.”

He makes a show of retrieving his phone out of his pocket and pressing it to his ear. “She’s all yours.”
The car weaves through the early morning traffic easily as you stare dumbfounded out of the window. The sun had come up and the city was beginning to come alive with early risers already creating a decent amount of footfall on the sidewalk. The two agents Kandomere had summoned were both large men but they’d still handled you carefully, like you posed some sort of threat to their personal wellbeing. You did, just not in the way they thought. It wasn’t you who would hurt them, it was the people coming after you, not that they’d listen, after all why would they when Kandomere himself had ignored your warning.

You twist your hands together, ignoring the biting metal cuffs securing your wrists. The two suited men in the front glance at you often and it would be amusing that they found you so dangerous if only they weren’t taking you to your death. You’d screwed up big time. Why you thought he’d ever listen is beyond you right now. It seemed that desperation had seriously clouded your judgement.

“Aw, don’t look so worried, Princess, we got a lovely space all set up for you. You’ll hardly notice the difference between the cell and Special Agent Kandomere’s plushy apartment.” The blonde agent smirks.

The other, a black haired man, flicks his gaze to the rear view mirror and narrows his eyes at you. This is so bad. You’re instinctively caught between fight and flight mode, but being unable to do either is making you numb. You’re fully aware that the second you enter the building you become a target and yet there’s nothing you can do about it. You’re no elf, you can’t fight your way free. The only consolation is that you’re sure no one will ever find the wand so at least your death won’t be in vain.

Far too soon you roll up to the front of the imposing MTF building. “I think we may need extra men for this one, you wanna go him to help?” The driver nods to the uniformed officer striding out of the grand entrance.

The other agent screws up his face. “I thought we were supposed to take her through the back, straight to processing.”

Your gut begins to churn and you look between the two men. Something was way off. The driver shakes his head. “Nah, Special Agent Kandomere wants as many people to see us taking her in as possible. Think he’s hoping to draw out the Inferni.”

“Really?” Blondie checks over his shoulder, scowling at you, “All right man, what ever you say.” His shoulders pull up into a shrug and he heaves himself out of the door. The moment he’s free of the vehicle, you’re thrust back into the seat by the momentum of the car hurtling forwards. The open passenger door bounces closed as the dark haired agent floors it. Paying no attention to safety he weaves lanes, cutting up the other road users and ignoring stop signs and red lights alike.

“What the hell!” You shout, smacking your head painfully against the glass as he takes a corner at
speed. Seconds later he’s screeching to a stop in a parking garage and yanking you out of the car.

“Get your fucking hands off of me!”

Glacial eyes glare at you. “Shut the fuck up, or I’ll make it so you can’t talk.”

“There’s n—“

You don’t get to finish. The agent is quick to remove his side arm and with a sickening smile he pistol whips you unconscious.

You come too with your hands bound tightly over your head and your body hanging limp in the centre of an unidentifiable room. Once again your heart rate increases to a gallop as the enormity of your predicament becomes clear. How you haven’t had a heart attack yet is beyond you.

You’re in a small, concrete, windowless room, the single bulb dangling directly above, your only light source. The room smells of damp and a cold chill wraps around your shivering frame. As you move your feet, trying to ease the discomfort in your aching shoulders you realise you’re stood, barefoot, in a shallow container of water. That can’t be good. Wincing as the rope cuts into the delicate skin of your wrists you attempt to move, testing the restraints. They won’t give all you’ve managed to do is rub your skin raw.

The sound of a door opening ceases all your movement and you wait, motionless for someone to approach. Footsteps shuffle into the room behind you. “Ah good, you’re awake.” The voice is not that of the agent who brought you in. It’s older, rougher and distinctly happier. “What do you know of the Vegas incident?”

Your tongue is heavy in your mouth, your throat dry and your head pounding. Even if you’d wanted to talk it would have taken you a minute or two to compose yourself. Time your new companion was not willing to give you. A sound, like the buzzing of live electricity reaches your ears and you’re suddenly acutely aware of what the water is for. Fiery heat travels up your legs, your entire body spasming as your muscles convulse. The pain is like nothing you’ve experienced before, the intensity of it destroying your ability to think. Your jaw tightens of its own accord and breathing becomes impossible as a howl is forced out of you until there’s no air left in your burning lungs.

“Now then.” Just as quickly as the electrocution started, it stops and you’re left hanging, gasping and bleeding where you’ve bitten through the inside of your cheek. “Are you ready to talk?”

A slight scent of singed hair surrounds you and there’s a pulsing in your head that’s affecting your vision. You’re vaguely aware that you’re swinging slightly but you can no longer feel your arms or shoulders. “Who are you?” You wheeze, unable to see your companion.

“Wrong answer!”

Again the crippling heat and agony savage your body. All you can comprehend is the white hot lava endlessly licking up and down your frame and it feels like your skin is melting away from your bones.

“Shall we try one last time?” Your attacker croons, removing the electrical current from the water
and sighing.

“‘Inferni.’ You manage, unable to swallow down the blood pouring out of your mouth.

“What about them?’”

Tears streak down your cheeks and you successfully achieve a shuddering breath, preparing
yourself for the next onslaught. “Are you Inferni?” You tense. Being unable to see your torturer
has you anticipating the next burst of electricity.

“No my dear. Are you?”

Despite yourself you manage a huffy laugh. “No. Never.”

“Good, now that’s established, care to tell me about Vegas?”

So this is how you die, at the hands of the Shield of Light. A small part of you acknowledges you
were right not to trust them, but that’s little comfort as you face your execution.

“I live there. Came here to visit my good friend Agent K.” You’re mumbling, the blood in your
mouth and clearly stiffness in your jaw affecting your speach.

“Oh my sweet, you’re only putting off the inevitable but I do so like your fortitude.”

The electricity crackles and you thrash as it makes your muscles dance. Noises escape your lips but
you’re unaware of everything except the relentless pain. Once again, it lasts no more than ten
seconds but it might as well be eternal as your nerve endings light up with the torment. As it comes
to an end you’re unable to process anything but the lingering twitches making your limbs and heart
shudder.

“Y/n?”

That wasn’t your assailant.

“Y/n? Can you hear me? Find a knife! Cut her down.” The accented voice fades in and out and
you’re sure you should be able to understand the words it’s saying but all you hear are noises.
Without warning you’re tilted, and your head flops but something rigid stops it from jerking all the
way back. More unfamiliar noises converge in your addled brain, confusing you further as your
mind slowly shuts down. You can’t feel anything except the frigid air and whilst it should be
disarming you find it a nice change from the previous scorching.

“Stay with us, Y/n.”

A calming blanket of absolute tranquility wraps tightly around you, blocking out all and every
external stimulant. You can’t see or hear or feel and it’s wonderful. Letting go of consciousness,
you slip quietly into a dreamless sleep, not giving one single damn if you never wake up again.

But you do wake up, in a sterile white room with bright lights and annoying beeping. You frown
against the dazzling halogen strip bulbs mounted to the ceiling, raising your hand to shield your
aching eyes.

“Y/n?” Kandomere asks softly, stepping into your line of sight.

Your scowl deepens and a venom filled, ‘fuck you’ spills automatically out of your mouth. Only it
doesn’t carry the weight you’d hoped, your voice too hoarse to convey the level of contempt you
feel for the blue haired ass. He breathes out an amused huff at your insult and looks you up and down. Tilting his head he tucks his hands into the pocket of his trousers and doesn’t even attempt to hide his crooked smile. “No lasting brain damage then.”

You want to scream at him, tell him this is all his fault, rub his nose in the fact that you’d been right all along. Just looking at him has your stomach churning and blood boiling, oh how you hate him. His smug, self assured, I-know-best attitude had literally handed you straight over to the Shield of Light and that was something you’d never be able to forgive. Nine days alone and the worst that had happened was weight loss and sleep deprivation, less than nine hours with him and you’d wound up tortured. No, you’d said all you would to the elf. Not a word more would pass your cracked lips whilst he was in the vicinity. He could go to hell.

You go to turn your back on him but a tangle of wires and tubes have you strapped down. Damn it.

You have to make do with turning your head. It doesn’t send quite the same message but it’ll have to do for now.

He sighs. “How are you feeling?” Unbelievable! How the fuck did he think you were feeling? “I’m sorry we didn’t get to you before he began.”

You’d been so pissed at Kandomere’s presence in your room you’d forgotten to question how you’d ended up here. From that statement he obviously had something to do with it but you’d choke on your words before you asked him what had happened.

He sighs again, “Y/n, I understand your animosity towards me but there is something we must talk about before you speak to anyone else.”

Go screw yourself.

He steps closer and rests a hand on the framework of the bed. “The official report I filed last night states that Miss Y/L/N died at the hands of the Shield of Light. A statement has been released to the press and your death certificate signed. The body had to be DNA certified as it was unidentifiable due to the torture sustained. The only person outside of this room who knows the actual story is Montehugh and for your protection it stays this way. The staff here are under the impression that you are Y/n Rubin and that you injured yourself in a flooded basement when you stood on an exposed wire. They are under the assumption that I am your lover and have agreed to release you into my care when you’re well enough to leave.”

Your head is spinning, the velocity with which it rotates making you queasy.

“Do you understand, Y/n?”

Before you can reply, not that you were going to, a nurse in scrubs enters the room.

“Oh good, you’re awake.” She offers you a wide smile, gesturing towards the elf with a nod. “He’s hardly left your side since you came in. I think you gave him a hell of a scare.”

You manage a tight lipped smile for all of three seconds until Kandomere covers your hand with his. The second he touches you, your expression morphs to disgust and fury and you battle to free your hand from his unwavering grasp.

“I was so worried, mi alma,” he murmurs, his free hand cupping your cheek and turning your face away from the nurse. Whilst his tone is full of adoration his eyes possess a sharpness warning you to play along. Oh how you hate him!

“You were just feeling guilty,” you croak, noticing with glee how the nurse stops what she’s doing
to looks at ‘your man’. He grips you a little tighter. “I mean, I’ve been asking you to check the washer cable for the last week and then this goes and happens.” You’re wide smile is genuine as you make the most of Kandomere’s squirming.

“You’re right,” his face softens, eyes closing momentarily as he inhales through his nose. “I should have listened Y/n. Lo siento corazon, I will never forgive myself for what I put you through.”

If you didn’t know better you’d swear he meant every word - the way he keeps his gaze locked to yours, totally ignoring the nurse, and the gentle caress of your cheek has you almost believing him - but you do know better. This elf didn’t have a remorseful bone in his body and couldn’t give two shits that he’d gotten you hurt, all he cared about was that his precious MTF wasn’t as infallible as he’d assumed.

Plastering on a smile you slide your hand around the back of his neck and weave your fingers through his flawless hair. Later, you’d marvel at how silky and luxurious it had felt, but at this moment your only aim is to mess up his pristine style and make him feel as uncomfortable as possible. Pulling him closer you guide his forehead to yours, and under your breath, whisper, “That makes two of us then.”
Chapter Six

Time passes slowly in hospital with only Kandomere for company. It was made all the worse by the nurses who had fallen foul of Kandomere’s charm, swooning whenever they were in his presence. You had to admit, he played his part well, fussing over you, retrieving things you couldn’t reach and only leaving your side when absolutely necessary, even then he hovered close by.

The day you’d woken up he’d been ordered out of the room by one of the doctors. He’d put up a very convincing fight but the physician had remained steadfast, refusing to examine you until the agent had gone. The disgruntled elf had bid you a begrudging farewell with a chaste kiss to your head and a very dirty look aimed at the young and ridiculously good looking medical practitioner. His actions looked, for all intents and purposes, like a jealous lover. It didn’t fool you though, you were well aware that his anger stemmed from a deep rooted mistrust. He didn’t want you alone for fear of you saying something you shouldn’t or worse, finding a way to skip out on him. Not that you were well enough to run.

The moment he’d left the doctors questions started. “Miss Rubin, I’m concerned. Your boyfriend gave us the details of your accident but you sustained injuries that couldn’t be explained by electrocution alone.” He clasps the clipboard against his chest and perches on the end of your bed. “Is there something going on we don’t know about?” Concern is written all over his handsome face.

Playing dumb you offer a smile. “What do you mean, Dr. Jacobson.”

The doctor sighs. “The muscle damage to your legs, the burns, they are conducive of electrocution however you also came in with two dislocated shoulders and nasty rope burns to your wrists.” His eyes search your face. “Can you explain to me what happened?”

You laugh. You can’t help it, the overwhelming ridiculousness of the situation takes hold and you giggle. He thought Kandomere had hurt you. Well, in a way he was right, but the guy was so far off the mark he wasn’t just on a different shooting range, he was in a different state.

“Miss Rubin, would you like to speak to a counsellor?”

“You think—” Sucking down air you battle to control yourself. “You think Kandomere—“

“It’s not uncommon for elf human relationships to deteriorate into unhealthy practises.”

“Oh doc, no.” The irony of having to protect the elf’s reputation is not lost on you. “This, the shoulder thing, I had hold of a rope when I stood on the wire, I guess the current made me grip on instead of let go. It felt like a hell of a jolt, one big enough to pop my bones out of place. I’m surprised I didn’t do worse to be honest.” He purses his lips, unconvinced. “I mean it. He would’t hurt me, I mean too much to him.” Theres a semblance of truth in there.

Dr. Jacobson gestures towards you. “And the bruising around your neck?”

This soberes you as you recall Kandomere’s hand choking you. “Ok, full disclosure.” You fidget uncomfortably, unable to believe what you’re about to say. “I like breath play, I like being tied up, I like, you know, stuff, but Kandomere has never laid a hand on me that I didn’t ask him to. We have safe words, we know how to,” you swallow, “play responsibly, so yes, I may look to have injuries but to me they’re trophies.” God this is humiliating. “I get off on him marking my skin.”
Heat floods your face as you hold the doctor’s gaze, willing him to trust you.

“I see. As long as you’re sure?” He doesn’t look overly convinced as he makes his way to the exit.

“Absolutely.” You’re nodding your head in earnest. “But thank you for checking. I guess in your line of work you see some pretty messed up things.”

As his hand curls around the door handle he glances back over his shoulder, “I’ll be back to check on you later. If you need anything in the meantime, just press the call button and one of the nurses will come straight in.” With a final sweep over your form he takes his leave.

He passes Kandomere in the doorway, side eyeing the elf as they cross paths. His mistrust of the agent boosts your mood somewhat and the smile you offer your ‘boyfriend’ is, for once, genuine. It was good to know that his act hadn’t fooled everyone, even if it meant the doctor would be keeping a closer eye on you both from now on.

“You did well.” Kandomere offers once the door is closed.

“You were listening? Why am I not surprised?”

“I’m sorry you had to lie—“

Your temper flares. “No, you’re only sorry that you and your crappy organisation are as infallible as each other. You might be fooling the nurses, Blue, but I’m literally painfully aware of what’s going on in that head of yours.”

He raises an eyebrow and folds his arms over his chest, the material of his shirt taut against his muscular biceps. It’s a display of power. Today he’s wearing a black pinstripe, three piece suit but the jacket is discarded somewhere. His tie is bright red and accentuates the coldness of his eyes that gleam like the gorget he insists on wearing. He looks every bit as deadly as you know elves to be.

“Do tell. What am I thinking?”

“You want to know where the wand is. You’re only keeping me around in the hopes that I’ll spill. You think that because you’ve offered me protection I’m more likely to trust you, that over time I’ll let my guard down when in actuality you couldn’t give a rats ass about me, you’re just playing the game to get what you want.”

A slow, sad smile lifts his mouth. “I am a law enforcer first and foremost, I swore to protect. What you see here is remorse. I’ll admit, I thought you delusional, you aren’t the first to come to us with grand theories of conspiracy, but you are the first civilian I’ve placed in mortal danger. I can assure you, this is no game and I am truly sorry for your suffering.”

It’s not what you’re expecting. His heartfelt sincerity is so surprising that you have to glance around to make sure he’s not putting on a performance for one of the nurses again.

“Y/n, I do not make mistakes. I am thorough, I am diligent. I should have known there were moles in my department. I know now however and I will do everything within my power to protect you from now on, and not simply because I want to know the whereabouts of the wand.”

The gentleness of his voice and his apparent candour unnerves you. “Save it. I’m not interested.”

Kandomere drops his arms and tucks his hands into his trouser pockets. Rocking back on his heels you tilts his head. “You know that physician is going to be keeping a very close eye on you. You’ll
You begin picking at the bandages on your wrists as you think about the implications of pretending to be in a relationship with Kandomere. You know he’s right, the doctor is already on high alert. You can’t give him any other reason to start digging, not if you want to stay under the radar. You’ve little choice but to play along with the ridiculousness of having the elf for a boyfriend, no matter how violently it turns your stomach.

“Fine, but no kissing!”

A flicker of amusement crosses his face and he moves to take up the spot the doctor vacated. Sitting on the end of your bed he leans forward and lays a hand over yours to stop you fraying your bandages.

“I will stay with you but during the times I cannot, Montehugh will be around.” You assume he’s telling you this to warn you to stay put until he breaks eye contact. “I will ensure your safety from now on, Y/n. No more harm will come to you.” His remorse is unsettling and you’re at a loss for words. A strange atmosphere hangs heavy in the air and you tense in anticipation, waiting for the other shoe to drop. Any moment now he’s going to turn back into the dangerous federal agent you know him to be.

Instead he lowers his voice and smiles. “You’re tired, you should sleep.” As he speaks he moves, shrugging off his vest and throwing it over the arm of the chair before settling down into it’s worn cushions. “Get some rest, we’ll talk when you’re stronger.”

He’s right, you’re exhausted and surprisingly it doesn’t take long for you to succumb to sleep, despite the raging confusion buzzing through your head. As you drift into your dreams you let go of the uncertainty and take solace in the peacefulness of unconsciousness once again.

-+-

More nightmares, only this time it’s you being burned alive. The flames start at your feet and work their way up your legs, licking you with a heat so intense you can see your flesh blistering into liquid.

When the fire reaches your lower abdomen a gasp leaves you and your eyes snap open to see Kandomere’s anxious face inches from yours, your name on his lips.

“It was just a dream, Y/n. You’re safe,” he murmurs, continuing to offer comfort until the last of the dream leaves you and you regain your bearings. You’re in the hospital. You’re safe.

Once you’re fully recovered you turn away from the man soothing your demons, unable to look at him any longer. Over the last week this has happened too many times to count and each time only increases your level of embarrassment. You hate showing weakness and you’re perturbed that he’s the one who always calms you down when it’s his fault you’re suffering in the first place.

Kandomere retreats back to his chair, allowing you time to adjust. It’s the same routine as always. “Would you like something to eat?”

Your eyes roll. “No, thank you.”

“Do you want to talk about your dream?” He puts his paperwork to one side and fixes his pearly gaze on you.
Swallowing harshly, you shake your head. In your dream he’d been too late to help and it got you wondering, again, how he’d found you in the first place. You’d asked a thousand times but he always dodged the question.

“I need to know.”

He’s up and pacing having already guessed what you’re asking. The rigidity of his spine and clenching of his jaw alludes to yet more of your practised routine. Then a moment later his hands fall behind his back and he drops his head. “I’m afraid to tell you,” he mutters.

This was new. Usually he attempted to manipulate the conversation to safer ground. “Why?”

He rotates to face you but keeps his eyes cast down. “Because I know how you think. You’ll assume it was intentional.”

“Kandomere, please. I need to know.” The firsts continue. You’d never begged before and the way he raises his gaze to meet yours shows how much it bothers him.

He sinks back into the chair. “I’d put a tracking device in your pocket whilst you slept. I was worried you might outwit my agents. The device gave us a rough location and we were able to find you from that.”

It was a simple explanation and you understood why he’d assumed you’d think it intentional. After all, you’d suggested using yourself as bait. You stare around the less than inspiring room, searching for an appropriate response. On the one hand you blamed him for getting you into the mess in the first place. If he’d listened to you from the start you never would have been handed over to the agents. However, on the other hand, you’d come to understand that he was a methodical, careful man who sought evidence before following the rabbit down to wonderland. The fact that he hadn’t taken you directly to the cells was itself a minor miracle.

You’re saved from answering when the nurse with the high ponytail knocks on the door. She enters without waiting for a reply and beams happily at you both.

“Just want to check your legs and reapply the antibiotic cream,” she chirps.

You offer a smile, tugging at your bedcovers in preparation. You’re struggling with the sheet when Kandomere once again takes your hand and with a quiet, “let me,” takes over. Nurse Chipper looks ready to drop to one knee and propose at his actions and you decide then and there she has an elf fetish.

“You’re such a sweetheart,” she coos, laying a gloved hand on his arm, “but you might want to leave the room for a little while.” She glances warily at you.

Kandomere steps around the bed, coming to your other side and claiming your hand with both of his. “No, I’ll stay.” He catches your eye, trying to read your expression to see if you mind.

This day just keeps getting stranger. First he opens up, finally answering your question and now he’s letting you decide if he stays or goes. Who is this elf and what has he done with Blue?

Nurse Chipper brings over the fresh bandages and cream with an apologetic grimace. “Alright then, Y/n, you let me know when you need a break.”

+++ 

“— and this cream is to be applied when you change your dressings, oh and not forgetting your
pain medication — I know you think you don’t need it Y/n but trust me, you’re going to be in a whole lot of discomfort if you stop taking them.” The perky nurse whose name you can never remember checks your chart. “You’re lucky the tests came back negative, I’ve never seen a case like yours that didn’t require dead tissue removal.” She hands Kandomere the bag of medication she’d been filling and smiles up at him. “No doubt you’ll be glad to get her home. Two weeks here is long enough for the patients let alone their partners, especially when you’ve been here ever single day.”

Oh god, pass the sick bucket please!

“It will be wonderful to have her back where she belongs,” he answers, looking at you pointedly but you’ve no idea what that means. Is he taking you to the MTF building? His apartment? Somewhere else entirely?

“Can we just go, already?” You dig your nail into the soft armrest of the wheelchair wishing you knew where you were heading. Looking down, your attitude sours even more at the brand new trousers covering your thighs. Kandomere had bought you a whole new wardrobe of clothes that you neither suited nor wanted. In his defence he had attempted to get you to choose your own but you’d shot him down every time, insisting that you could take care of yourself. Plus you had clothes in your backpack if he’d just bring the damn thing in. He’s refused and now you’re reluctantly dressed like an elf wannabe. It’s mortifying.

“I’ll see you out.” The nurse — Camilla, Caron, Cathy? — sings, pushing you out of your room. Ten minutes later she’s about to keel over as Kandomere takes her hand and offers his gratitude. Looking through the car window you scoff as he throws his head back and laughs at something she says. “Just get a room already,” you groan, resting your head in your hand and turning to face the windshield. When he finally joins you in the car you shoot him a withering glare. “Oh, so kind of you to join me.”

Pulling away from the kerb he mutters quietly, “Ah, mi alma, te ves hermosa en verde.”

“Stop calling me that!”

He throws you a brief puzzled look. “What?”

“Mi alma, I don’t know what it means but it’s getting on my nerves. You’ve spent the last two weeks breathing it anytime we had company and I’ve had enough.” You’re sure its some stupid pet name meant to convey sweetness and you’re even more certain now you’ve snapped he’ll use it at every given opportunity. Turning your back to him you lean on the door and concentrate on the people outside. Eventually the silence starts to annoy you. You’d grown accustomed to long bouts of quiet back at the hospital as he worked on whatever file he’d brought with him, only now there was no tv to stop your mind from wandering to the dark thoughts you’ve been avoiding. Such as, what now? In the hospital it had been easy to fall into the pretence Kandomere had provided. There’d been no running, no fear, no urgency. All that ended the second you got in the car.

“Where are you taking me?”

“What?”

“And then what?” You discard your hostility as you try to figure out what to do next. “I mean, I’m not staying indefinitely so what’s the plan? The world thinks I’m dead. So witness protection? Or are you going to haul me in under pseudo name? What’s next for me, Blue?” From your perspective the world suddenly looks very lonely no matter which route he takes.
“You’ll stay with me, help me work the case. I have a unique insight into the Inferni with you as a specialist consultant.” The way he says the last two words catch your attention.

“Excuse me?”

“Once you’re healed you’re expected to join me at work. I have the necessary documentation all ready prepared. You’ll be joining me on this operation, Miss Rubin.”

Your mouth works before your brain, spluttering out your thoughts as you have them. “What if I’m recognised? What if I’m attacked again? What about the agents that have seen me? How am I supposed to know how to act? What will people say if they find out I’m staying with you?”

Kandomere steers the car into the parking garage and pulls up next to the elevator. “You won’t be recognised, we will change your hair and you’ll look completely different in the clothes I bought. You’re officially dead now so no need for anyone to look for you.”

You’re not reassured and make it known in your expression.

“Please, Y/n, don’t worry, you’ll be with me the entire time. I won’t let anything happen to you.” He stretches out his hand and catches yours in an all too familiar move. It seems he’s bringing some of his faux-boyfriend characteristics home from the hospital with him.

“What about the agents? They’ll know who I am.”

He shakes his head, his thumb tracing indeterminate letters on your skin. Strangely it doesn’t annoy you. “Agent Brown is now heading up out New York office and Agent Court,” his features darken as he bares his teeth, “died a most painful death when he was found aiding Shield of Light operatives at one of their safe houses.”

Dead? Was it actually possible? “You’re sure?”

“I’m certain, Y/n. I saw it with my own eyes.” He doesn’t rush you as you sit quietly and process what you’d been told. Nor does he remove his hand. You cling to it, using the soft touch to anchor you to the present as you attempt to considered your future. It’s a nigh on impossible task though, your head keeps dragging you back to the people who had seen you and those who knew the real story of your torture.

“He was there wasn’t he? He stayed whilst I was being tortured?”

“He was.”

“What happened? How did he die?”

His free hand traces your cheek to your jaw and slowly taking hold of your chin, he turns you to face him. “Come upstairs where you’ll be more comfortable and I’ll explain everything.”

Your tired, sore and adrift in a sea of uncertainty so you don’t try and fight him as he quickly releases you only to reappear at your door. Opening it he holds out his hand and smiles when you mindlessly take it and allow him to guide you to the elevator. Two weeks ago you’d sworn he was your enemy, out to get only what he wanted from you, but now you weren’t so sure. Perhaps something had changed during your stint in hospital? You can’t remember the last time he’d snapped at you or demanded to know where the wand was. In fact, every time he talked he’d been civil, kind even.

Once inside the push, elevator you stare into the mirrored doors and appraise the elf. Was this new
attitude born of guilt? Was this trust? Sensing your gaze he meets your eyes and draws you closer by wrapping an arm around your waist. Dumbfounded you shift to look at the hand curved around you.

“I truly am sorry, Y/n. I never intended for you to get hurt.” The anguish on his face is off-putting and it steals any reply you could muster. Just what the hell was going on here? Surely this was a trick. And yet, the way he looks at you, his shimmering silver eyes unguarded and vulnerable. The understated ‘ding’ announcing your arrival breaks you out of your thoughts and brings a blush to your face.

“Come, mi alma,” he smirks, “let’s get you settled in your new home, yes?”
Chapter Seven

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Anxiety

The moon is covered by a wisp of cloud, defusing the silvery glow illuminating the quiet elf town streets below. Somewhere in the distance an alarm sounds, the shrill wailing carries on the soft breeze for a moment and then it stops, plunging the opulent neighbourhood back into stillness.

Out on the terrace outside your bedroom you’ve managed to find a semblance of tranquility, letting the gentle wind, caressing your face, carry away the tumultuous array of emotions that had stolen any chance of sleep. Unseeing you stare up at the stars, your empty mind as quiet as the deserted late night city.

Detached. That’s a good description for how you’re feeling. Numb is another. Pulling your thighs to your chest, you rest your chin on your knees and just breathe. You feel nothing. You’re dead, emotionally as well as officially. Maybe that’s not a bad thing, though. It’s certainly better than the desolation which had consumed you earlier. You’d been contemplating how alone you are when it had struck. Icy tendrils had wrapped around your heart, squeezing the life out of you, draining all hope. You’d shook with fear and despondency.

Your mind drifts and for a while you let it, reliving old memories of happier times, bathing in the comfort of days spent laughing and nights spent loving. Oh, you’d had great friends, great loves, great times. Times you would miss, times you would never have again with friends who were now dead or mourning their loss. The heaviness of guilt is fast approaching, you recognise the signs. Like a toxic, choking smog, sadness creeps through your cheerful memories, smothering all the light from your mind and plunging you into a maudlin abyss.

What little focus you’d had, the only real purpose to your life since Vegas, had now dissipated. You’d given the MTF what they needed, you’d ensured the wand would never be found, you’d completed your task. There was nothing left for you, no friends, no family, no point, no hope.

So here you sit, wearing clothes that aren’t yours, in an apartment that would never be home with only two federal agents as acquaintances. Federal agents who had both saved and ended you. Not that you could blame Kandomere for all this. Despite his early fuck up, he’d been there when you needed him the most, literally. If it wasn’t for him, you’d be dead. Even if you’d somehow survived and escaped without him, the agent who’d kidnapped you would still be alive and you’d have been forced to run forever. As it was Kandomere had made sure that bastard wouldn’t hurt anyone ever again. He’d been wary to tell you what had happened but you’d forced it out of him and under duress he’d eventually confessed.

He’d recounted his version of events, cautiously recollecting the team storming the abandoned school you’d been taken to. He’d told you how he’d followed your screams and put down the man torturing you. After passing you off to Montehugh, he’d run into Agent Court and things had escalated quickly. Kandomere had walked away unharmed, Agent Court had not.

Suddenly you’re jolted out of your deliberation as strong arms loop under your legs and around your back. You're blindsided as instinct tells you to kick out and react but fear holds you rigid. It’s
happening again. They’re here, they found you!

As you’re held against the broad expanse of a muscular, unclothed chest you catch sight of blue hair hanging over a shoulder and the familiarity of the colour brings you to your senses.

“—eezing cold. Didn’t you hear me calling you?” Kandomere looks down at you, a deep frown creasing his forehead.

He’d been calling you?

“Y/n? How long have you been outside?”

His long strides carry you the short distance inside your room and he wastes no time grabbing the comforter off your bed and wrapping it around you both. You’re aware of what’s happening but you’re emotionally distanced. You can hear and see him but you feel nothing and it’s taking a while to process his words. He settles down on the bed, cradling you in his lap, rubbing your arms and thighs under the comforter. The friction seems to bring back a little of the feeling you’ve lost.

“Can you hear me, Y/n? Are you with me?”

Starlit eyes peer into yours and you recognise the panic written in them. He’s worried, you’re scaring him. “I couldn’t sleep,” you offer by way of an explanation, your whisper soothing the anxiousness from his expression. Without another word he closes his arms around you and holds you close, resting his head against yours. It’s intimate, sitting this way on your bed wrapped up together, but oddly you can’t bring yourself to mind. Maybe in the bright daylight of tomorrow you’ll experience the embarrassment you believe is missing, but right now it’s just nice. For a moment you don’t feel so alone.

Uncurling your hands you lay one against Kandomere’s chest, right over his steady heart. The faint thump gives you something to concentrate on and after a while you find your own heart rhythm calming to match his. Twisting your torso you slip your free hand under Kandomere’s arm, sliding it behind his back. The new position allows you to soak up his radiating body heat and relax against him fully. Turning your face, your met with a curtain of impossibly soft hair only for Kandomere to flick it away, his shoulder now free for you to rest your head against.

“How long have you been out there?” His voice is low and you feel it rumble through your chests where they are pressed lightly together. Pulling your bottom lip into your mouth you chew, shaking your head absently. You don’t know how long you’d been sat there. “Y/n?”

Letting out a breath you move to meet his gaze. “I don’t know. I tried to sleep, it didn’t happen so I went outside. What time is it now?”

“Three fifteen.” Kandomere shifts under you, moving to lean against the headboard but keeping you locked in his arms. He makes it all seem effortless in the way that only elves can.

“Why are you awake?” You’re curious as to how he found you. Why was he awake at this hour? What was it that had him prowling the terrace at night?

“There was an alarm. It woke me. When I came out to see what it was I spotted you. I called but you didn’t answer.”

“I didn’t hear you.”

Together you break eye contact, you returning to your last position as his tilted head comes to rest on your shoulder. You realise you’re now embracing one another.
“I called your name many times, you didn’t hear anything?” His breath tickles your ear and makes your hair dance.

“I was… thinking.”

He pauses before replying carefully. “Is that why you couldn’t sleep?”

“I guess.” Without consideration, you begin to move your hand on his chest, your fingertips brushing against his smooth, taught skin. He’s warm against your cold flesh, the starkness of your body temperatures confusing you. Shouldn’t you have recognised how cold you were outside? Are you really that cold or do elves run hotter than humans?

“Y/n?” Kandomere swallows, his hands clenching slightly, digging into your hips where he’s clutching you.

“I was being over emotional. Full of self pity, pining for a life I can no longer have. I don’t want to be alone.” The words pour easily from you, without shame or concern and you wonder why you’ve been unable to speak this freely with Kandomere before. “I’m scared of what happens when this is all over.” You wait, giving your companion chance to weigh in as you continue to trace patterns on his skin. Time ticks by without any one filling the silence, but you’re okay with it. You don’t feel the need to talk and you figure he feels the same. Taking a deep breath you still your hand and turn to press your cheek into the hollow of his throat. The heaviness of exhaustion is growing and now you’ve unburdened yourself you’re giving into the lull of sleep. Again you acknowledge the strange missing awkwardness of the situation but before you can give it too much thought, you drift into a peaceful slumber, draped happily over a half naked elf.

It’s dawn when you come too. The week early light not yet strong enough to chase the shadows away, allows your eyes to adjust gently. From what you can see, you’re in the room Kandomere insisted on calling yours, where he carried you last night, and you're alone. The bed is vast and unbelievably comfortable but you’re wrapped in layers of blankets that are restricting your movements and you guess it’s that which woke you. Fighting against the bindings you manage to work your arms free enough to pull yourself into a seated position, your back supported by the headboard.

Rubbing your eyes you stifle a yawn and contemplate getting up. You’re still bone tired, your body aches and your eyes are watering, yet you know there’s no chance of more seep. Not whilst your brain is whirring along at ninety miles per hour.

What the hell had happened last night? Why had you reacted so bizarre to your host? You’d opened up, willingly, and given over any semblance of privacy. On what planet was any of what happened acceptable? Less than twenty-four hours ago you’d recoiled from his touch with a heavy scowl, last night however you’d welcomed it. Had he drugged you?

A soft sigh from the darkest corner of the room draws your attention and you squint into the gloom.

“Y/n, why won’t you sleep?”

Kandomere?
As if he can hear your thoughts, he leans forward into the light, balancing his elbows on his knees. He’s still shirtless but you see a blanket draped over his shoulders. It’s then you remember the plush chair and footstool positioned in the corner.

“What—“ Your voice is thick and hoarse leading you to clear your throat. “Kandomere, why are you sitting in a dark corner watching me sleep?” Despite being taken aback, your tone is soft and friendly.

His lips turn up into a small poignant smile as his gaze drops. “I’m worried about you. I wanted to be here should your nightmares return.”

What in the holy hell? This went above and beyond his responsibilities as both a federal agent and a host. Why is he being so caring? What changed?

Scrubbing your hand down your face you swing your legs over the edge of the mattress and grip the edge. His close proximity isn’t what you need right now. What you need is space to work through your issues. You can’t think straight with him sat there, looking at you with those piercing eyes watching your every move. You need actual physical distance between you to quell the urge to go to him and wrap your arms around his strong, sturdy frame.

“Go to bed, Blue, you need rest too. You’ve already spent too long tonight taking care of me.” You stare out of the windows too afraid of your reaction if you look at him. Instead you force yourself to watch the new day being born in subtle shades of calming blue.

“You’re very honest during the witching hour, Y/n.” In your peripheral vision you see him stand, the blanket around him dropping into the chair as he walks towards you. “What you said, I’ve been thinking about it, and I need you to know you’re welcome here as long as you want.”

Your eyes slip close in response to his offer and the shame you’ve been anticipating coils around you. You’d shown weakness and now he felt obliged to step up and help.

Your throat tightens. “I’m sorry, I spoke out of turn. I was, it was, I never—” Straightening your back you attempt to at least look like you’ve regained some strength. “I’m fine now. I was tired and delirious and I acted inappropriately. I promise it wont happen again. You don’t need to take care of me, I’m not your responsibility, I’m an adult and perfectly capable of taking care of myself. So please, go to bed. I don’t need babysitting, I assure you that whatever exhaustion induced episode happened last night will most certainly never happen again.”

“Ah, I see.” Kandomere moves in front of you and cups your cheek with his hand, tilting your face to his. As your eyes meet your heart lurches uneasily, remembering how good it had been, held against his warm, solid body in his comforting embrace. Oh god, you wanted that again.

His thumb strokes down your cheek and it takes all your will power not to lean into his touch. “Y/n, I understand what is happening. You showed vulnerability and now you’re running scared.”

Unable to stay still you attempt to back out of his hold only he doesn’t budge an inch. The intimacy is back and it’s causing your palms to sweat. This isn’t right, you shouldn’t be experiencing such inappropriate urges. Reproachfully you remind yourself that he’s not your friend, he’s simply doing a job and you need to regain control of your wayward emotions. Clenching your jaw, you stand up, hoping the movement might be enough to get him to let go. It’s not.

He bends his head, seizing your gaze with his bright, silver blue eyes. You can’t look away. “Querida, eres más fuerte de lo que piensas.” His voice, smooth and quiet, takes your breath away and makes your mouth go dry. “No confundas tu vulnerabilidad anoche como debilidad.” He draws
You blink, not having understood a word of what he said but mesmerised by his lilting tone. Licking your lips, you try hard to swallow down your conflicting emotions and settle the budding butterflies in your stomach. *This is a federal agent, he’s only trying to get information out of you. You are only here because it’s his job! Get a grip.*

Shaking your head you take a cleansing breath. “I don’t speak Spanish. I have no idea what you said.”

“Lo se, mi alma.” He offers you a lopsided grin and slowly backs away. “Do try to sleep, Y/n, you need to rest.” Dropping his hand, he gives you a once over, nodding to himself at whatever he sees. Then without another word he walks away. Reaching the doorway he turns, “I’ll be right next door if you want me. I am here for you, querido.” He lingers only a moment longer before taking his leave. The second your door closes you sink back onto the bed, resting your head in your hands and covering your face. How had you gone from hating him to craving his touch in less than a day?

What had happened to you last night when he’d held you close? Whatever it was had fundamentally altered your relationship, much to your disdain. Gritting your teeth you yanked at the hair in your hands angrily. You never should have come here. You never should have stayed. Kandomere was nothing to you, not a friend, not an ally. He was merely a federal agent working a case and from now on you’d treat him as such. You’d regain the distance between you. You’d reign in your misguided emotions.

Even as you think it, you recognise the lie. Over the course of the past two weeks, you’d come to rely on the elf. More so you’d grown fond of his company. He’d slid past your defences and well and truly cemented himself as an integral part of your decimated life. Oh god. He’d become your friend. Somehow amongst the arguing, the pettiness and bickering Kandomere had managed to shift your connection, allowing it to mold into whatever the hell this mess is.

Groaning you throw yourself back, landing in a disgruntled heap in the centre of the bed. What were you supposed to do now? This was never part of the plan. How the hell did you get yourself into these situations?
Chapter Eight

Warning: Possible triggers for abuse, Anxiety

The coffee machine gurgles discretely in the corner of Kandomere’s Nasa-like kitchen, tempting you with the mouthwatering scent of fresh coffee. It had taken you a good thirty minutes to figure out how to use the damn thing and that was after ten minutes hunting for the coffee but you’d persevered, the need for caffeine outweighing your rising temper.

The day is only just beginning. The sun is meandering its way from the horizon at a ridiculously slow pace and you already know it’s going to be a long day. It’s barely six am and you’re exhausted, you’d been unable to get back to sleep, how could you after the nausea inducing epiphany you’d had? Instead you’d laid awake trying to come up with ways of escaping Kandomere and you’re sudden desire for his companionship. Unable to shut off your mind, you’d eventually given in and dragged yourself out of the bedroom when the craving for coffee had been too severe to ignore. So here you were, battling with a stubborn coffee machine, trying to find a decent sized mug to drink out of.

The apartment is chilly, or maybe it’s just you, you tended to notice the cold more when you were tired. Either way you’d lugged a blanket around your shivering frame to stave off the cool air but as you attempt to pour coffee, it slips, dropping to the floor. You grumble incoherently, quietly complaining about the need for a blanket because of the stupid nightclothes you’d been given — the pretty satin and lace cami set currently covering you offered zero protection from the elements.

With a heavy sigh you turn, putting the coffee pot back in place and gritting your teeth. Scowling down at the blanket you glare at it, as if that might make it magically jump back up to cover you, of course it doesn’t. Letting out a scoff of annoyance you scoop up the fabric and toss it over your shoulders, holding it tight at the front as you carefully collect your mug.

Crossing the expanse of hardwood floor your feet pad softly against the smooth surface. The noise of your footsteps carry in the silence but you’re not worried, even with superior hearing there’s no way it will wake the elf. The door leading outside might though so you use extra care sliding it open, keeping the soft rolling sound it makes to a minimum. Pulling it shut, you make your way to the glass barrier, using the chrome banister to pin your protective blanket around your body. With your mug cradled between both hands, you sip your coffee, peacefully watching the sunrise paint the extravagant neighbourhood bright orange.

Only when the sun is fully situated in the sky and your empty mug has long since gone cold do you turn to make your way back inside. Kandomere is watching you from the couch, a mug raised to his lips. He’s still in his sweatpants and he’s covered his impressive chest with a crisp white t-shirt. For a moment you pause, your mind at war with itself. Should you join him or retreat back to the solitude of your room?

He makes the decision for you. His mug is placed on the coffee table as he strides to open the door. “I keep finding you out here, pequeña ave, are you hoping to fly away?” He says with a smile that doesn’t quite reach his eyes. You shrug, casting your gaze to the floor, unsure how to act around him. You can’t pretend last night didn’t happen but you aren’t ready to acknowledge it yet.
either. Kandomere tries again. “Thank you for making the coffee, it was a nice surprise to wake to.”

Shuffling past him you bite your bottom lip and nod once. “S’okay.” Thankfully he lets you pass without incident and you find yourself back in the kitchen, readily pouring more coffee into your mug.

“You should eat something.”

You startle at the closeness of his voice. Glancing over your shoulder you see him approach and tense up. Wordlessly he leans around you reaching up over your head with one hand, his other resting on the counter top, caging you in. He flicks open a high cupboard and gestures to the contents. “Help yourself, I’m going to shower. I’ll leave you to your thoughts.”

With your heart in your mouth you watch him depart, sagging against the marble behind you in relief. He hadn’t tried to push you for answers, maybe he was going to let the incident go? Perhaps you could attempt to forget your lapse in judgement and the pair of you could continue on your way without complicating things further. Pushing your hair out of your face you sigh. You don’t know what you want and you have no idea how you should be feeling. There’s no one left for you to talk to so how were you supposed to deal with any of this? You were lost in an unprecedented situation, unable to find a way back to normality.

You needed time to think but Kandomere would be back all too soon. With that in mine you hurry to your bedroom, eager to be out of the way when he re-appeared. You couldn’t handle any of this, it was all too much, so you were going to do what you did best. Hide.

“Y/n?” Kandomere calls, rapping his knuckles on your door, “I’d like you to take a look at something.”

He’d left you alone for far longer than you imagined he would but the time had come and you had to face him. Hiding in your room seemed like a good idea at the time until you’d realised that your medication was in the other room. Now you were hours past your first dose and your nerves were firing painful bulletins to your brain, remind you why the nurse had insisted you keep up with the meds. Pulling up the legs of the comfortable sweats Kandomere had bought you, you check your bandages. They need changing. You’ve no choice but to leave the safety of your room. Wrapping your cashmere covered arms around yourself you slink to the door and crack it open. There he stands in his usual attire, the only thing missing is his jacket.

His eyes drink you in, widening slightly at your appearance. “You’re in pain.” The way he states it leaves no room for dispute. He can see your discomfort easily.

Pursing your lips you wrinkle your nose. “I’m okay, I just forgot to take my meds.”

“Don’t!” His strong tone takes you aback. “Don’t downplay the extent of your injuries, Y/n. This is not a simple affliction to be brushed off nonchalantly, you are in a great deal of pain.”

“I—“

“Don’t try to deny it.” The door is pushed wider. “Does it hurt to walk?”
It hurts to breathe, let alone walk, not that you’d admit it. “No, I’m okay.” You lie, biting the inside of your cheek as you attempt to move causally.

“Y/n!” He growls, your name rumbling through his chest in warning.

“No, really I’m fine.” Clearing your throat you duck past him and hurry as fast as your protesting limbs will carry you to the kitchen. “I’m okay, I can look after myself,” you huff, yanking open the drawer he’d cleared out for your assortment of drugs.

He laughs. “And how does forgetting your medication support that argument?”

Heat explodes up your neck and into your face. How dare he treat you like a child! You count out the appropriate pills and are just about to swallow them dry when he darts forward and seizes your wrist.

Glaring down at you he narrows his eyes. “You need eat before you take them.”

Damn him! “I have,” you lie, willing to sustain whatever side effects come with taking your medication on an empty stomach. The tension builds, thickening the air in the sterile kitchen and pushing you closer together. He looks ready to murder as he forces your hand away from your mouth. “Are you so stubborn that you would jeopardise your health to prove me wrong?”

You are, you can’t deny it and he knows it. “Why the hell do you even care? Just leave me alone. I’ve had it with you interfering.”

His face morphs from anger to smugness and he smirks, “I suggest taking better care of yourself so I won’t have to check over your shoulder at every turn then.”

You growl an animalistic snarl full of frustration. “I hate you.”

Kandomere throws back his head and laughs. “No, mi alma, yo creo que no.”

Your anger intensifies at the reply he knows you don’t understand and the red mist descends. “I wish I’d never laid eyes on you, I should have just put myself out of this misery after I hid that fucking wand.”

The change in him is instant. His expression is one of horrified outrage as his hand releases yours. The moment you’re free you slap the pills into your mouth and gulp down the meds, eyeing him with conceited satisfaction. So what if the pills eat through your stomach lining, you’d won this battle.

Or have you. In the blink of an eye, he is dragging you to the opposite end of the kitchen island, his grip painful against your bicep as he hisses in Övüsi. Roughly he shoves you onto a stool, eyes narrowed to dangerous silver slits, he points a long finger in your face. “Sit still and do as you’re told.”

A flash of a memory darts just out of reach and with it a sense of dread and trepidation. Fear renders you compliant, persuading you to follow Kandomere’s instructions without argument. As your heart thunders in your ribcage you remain motionless, watching as the elf flits rapidly around the space. In minutes he pushes a bowl of fruit and yogurt under your nose and hands you a spoon. “Eat.” It’s a command not a request.

Your hand trembles as you lift the first mouthful under his watchful eye. Something about this is familiar and it’s making you extremely uncomfortable. You manage to wrap your lips around the food without incident and chew slowly, but you’re unsure as to whether you can swallow.
“I said, eat.” Kandomere roars noticing your hesitation.

You flinch. His tone is terrifying and not at all helpful in combating the surge of nausea that threatens to make you throw up all over his pristine floor. Scooping up more of the food you push the mouthful down, keeping your head ducked and your gaze locked on the bowl in front of you for fear of provoking him further. You’re shaking, your muscles jittering uncontrollably under his cold scrutiny as your pulse hurtles at breakneck speed but you do your best to hide it. You’d stupidly let your guard down too much and you’d forgotten exactly who — what — you were dealing with. Kandomere was deadly, not only as an elf but as federal agent.

He scrutinises you closely as you finish eating, trying to balance clearing the bowl fast enough to appease him but not so fast that you bring it all back up. Quicker than is comfortable you have consumed everything and you sit, praying that your breakfast stays down. You can feel it churning in your stomach, mixing with the apprehension and panic there.

Pale hands snatch away the bowl and you cringe as Kandomere breathes out a pleased hum. As he turns his back to deal with the dish he mutters wearily, “You must take better care of yourself.” Bowing your head you clasp your hands in your lap and cower into yourself. “I mean it, Y/n, I ca — “ His words stop unexpectedly and you flinch again waiting nervously for whatever comes next. What had you done to displease him this time?

Warm fingers brush against your jaw, shocking you out of your stupor and sending you bolting in the other direction.

_Elf hands bring pain… Elf hands bring death._

Despite the agony in your scorched legs the adrenaline in your system is enough to get some distance between you as your mind cautions you.

_Get away from the elf._

“Y/n…?”

You’re not sure where it’s coming from, this sense of familiarity; the sickening repugnance, the expectation of repercussion its all there in the tightness of your muscles and the thudding of your heart, like it has been before, but when?

Kandomere holds his hands out in surrender. “Y/n, what’s wrong?”

_Everything_, your mind screams, yet you can’t pinpoint why.

“Mi alma? Y/n?” He moves, advancing towards you with hesitation. He comes closer, almost close enough to reach out and touch you and it’s too close. You’ve got to get away.

_Run!_

On autopilot you race to your room and slam the door, leaping over the bed to reach the external sliding glass door. You’ve just got it wide enough to pass through when Kandomere strides into your room. The urgency that accompanies the thought of him catching you makes your body numb and sends you sprawling to the floor. Crashing face first out onto the terrace your hair splays over your face and you’re blinded.

“What are you doing, Y/n? Talk to me, what’s wrong.”

Your heart is trying to burst out of your chest and you’re about to bring back your food. The world
is spinning and you can taste blood which only serves to add to your panic. Scrambling blindly you
manage to get onto all fours only for Kandomere to block your escape. He drops to his knees and
takes hold of your face, his thumbs running from your cheek bones to your jaw and back again.

He speaks carefully. “You’re having an anxiety attack, Y/n. You need to listen to me. Talk to me,
tell me five things you see.”

The smoothness of his thumbs repetitive motion on your cheeks snaps you out of the trance you're
in. The scene around you shifts in your mind, tilting everything on its axis and the resolute
desperation to run from Kandomere becomes an urgent need to get closer to him. You reach out,
grasping his shirt in shaking fists.

“Five things. Five things you can see Y/n, tell me.”

A ragged breath leaves you. “Blue… I see your hair.”

Kandomere nods, urging you to continue, “Good, what else?”

Your frantic gaze searches haphazardly until you settle on the potted plants at the end of the
terrace. “Plants,” you gasp.

“What else?”

You blink, what else can you see? “I see you. Silvery blue eyes, sharp teeth, pointed ears.”
Breathing is becoming easier and instead of panting you're able to fill your lungs again. “I see
you.”

Kandomere smiles. “Yes, now tell me four things you can touch.”

Licking your lips, you reach up a hand and catch a lock of his hair. “Your hair. The tiles on the
floor. Your shirt. Your hands on my face.”

“Tell me three things you hear.”

Closing your eyes you concentrate, clutching hold of his broad shoulders for balance. “I hear the
traffic bellow, my voice and you breathing.” You look at your companion.

“Excellent. Two things you can smell.”

Inhaling you take a moment to distinguish the scent rolling off the elf. “I smell your cologne and
laundry detergent.”

A chuckle calms your nerves. “And lastly, what can you taste?”

“Blood.” You don’t need to think this time. Kandomere frowns but you hurry to explain now you
have your mental faculties back in place. “I think I bit tongue as I fell. It’s okay, it’s not bleeding
anymore.” He still has your head in his hands as he examines you closely. “Really, I’m fine now.
It’s gone, the feeling, I’m, I’m okay.” You're not, your pulse is racing and you're sweating but the
worst has passed.

“I’m sorry, mi alma, I should not have reacted so—” Kandomere licks his lip and sighs, “Did you
think I would hurt you?”

Impulsively you go to answer ‘no’ only it won’t come out. Yes, you had thought he was going to
hurt you or worse. Shifting, you rub your palms on your sweater and bite your lip. Kandomere
sighs again, dropping his forehead to yours. His breath fans your face. “I’m sorry. I should not have behaved that way. I didn’t mean to frighten you. I know I have made mistakes when it comes to you, that you have little reason to trust me, but I will not hurt you. You are safe with me, lo prometo.”

Oh how you want to put your trust in the elf, and you almost do, you very nearly nod and smile only you can’t. There is something at the back of your mind whispering with insistence, begging you not to believe his words.

*Don’t trust elves. Elves above all, above all Elves.*

Sitting back on your haunches jerks you out of his hands and away from his touch. “I think the meds are messing with me. It, it’s not you, it’s me. Really. No need to be sorry. I’ll try and control it.” Nervously your hand tugs through your hair as you ramble.

“Y/n—“

“No, no really, I, it was me. I’m tired and loopy and I wasn’t thinking, I didn’t mean, I’m sorry. Can we just forget it? I’ll be good, I’ll eat and take my meds and—“

Inside the apartment the distinct voice of Montehugh calls through the rooms. “Boss? You in here?” Kandomere’s gaze darts over your shoulder, a minuscule twitch of his jaw the only indication of his irritation. Seeing an opportunity you glance over your shoulder.

“You should see what he needs.” The breeze ruffles your hair, blowing the unruly mess into your eyes as you turn back.

“Will you wait inside?” Kandomere offers his hand out as he climbs to his feet. Uneasily you allow him to tug you up, your spine becoming rigid as he places a hand on the small of your back and encourages you into a loose embrace. He notices your resistance despite your attempt to disguise it. “Please believe me, Y/n. I will not harm you.”

You want to relax and rediscover the comfort his arms had brought you last night. You want to believe him. You want to pretend that the voice in the back of your mind isn’t murmuring warnings. But it is and you can’t ignore them.

*Elves are dangerous. Don’t trust elves.*

“Boss!”

Kandomere tuts, unimpressed at his subordinates impatience. Plastering on a fake smile you force yourself to hug him quickly. “It’s okay, go, I’ll stay here.”

Unconvinced he brushes the hair away from your face. “Fine, if you promise to rest, I fear this may take a while and I still have some files I need you to look at.” Mutely you move to sit on the bed earning a nod of approval.

“Try to sleep, Y/n, you’ll feel better once you’re refreshed.” Again you nod. Raising your legs to lay out on the soft mattress you notice him pocketing the key to the terrace door. He’s locked you in. With a final tight lipped smile he closes the door behind himself and you let out a shaky breath.

*Don’t trust elves.*

You don’t know where this feeling is coming from but you know it’s real. Like muscle memory, your mind is reflexively reacting to something, you just don’t know what. What ever it is though,
you’re going to find out!
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Anxiety, Language

Kandomere checks on you regularly during the remainder of the day. At times he only enters for a moment, others he brings you food, water and medication, leaving them on the mahogany vanity unit when you pretend to be asleep. You can’t handle being around him right now. Keeping your back to the door you watch the clouds sweep gracefully across the sky, only closing your eyes when you hear any indication of the elf.

You’re trying to decipher the origin of your new found wariness. Kandomere had been a little over the top this morning but you’d dealt with worse without breaking apart. No, there was something deeper, something hidden just out of reach in the darkest corner of your mind that had caused your reaction. You could feel it, a tendril of discord that slithered into obscurity each time you tried to grasp it. You’re sure you’d have a headache by now if it weren’t for the high level of pain suppressants you’d taken.

You think about Montehugh, the giant of a man in the room down the hall. His red hair that surrounded his face in a beard which made him appear wild, his small eyes, his tall stature, and whilst intimidating he didn’t frighten you. Not in the way that Kandomere had. And yet overnight, the elf had been the only thing to bring you a shred of comfort. How was it possible to have such extreme and polar reactions to one person?

Sighing you roll onto your back and glare at the ceiling. You're exhausted from lack of sleep and frustrated from analysing the same thing and getting completely nowhere. Allowing your eyes to slide close, you take concentrate on tensing and relaxing your muscles from your feet upwards. Your body aches.

A click of shoes announces your approaching companion and you hold your breath. The elf is coming to check on you again. As if on cue the door opens and his steps bring him into your room.

“I know you’re not asleep.”

You crack open an eye to see him more dishevelled than he's ever been before. He’s undone his tie, letting it hang loose around his neck where his top three shirt buttons are undone. His vest is gone and his shirt cuffs are rolled haphazardly up his forearms, something you can’t fail to note as he runs a hand through his hair. He looks like you feel.

“I’m sorry to disturb you but I need your help.”

You know you can’t avoid him forever so taking a deep breath you get up. With any luck Montehugh was still here and would act as a buffer between you and the elf.

The elf — when had you come to think of him by his race rather than his name?

He graciously steps aside as you draw near only to reach out and brush his knuckles over the back of your hand at the last moment. Instinctively you jump away, clutching yourself like he’s burnt
you. A crease pulls his brows together and the corners of his mouth turn down as his cautious eyes look you up and down. His expression asks you what’s wrong and you expect him to comment on your overreaction but he doesn’t.

“Montehugh had to leave but the files are laid out on the coffee table in order. They should be self explanatory. I’ll be through shortly. If you need me—” He clamps his jaw shut and drops his head almost like he knows he’s the last person you’d go to right now.

Chewing the inside of your cheek you wrap your arms around yourself and hurry away. There’s nothing you can say to make him feel better because his assumption is right. You want as little to do with him as possible.

Two further steps and you’re shaking your head as you realise that’s not strictly true. You do want him, you want his help and friendship but since this morning there seems to be a mental block when it comes to trusting him. Halting your movements you glance over your shoulder, meeting his gaze and catching your breath at the rejection you see there. It’s unnerving to see an elf looking so… Human.

“It’s not you.” Your voice is hoarse from lack of use. “Something’s not right, but I don’t think it’s you.” Holding yourself tighter you coax your body to face him, telling your heart to calm down as it picks up the pace. “I think—”

Elves above all. Above all Elves

Screwing your eyes up you shrug off the stray thought. That’s not who Kandomere is. Sure he has that damn gorget but he doesn’t view you with contempt the way another elf would. Had he not proven himself to you already? First by helping you disappear after the Shield of Light situation and secondly by opening up his home to you?

Swallowing hard, you physically hold yourself together in order to choke out what you’re deliberating. “I think I’m having some sort of break down and its manifesting itself in distrust and anxiety.” No, that doesn’t feel right. Gritting your teeth, you try again. “I have this unwavering notion that—“

Don’t trust him.

Your hands fly to your temple and you ball your fists. “My head and my heart are at odds. Something is telling me not to trust you but I want to, I really want to.”

Kandomere tenses, his muscles visibly locking in place like he’s trying to hold himself still. “Is this because of what happened at breakfast?” He jambs his hands into his pockets and tips his face to the floor. His hair falls, framing his jawline and covering his eyes.

“No, yes, sort of. I mean, that kinda started it.”

He’ll kill you!

Your hands snake into your locks and you pull hard with a pained groan. “It’s like my subconscious has it’s own fucking voice. I can’t control it, I, I can’t ignore it.” Tears of frustration burn the back of your eyes. “I feel it, the fear and the dread, I remember it but I don’t know where from. Like a, a visceral déja vu. I don’t, it’s real I know it is.” Your thoughts jump erratically and you struggle to keep up.

Tipping forward, you rock on your toes precariously, as if your body is being magnetically tugged towards him but something is holding you back, fastening you in place. You have never been so
conflicted. Frustrated tears finally break free and a cracked whisper has you begging your companion, “Please, Kandomere, help me.”

He darts forward, arms open to scoop you up as your body gives out. With the tenderness of a lover he carries you back to bed and lays you both down. Keeping you in his tight embrace you’re sure that his presence is the only thing stopping you from shattering into a million pieces.

“I’m losing my mind.” You sniff.

His arms constrict, one hand coming up to smooth your hair. “No, you’re severely sleep deprived. You haven’t slept properly in weeks. Your cognitive functions are compromised. You’re tired, Y/n, not insane.”

It’s a logically sound explanation but you know deep in your bones, lack of sleep is not the reason behind your unease. Something was affecting you, altering how you perceived Kandomere and how you felt about elves in general. Breathing deeply you catch his scent, he smells spicy and fresh and it gives you something to focus on. Shifting closer you align your body with his, settling your nose at the crook of his neck where his shirt is open. The proximity stirs the disquiet in the back of your mind but the incessant buzz is less pronounced than before. This time, Kandomere’s presence is once again comforting.

“This isn’t protocol behaviour,” you comment when he sighs at your touch. Never in your wildest imagination would you have guessed when you started this journey that you’d end up here, in such a compromising position with a federal agent, even if it was all totally plutonic.

“Would you like me to go?”

“No!”

You hear him smile above you. “I believe I abandoned procedure the night we met, mi alma, why change things now? Besides, you don’t respond well to authority.”

You smile and nuzzle closer, the anxiety twisted around your soul loosening its grip with each passing second. “I don’t know,” you’re relaxing, your eyes falling shut as you rest a palm against his beating heart, “I can be compliant in the right circumstances.”

His chest expands as he breathes deep but doesn’t answer. Instead the two of you lay in peaceful silence, finding solace in the company of each other. It’s easy, it’s tranquil and it doesn’t take long for sleep to claim you.
The file is thick and heavy and you’re unsure as to what half of it means. Flicking through the loose paper you scan the pages, searching for anything you might recognise. Take out containers litter the onyx table between where you sit, opposite Kandomere, their contents either consumed or pushed aside in favour of paperwork. Absently you sip your drink, shaking your head at yet another meaningless page.

“What about her?” Kandomere enquires, pushing a worn photograph over the polished surface towards you.

Glancing up at him you're struck by his beauty. The overhead lamp bathing his face in a soft light that shows off his strong jaw line and plush lips. It leads you to wonder what you must look like to him. Hideous no doubt. Your unkept hair is dragged into a messy bun and your face is gaunt and sallow from weeks of trauma and mistreatment. Reaching out you take the photo and study the image, shaking your head.

“No, I don’t recognise her either.”

You’d been at this for hours, rifling through his many open case files, trying to put names to faces and identify members of the Inferni. It had been dark when you’d woken with your arms and legs entwined with Kandomere’s and despite the nature of your relationship, neither of you had suffered any embarrassment or regret. You’d offered him a smile of gratitude as you'd pulled apart slowly, allowing the last embers of sleep to fade away with the cathartic stretching of your limbs. The fear he’d previously evoked had dissipated completely, melted back into the void where you hoped it would stay.

“But this one!” Waving a surveillance image at the elf, you smile triumphantly. “His name’s Alexo, I saw his with Mia a few times. She told me he was a friend of a friend that she was crushing on.”

He plucks the photo from your fingers, flipping it over to write on the back. “Good, very good, Y/n.” His eyes slide up and you can see he’s pleased. “You’ve been a great deal of help tonight. The intel you’ve provided will go a long way towards bringing these cases to a close. Thank you.”

“It’s what I’m here for.” You quip, sitting back in your chair and bending your knee to rest your foot on the seat.

“Ah yes, that reminds me,” Kandomere’s gaze drops to your bandaged leg, “it’s time for your next dose of medication.”

Holding up your hand, you’re quick to stand and rush to the kitchen. “I got it.” Grabbing what you need, you return to the table to find him watching you with a chagrin expression. “What? I’m taking them see?” You make a show of putting the pills in your mouth and swallowing them down with water but he doesn't appear appeased. “What? What did I do now?”
“You are very difficult to understand.”

Your surprise at his sudden change in direction must be written on your face as he allows himself a small smile whilst looking at you. Tilting your head you rest your hands on your hips. “I— What?”

“I am usually very good at reading people, you however, you’re quite the puzzle.” He threads his fingers together, resting his hands on the folder in front of him as he studies you.

“Me?” It comes out as a squeak and only furthers the blush creeping up your face. “There’s nothing special about me, you’re reading too much into everything.”

“Hmm.”

Flushed, you pick up the next file, using it as both a distraction and a partition to hide behind as you sink into the chair. You can sense him watching you and it’s extremely off putting.

“Tell me, Y/n, why did you move to Vegas?”

Another unexpected change of conversation makes your head spin. Dropping your makeshift barrier you meet his inquisitive gaze. “I followed someone there. It didn’t work out. He left, I stayed.”

“Why?”

Scrunching up your nose you raise your hands in a shrug. “Wanna be a bit more specific here, Blue?”

Kandomere smirks at the nickname and you can’t help but mirror his expression. His shirt is completely unbuttoned and hanging loose showing his white undershirt. The tie that had been loose when he’d come to you earlier was now gone, discarded somewhere in the bedroom and his hair is showing signs of the nap you both took earlier. All this combined with the lopsided grin makes him appear relaxed and approachable for once.

Licking his lips he alters his position to stretch an arm around the back of the chair next to him. “You lived in Vegas for three years. What kept you there? As far as I can see you left what friends you had behind in Arizona, never to contact them again in order to follow your then boyfriend. Why didn’t you return to Arizona?”

Your smile grows. Two can play this game. “Why’d you choose a career your race looks down on?”

He tilts his head to the side, his eyes sparkling mischievously in the dim light. “I joined Homeland Security, specifically the magic division to hunt magic users and take them off the streets because I deplore magic.”

Resting your forearms on the table you tilt your body towards him. “Why?”

“Ah ah ah. You first. What happened in Arizona to make you leave and never return?”

“The man I loved proposed to my best friend. How could I stay? They were happy, they deserved the whole package, y’know? Marriage, house, kids but I couldn’t stick around and watch. Jeff offered me a way out, he was fun and I liked him, I just didn’t like him enough.” You laugh. “He was okay though, only took him about three weeks to fall for a striper and propose. They actually moved back to Arizona not long after that.” Propping your chin in your hand you stare him dead in the eye. “Why do you hate magic so much?”
“The Inferni killed my parents. How did you meet Mia?”

You adjust your stance, leaning against the back of the chair to bring your knee up and hug it. “I’m so sorry for your loss.”

“It was a long time ago.”

Chewing your bottom lip, you nod, knowing from experience that time didn’t make it okay, it just gave you a chance to learn how to cope. “Still, I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

He smiles, picking up his whisky glass and swirling the contents. “Mia?”

“The library. She was pinning up flyers for a roommate and I was looking to use their computers.”

He swallows a generous mouthful of the amber liquid and raises a brow. “You were fourteen when your own parents were killed, yes?”

It doesn’t come as a shock, you’d been expecting him to bring up the subject of your deceased family sooner or later, it seemed only appropriate that it be now, after his confession. “Yeah, after the car wreck my aunt took me in but it wasn’t an easy relationship. She wasn’t equipped to deal with an angsty teenager. Safe to say we didn’t exactly see eye to eye. After college I never went back, I got a job in Arizona and well, that was that.”

“Did you ever tell him how you felt?”

“Who?”

He empties his glass and sets it gently on the table. “Your best friend’s fiancé.”

If this is his interrogation technique, he must be one of the best there is. You can’t keep up with the speed his mind is working at, the constant twists and turns knocking you off kilter.

“Of course not. We, Kelly and me, we met Jay and his friend Paul one night at a party. We met up regularly after that, just as friends, but you know, feelings happen. I didn’t know it but Jay and Kelly started dating on the quiet. By the time I found out it was too late, I’d already fallen for him.”

“And you never told Kelly?”

You look at him like he’s grown three heads. “Why would I do that?”

His middle finger circles the crystal glass and he stares at you silently.

“What?” You grumble, unappreciative of his silent judging.

“I think I’m beginning to understand you better.”

“Oh, I see, well bully for you.”

A smile lights up his face and he reaches over wrapping his large hand around yours. “Come, there’s something I think you might like.” He’s in your personal space and tugging you to your feet before you can argue. As soon as you’re vertical he’s off, dragging you behind him, towards his bedroom.

He’d shown you the whole apartment except his bedroom when he’d brought you back from the hospital. As he’d walked you to the room you would be staying in he’d simply pointed to the
closed door and stated what it was. You’d assumed it was pretty similar to yours but you were oh so wrong.

Carefully towing you in he leaves the lights off. There’s a door to your immediate right but the room beyond is in complete darkness. To the left is a matching door but it’s closed.

“En suite,” he gestures to the closed door, “and dressing room,” he finishes looking into the darkened space.

“Okay?” You’re apprehensive as to where all this is leading.

Kandomere chuckles, releasing your hand he spins around to face you, “Close your eyes, mi alma.”

His request makes your jaw drop. What the hell was going on here? Without warning, his free hand reaches up and curves to the shape of your cheek but he doesn’t actually touch you. Instead he waits, watching you. The heat from his palm seeps into your skin despite the distance causing you to turn to stare dumbfounded at the pale hand just hovering there.

“What the fuck?”

“Given the events of this morning, I have no desire to upset you by acting rash. I would like to share something with you, something I am sure you will like, but you have to trust me, querida.”

Carefully he lays his hand on you allowing you to adjust and get comfortable. Once you’re sure he isn’t going to hurt you, and your breathing returns to an acceptable level, he moves. In a singular fluid motion he’s behind you, one arm wrapping around your middle to drag you flush against his chest, the other covering your eyes.

“Let me guide you,” he whispers into the shell of your ear.

You can feel your anxiety rising at a speed of knots. What was he going to do? You were defenceless, and now you were blind. “Kandomere—”

“You’re safe, I simply wish to show you something. Now walk forward, please.”

Your legs are heavy and your heart is pounding but you manage to do as he says.

“Good, querida, very good,” he breathes, “now we go up three steps.” You stumble catching your toe on the first tread but he’s quick to right you. “Two more. One more. Good. Walk forward.”

With your vision impaired you notice just how his accent shapes his words. Inhaling, you concentrate on the scent surrounding you; the spicy musk of his cologne fills the room. The more you notice the less your anxiety controls you and you begin to relax in his hold.

“Valé.” There’s a smile in his voice as he pulls you to a halt and removes his hand.

As your sight returns you gasp and grip onto the arm still wrapped around your waist. In front of you is the whole of the Elven district, seemingly rolled out and polished for your pleasure. The way Kandomere’s bedroom has been designed allows you an uninterrupted view over the whole vista as two gigantic wall length windows meet at the corner of the building. The result is breath taking. As far as the eye can see there are twinkling lights and glass reflections without any buildings to obscure the view. You’d not realised it before, but Kandomere’s apartment block is the highest in the district — at least on these two sides of the building.

“I thought you might like it, mi pajarito, you seem to quite enjoy the views from the other balconies.”
“Can we,” craning your neck, you meet his soft gaze with wide eyes, “can we go outside?”

Silver eyes dart over your features, his smile growing. “Of course.” The arm around you starts to slip away but you’re quick to stop it. Up here you’re flying and you need something to tether you, to keep you grounded. You need the contact to stop you floating away. Gripping on to him you place his muscular arm back where it was and then reach for the other. Criss crossing them over your torso hauls him flush against your back but that only adds to your sense of safety. With him holding on to you, you know you won’t lose yourself. Moving together, he guides you out into the night.

“It’s beautiful,” you marvel, “I can see for miles.”

This terrace is separated from the others by frosted glass, adding to the privacy and intimacy of the moment. Glancing across you spot the door in the divider which leads to the terrace outside your room and you’re reminded of the scenes that played out there.

“I’m so sorry, Kandomere.”

He tenses. “For what, Y/n?” he asks cautiously.

You tilt your head to look up at the stars and sigh. “For all the trouble I’ve caused you.”

He chuckles gently, “Think nothing of it, mi alma. We elves like to keep busy.”

A thousand sickening emotions slam into you at once, pushing the air from your lungs. Bending over you wheeze.

*Elves like to be kept busy...*

The echoes of another voice, one far less kind, swirl in your mind, unlocking the mystery that has haunted you all day. The lights, the files and the words Kandomere had said so innocently, trigger a memory you’d been unaware you even had.

“Oh god! Oh god, no.”

Kandomere turns you, one hand on your back and one on your face. His eyes sweep over you, a deep frown marring his features.

“The Inferni.” You spit frantically. “The Inferni, I remember, they forced me, us, we couldn’t fight them. That’s how they knew I could—“

“Y/n, slow down.“

“They used magic to make me forget, but this,” you wave your hands around, “I remember! Alexo, the elf from the photograph, I’ve met him! The Vegas coven, they took us to a building, they tortured us, tried to brainwash us and then they made us hold the wand.” You gasp as the grisly memories return. “Oh my god, they—“ Your hand slaps over your mouth and you shiver violently. “They all died. Everyone except me. The second they held the wand they—“ A sob rips free and Kandomere is quick to pull you to his chest.

“Slow breaths, Y/n. You’re hyperventilating.”

Clinging to him for dear life, everything slots neatly into place. Your erratic behaviour, the voice in your head, the visceral deja vu it all suddenly makes perfect sense. Pulling back enough to look into his face, he drops his hands to your hips for support allowing you to get a strong grip on his
biceps.

“Alexo, he was my designated handler. When I didn’t explode he took me to a safe house — oh my god! How could I forget this? — he, he was volatile and abusive. I had to follow his instructions to the letter or he would hurt me, nothing that would compromise my indoctrination, but enough to let me know who was in charge.” He’d been the elf your subconscious was warning you against.

“What happened? How did you escape?” There’s a hard edge to Kandomere’s voice and it makes you wary.

“It was a test! The night they killed my friends, they were testing me. Oh god! They’ll find me, the second I step out in public they’ll see. They’re everywhere and they know what I’m capable of now, they won’t stop until they have me.”

“What do you mean ‘what you’re capable of’?”

“They trained me, I had no choice. They — I had to play along, if I didn’t — they did things to me. So I stopped fighting, started to cooperate but they were smart. They didn’t believe my turn around. They wiped my mind with their god-damn magic and put me in that situation to test my loyalties. Those fuckers!” You growl. “Well fuck them, it didn’t work out the way they wanted.”

“You’re working for the Inferni.”

Your heart skips at his accusation and you shove at him. It doesn’t effect him how you’d wanted instead he holds you tighter, his fingers digging into the skin at your hips.

“I what?” You shake your head in confusion. “Are you out of your fucking mind? Did you not hear what I just said? They tortured me, made me do shit and then killed my friends. They find me and I’m dead. If I were working for them what the fuck am I doing here?”

His eyes narrow. “You could be feeding me false information.”

Yanking yourself out of his grasp you stagger back until your back collides with the glass barrier but the thirty storey drop behind you is the least of your worries. “Are you fucking kidding me? Why would I tell you any of this if that were the case? Fuck! You made this mistake once already and I paid a hefty price,” you point to your legs and grit your teeth, “what’s it gonna cost me this time huh? My fucking life? Will that make you happy?” Your hands find the top of the glass safety barrier and you hold on tight. There’s no escape.

Kandomere balls his fists and inhales. He’d conflicted. Taking a moment to peer at you, he rests his hands on his hips and drops his chin to his chest, avoiding your gaze. “Y/n…”

He doesn’t believe you. You can tell by the way he’s holding his body, its written in every taut muscle.

“Kandomere, please. I can’t make you trust me but I’m begging you to think through what happens next. My life depends on it.”

He looks up from under his brow and sighs. “If I had a way to verify what you say—“

“You do!” You shriek as an idea hits you. “He recorded the whole thing! Find Alexo, get his phone, it’s all on there. Please!”

He raises an eyebrow. “Do you have any other details other than his name?”
Hope blossoms in your chest at his words. “I don’t know,” your brain kicks up a gear as you try to filter through your time with the renegade elf. “Yes! Strayside Finance, he had a card he gave to someone, a business card with his name and Strayside Finance written on it.”

His phone is in his hand before you’ve even finished and he hurriedly instructs the person on the other end to cross match the two names you’ve given him. Moments later he nods, stepping away so you can’t hear what’s being said but keeping you in the corner of his peripheral vision.

Sliding down to the floor, you wrap your arms around your knees and try to think of anything but the flashbacks you’ve unlocked in your mind, or the possibility of being the agents suspect yet again.

“You need to come with me.”

Kandomere is back and he’s keeping his distance. Your mouth goes dry. “Where?”

“Inside.” His curt answer increases your nerves.

“Blue, please.”

He closes his eyes and turns away, unwilling to listen to your pleas. “Come with me, now, Y/n.”

Chewing the inside your cheek you bite down, battling against the tears that burn your eyes. Maybe your subconscious had been right all along. Maybe you shouldn’t have trusted Kandomere. With your head hanging low you follow him back through his room and out into the apartment. He hasn’t looked at you once since the balcony and you know now that he’s transformed back to his federal agent persona. You’re no longer “mi alma” to him, you’re enemy number one.
Chapter Eleven

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Language

Something big is about to go down. You’re not privy to any information but you can sense it in the way they look at you, whispering frantic words you can’t hear. Kandomere and Montehugh are taking it turns watching you, they stare like they’re afraid you’re about to unleash hell. Occasionally they’ll team up to work at the table, pouring over a multitude of folders but always keeping you in their line of sight. Always with weapons at the ready — oh they’re subtle about it, sure, but you’ve noticed the way their hands twitch if you move unexpectedly.

You’re cuffed, sitting on the plush couch in Kandomere’s apartment looking out at the view. You’ve been here since yesterday, when the elf had frog marched you out of his room and physically put you down onto the seat. The handcuffs had been slapped on just before you’d sat and the silence had followed shortly after when you’d given up begging the blue haired agent to believe you.

Strike two for Kandomere.

The only time either of the men interact with you is when it’s time to take your medication or eat. With your hands fastened behind your back, they feed you, never meeting your eyes nor speaking a word. It’s degrading.

Fixing your gaze on the window you spy on the agents out of the corner of your eye. Kandomere has the phone pressed to his ear, his expression is pensive, his body stiff. He’s unhappy, that much is clear, you just don’t know what, exactly, has him so rigid and tense. A betting man would have his money on you, you’ve never been a gambler but if you had the money, you’re sure the odds would be favourable enough to tempt you. He thinks you’re Inferni. He thinks you’re the enemy and nothing you’ve said will sway him. He hangs up his cell without speaking a single word. Whipping his jacket off the back of the chair, he slides it on and walks away, disappearing out of sight in the direction of the front door. This is it, you can feel it. Whatever it is, is happening now.

It’s not long before Kandomere reappears followed by two police officers. You glance nervously at the two new men — one human, one orc — and swallow. This can’t be good. Quietly the four men talk, occasionally throwing you a cursory glance. They rest their hands on their sidearms, it’s either a warning or a challenge, at this point either is possible. The officers nod, their body language formal and stiff as they listen intently to what Kandomere is telling them. If only you could hear, maybe you could… What? You’re smart, you’ve gone through every possible outcome whilst sat here. There is no scentroiles in which this ends well for you. You’ve been here already, not three weeks ago, you know this time there can be only one conclusion. Death.

Sighing heavily, your shoulders slump and your head hangs low. There’s no fear anymore, just acceptance. You’re tired of the fight anyway, might as well just embrace your mortality and make peace with the inevitable.

“Hi, I’m Officer Jakoby and that over there is my partner, Officer Ward.” You’re greeted by the orc who bends down in front of you and offers a small wave of his hand.
You sit up, your eyes scanning the room automatically, trying to search out the elf. He’s gone, as has Montehugh. It’s just you and the LAPD now.

“THE FUCK MAN,” the other officer exclaims in disbelief, “DIDN’T THEY JUST SAY—“ He glares at you. “GET YOUR BLUE ASS OVER HERE AND LEAVE THE PRISONER ALONE. NOW!”

Officer Jakoby looks from you, to his partner and back again. “I’M SORRY ABOUT HIM. HE’S A LITTLE JUMPY AROUND ANYTHING TO DO WITH MAGIC. PLUS THE ELF AGENT TOLD US NOT TO SPEAK TO YOU BUT—“

“NICK!” Officer Ward glares, his jaw ticking in annoyance.

Officer Jakoby sighs. “I’M GOING TO GO OVER THERE BUT IF YOU NEED ANYTHING—“

“What part of ‘do not speak to her’ don’t you understand, man? Get over here now!”

The orc offers you a look of sympathy before joining Ward by the dining table. Snippets of their heated conversation drift over to where you’re sat

“— looks harmless enough to me.”

“— stupid magic — everyone dead.”

“Oh, you’re still—”

“Know your place. We just the police, they the magic feds, I ain’t getting into no more shit because of you an’ your—”

As they argue, the man, Ward, becomes more and more animated until he throws up his hands and moves away from his partner. The orc, Jakoby, turns to look at you. A sad smile is thrown your way before he lowers himself into one of the dining room chairs and crosses his arms.

Once again quiet reigns and you’re left alone with your macabre thoughts. Time passes slowly. The officers settle at the table, playing on their phones as the hours tick by in relative silence.

With nothing better to do you turn your attention to the sun, watching it travel across the sky until it disappears behind an oncoming stormy cloud bank. It isn’t much longer before the first fat droplets of rain start to fall.

Night descends and with it the first spoken words since Jakoby and Ward’s hushed argument. Officer Ward approaches you warily, in his hands he holds a plated sandwich and a glass of water. He sets them down on the coffee table, fishing your meds of the side of the plate.

“Open your mouth.”

You want to argue, to tell him where to shove the pills but what would be the point? There was nothing to gain from antagonising the man so you do as you’re told.

“You try to bite me, or any other funky shit and I will—“

Jakoby appears at his side and takes the white and yellow tablets from him. “HERE, LET ME.” He turns to you and holds up his hand, asking for permission. It’s the first time since Kandomere detained you that anyone has treated you with any consideration and it takes everything in you not to cry. You nod and he gently tips the medication in, swiftly following it with the glass of water.
You didn’t realise how thirsty you were until you’ve gulped down half the glass.

“Do you think you can eat?” Golden eyes shine with compassion as he offers you the sandwich.

“Yes, thank you, Officer.”

His answering smile warms you from the inside out as carefully you take a bite and chew your food. It’s slightly stale and leaves you wondering how long ago it was made and by whom.

A commotion at the entrance way draws your attention as you swallow the food. Officer Ward raises his weapon only to drop it down when Kandomere storms into the apartment, striding purposefully past the officers, heading straight for you. His jacket is wrinkled, his hair damp and his fierce gaze is locked on you.

“Sir—“ Jakoby starts. Kandomere holds up his hand, cutting him off without a word. Reaching you, he snatches you up, one hand under your knees, one behind your back, carrying you bridal style down the hall into his bedroom. You’re too stunned to question it as he closes the door with his foot, passing the dressing room and en suite to hurry up the steps and out on to the terrace. He’s careful to stay out of the rain and under the part that is covered. Gently he lowers you, steadying your body as you find your feet. He waits until you’re completely stable before unlocking the cuffs and pocketing them. Standing back he folds his arms over his chest and looks down at you.

“You must understand my position. The Inferni believe I killed Leilah. They are enraged we took her wand and so it is entirely possible they would infiltrate the MTF and use someone to misinform me, to kill me.” He’s speaking hypothetically, choosing his words carefully. “I had no choice but to restrain you.”

You’re not entirely sure where he’s going with this or why he’s brought you out here but you’re certain of one thing, he’s trying to backtrack.

“What can I assume, now you’ve taken the handcuffs off, that I’m no longer a suspect?” Your voice and expression are void of emotion.

He rocks back on his heels. “That is correct.”

Turning your back to the elf, you stomp over to the glass barrier and once again look out over the city. You don’t care that the rain is beating your face or that you’re getting soaked, all you can think of is subduing your rising fury. The urge to slap his stoic face has you itching to move but you plant your feet firm and grip hold of the slick glass tightly.

“I cannot trust blindly, no matter how great the compulsion,” he calls.

Gritting your teeth you glare out at the lights. “Piss poor apology, if thats even what you're going for.”

“I had to be sure. I won’t apologise for prudence, not when the lives of the people important to me are at stake.”

“So, just to be clear,” you bite, happy for once that his superior hearing means you don’t have to shout, “I remove a wand from circulation, I help you solve a case by sending you photos, I come to you freely, telling you everything I know and you repay me by handing me over to the Shield of Light, getting me tortured, disbelieving everything I say and oh yeah, leaving me handcuffed and debating exactly how the Inferni will end up killing me. You degrade, dismiss and debase me, and to top it all off, refuse to apologise because, as you say, it was all for a noble cause.” Finally you spin around. “Is that about it? Did I cover it all?”
He has the good grace to hang his head not that it appeases you any.

“I gave you two chances and you threw them both back in my face.” Your anger wanes making way for clarity. Rolling your eyes to the heavens you laugh and shake your head. “Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice—“ Pushing the hair back from your face you move away from the corner, heading towards the door. “I’m done agent.”

As you pass he closes his eyes and exhales. “I had to be sure. And I had to keep you safe.”

Wet and dripping, you take great pleasure in the thought of ruining the expensive rug at the end of his bed as you trample water through the room. Hopefully he’ll see it and remember his many many mistakes once you’re gone. Probably not though, he’d just throw it out and buy another.

“Ward and Jakoby were the only two I could trust,” he continues, following you through his vast room. “I had them watch you whilst my team and I—“

You cut him off with a shout. “I said I’m done! I don’t give a fuck what you did, what you were thinking or where the hell you went. This fucking shit show is over. I am done.”

Reaching his door you yank on the handle but it doesn’t budge. It’s only as you try again that you realise Kandomere is leaning over you, pinning it closed. Growling you slam your back against the door for leverage, crashing your hands against his shoulders you shove, letting fly a barrage of colourful curses. The elf doesn’t move. Not even an inch. Instead he raises a brow.

“You’ll think differently when you have calmed down.”

Rage clouds your judgement and drives you to reach up and slap him. Of course he catches your wrist easily, well before you’re able to make contact, but he looks perturbed enough by your attempt.

“When I’ve— Are you fucking serious? You think I’m overreacting?” Incessant wrath sets fire to your blood and you spit out venomous words without thought. “I hate you! More than I have ever hated anyone, including the Inferni. You lied to me, you used me! I swear if I still had that wand —“ You want to scream you’d end his life with it but your tongue refuses to cooperate. No matter how much you despise him, you can’t bring yourself to threaten him with the same fate as his parents, its just not in your nature. Cursing your compassion, you rip your hand free and barge past him, aimlessly wandering into the centre of the room.

“You are angry and I understand,” he follows, stepping lightly behind you, “but I took precautions. For us and for you.”

“You understand? You understand?” You ball your fists. “All you have done since the moment I met you is cause me pain. You’re toxic! I hate you and I want nothing more to do with you. Do you understand that?”

“I understand you’re emotional.” Your jaw drops and you’re about to scream at him when he darts forward and clamps a hand over your mouth. The shock of his audacity stills you and he uses the surprise to his advantage. In a flash you’re once again in his hold, your mouth still covered, your back against his chest as his lips brush against your ear. “I should have taken you in!” He hisses angrily. “You are a known bright and you confessed to me, a federal agent, you have recently used magic. Yes, I cuffed you, but what I should have done is so much worse. I am not naive, Y/n, I am fully aware how my actions appear to you but I don’t have the privilege of acting selfishly. For your safety, for mine, I must look at the big picture. In order to protect you I had to protect my
team, I had to protect myself. Until I knew for absolute certain you weren’t collaborating with the Inferni, I had no choice but to detain you.” He drops his hand from your face and pulls you impossibly close. “Convention dictates any suspect tied to Inferni be taken to our specialist interrogation rooms. For someone such as yourself, a known magic user, these rooms are—“ His hesitation tells you everything you need to know.

“You could have believed me.” Your counter argument is weak and you know it but you’re still too angry to back down.

“Mi alma.” He dips his head, resting his chin on your shoulder. “Would you believe me if I said I wanted to?” He turns slightly, his nose coming to the crook of your neck, he inhales deeply. “I am sorry I behaved in such a way as to cause you distress. I was… troubled by your words.”

“And leaving me cuffed on the couch was your best solution?” The fight is rapidly draining from you as you consider the situation from his point of view. You’re still pissed he couldn’t take you at your word but being up against the Inferni and the Shield of Light yourself, you can see where he’s coming from.

“We had to act fast. The quicker I could verify your story, the faster I could prove your innocence. An operation such as the one we assembled would usually take weeks to piece together, for you I did it in a day. Unfortunately that meant pouring all our resources into research and strategy, I had little time for anything else.”

Your thoughts turn to the reason behind it all. “You found him, Alexo, didn’t you?”

He tenses, his arms constricting to the point where it’s almost painful. “He’s being interrogated as we speak.”

“You’re not doing it yourself?” This confuses you, after all the trouble he went to why wouldn’t he want to be the one who got the answers.

“No, not this time.”

“So how can you be so sure I’m inno— oh, you got his phone.”

He swallows. “Yes. I’m going to release you now, I would appreciate your company without having to chase after you.” His arms pull away slowly and as you turn you see where you’re sodden clothes have soaked his.

“You saw?”

He meets your gaze. “I did.”

“I remember it all.” A dry smile dances across your lips. “I had some free time recently to sit and think about it all.”

His face drops, his composure slipping at the implications of your confession. His stoic mask is back in place after only a second but the emotions still show in his eyes. Regret, sadness, anger and pain.

“I cannot undo what has been done to you, mi alma, nor can I change my part in your story. What I can do is reiterate my promise to protect you, even when it may seem I’m not. Please know I have your best interests at heart, I only wish to help you, and I will do everything in my power to bring every one involved in your persecution to justice.”
You don’t know how to reply. You can’t just forget the past twenty four hours, especially after he promised to trust you after the Shield of Light incident, but on the other hand, you at least understand his motives now.

“Come, you need to get out of those wet clothes. Why don’t you shower and I’ll make us some dinner.” Without a reason to protest you allow him to lead you to his en suite. “The shower in here is superior, I think you’ll enjoy it more.” The door is opened and the light snapped on to reveal a room that wouldn’t look out of place in a glossy magazine. A laughably large rainforest shower stands proud against the back wall and at the flip of a switch the water cascades invitingly down onto the tiled floor. You stare at the waterfall, wondering how you’d gone from living on the streets to this. You’re pulled back to the present when Kandomere points to an assortment of bottles, “Use whatever you want,” he instructs, “I’ll leave your fresh clothes and bandages on my bed for you, take your time, try to relax and then we can talk some more over dinner.”

It’s a world away from where you’d expected to be, as you’d awaited the results of Kandomere’s disappearance. It’s so normal and domestic and whilst it’s literally blowing your mind, he appears completely unruffled by the recent turn in events. You answer him with dumbfounded silence and a slack jaw.

He smiles as he catches your hand and brings it to his lips to place a chaste kiss on your knuckles, “Disfruta, mi alma.”

Blinking away your disbelief, you wait for the door to close before stripping off. How was it he’d managed to manipulate you into dumb obedience? Where was the fire in your belly that had made you try to slap him? Stepping into the water, you groan obscenely, unable to silence your appreciation of the heat against your sore muscles. Thinking could wait, for now you were going to give yourself over to your physical need and enjoy the pleasure of a hot, blissful shower.
Creeping out from Kandomere’s bedroom, you make your way to the main body of the apartment silently. Rounding the corner you’re met with the sight of a beautifully set table complete with wine and candles. Kandomere is in the kitchen, effortlessly moving from counter to counter as he prepares dinner. Whatever it is smells amazing and from the way he flows it’s clear he knows what he is doing. Music plays softly in the background and you swear he’s humming away to it. In a daze, you take in your surroundings and companion, unable to marry it all with the expectations of a few hours ago. It’s not surprising, given the mental trauma you’ve been through, but you’re still trying to figure out how to process it all. Your host turns to you, a smile lighting up his face and making his silvery eyes sparkle. He looks different, younger somehow, and far less uptight.

“Come, sit.” He flits around the island, wiping his hands on a towel before pulling out a chair for you. Hesitantly you do as you’re told, all the while wondering when you’re going to wake up and find yourself in an interrogation cell somewhere.

Once you’re settled, he pours a generous glass of wine and hands it to you. “Don’t worry, I checked with the doctor, a few glasses are fine with your medication.”

It’s a step too far. You could just about handle the debacle in the bedroom, the food and the music, but this, this apparent easygoing domesticity is too much.

“Please, stop.” You put the wine down and shake your head. “What are you doing, Kandomere?”

He sighs, dubiously pulling out the seat to your left and sitting down, slowly turning to face you. He leans in, forearms resting against his thighs, face turned down. After a pause he drags his gaze from the floor to meet yours. “I am attempting to make things right between us. I know you are angry but I cannot apologise for doing what I believe was the right thing. I can, however, attempt to mend bridges and hopefully we can build a level of trust that will ensure neither of us has cause to question the other again.”

Scrubbing your hand down your face, you prop your elbow on the table, covering your mouth with your hand as you digest his explanation. Did you want to move forward from this? Were you capable of forgetting, if not forgiving. Sitting back you drop your hands to your lap. “You’re asking me to trust you.”

He reaches out for your hands but you shift away. Whilst you understand his motives for treating you the way he did, you can’t simply let it go just because he wants you to. He betrayed you, even if it was for supposed good intentions. He breathes out and it’s not a sigh but it is laced with disappointment.

“Will you at least eat with me?” He doesn’t try to hide his dejection, quite the opposite. His voice is low and rough.

You glance at him from the side of your eye and it dawns on you that it hurts to even look at him.
“The first time you refused to take me at my word,” your voice is soft and coated with despondency, “you only knew what you’d read in files, you didn’t know me. I get it, even if I don’t agree with what you did, I understand. But this time—“ Closing your eyes you swallow down the lump forming in your throat. “I’d had every opportunity to escape or go against you. In the hospital I had access to all kinds of drugs and weapons. Here, we slept in the same bed more than once, surely if I wanted to get to you that would have been the perfect time. You were asleep and defenceless.”

With each word you utter, Kandomere grows quieter until he is a motionless statue next to you. Strangely, knowing you’re causing him even a shred of distress doesn’t bring you the comfort you expected. You can feel the cracks as they begin to fissure your protective armour but you’re not willing to surrender. Not yet. Pushing up, you wrap your arms around yourself in an attempt to stay together long enough get this out of your system.

In barely a whisper you press on.“I understand why you think you did the right thing, but you’re wrong. You weren’t thinking of me, you were thinking like a federal agent—” And then the dots align and you understand why you’re so disjointed and pained by his actions. Blinking back your tears you clear your throat, silently berating yourself for blurring the boundaries of courtesy and friendship. This was your mistake, not his. “I shouldn’t have expected anything more. You are the head of the Magic Task Force, this is your case and somewhere along the way I forgot that. So no, I can’t sit and eat with you, I can’t build bridges because there are non needed. I am part of a case and when push comes to shove that’s all this will ever be to you. I’m not a person, I’m an asset. I’ll bear that in mind going forward, which is why I can’t do this. Any of it.” You need to get out, to run, to save face. “Thank you for your hospitality, Kandomere, but I have to leave now.”

He’s on his feet so fast he becomes just a blur of colour. “You aren’t going anywhere!” He growls.

You hug yourself tighter. “I have to, don’t worry, I’ll tell you where I am. I meant what I said, I want to help you, I just, I realised I can’t do that and stay here. I—“ You bite your lip hard as a single tear breaks free. Angrily you shove it away with the heel of your palm. “This is a professional relationship, I need to, you are not my friend, I expected, it’s, this is on me, I did this. I—“ You clamp your mouth shut to stem your rambling nonsense. You’re embarrassed and hurt but there’s still a chance you can get out of here with a shred of dignity intact.

“Mi alma, no!” His jaw flexes and he begins to pace.

You don’t wait around to hear anything else. Taking your leave you hurry to your room, heading straight to the closet where your old bag resides. With your old clothes thrown away you fold some of the new stuff carefully into the bag and swear to yourself that you will reimburse Kandomere, not wanting to be in his debt any more than you absolute have to be.

When you’ve filed the bag with essentials you sling it over your shoulder and grit your teeth steeling yourself for the confrontation you know is about to happen. Striding out, you head straight to the door, but as expected, the elf blocks your way. He glares you down, muttering heatedly in Övüsi. Holding your hands up in submission, you wait patiently for his attention.

“Please understand. I’m not running. I’ll help in any way I can. I want what you want—“

He steps towards you, a solid wall of trained elven muscle obstructing your exit. “Do not make me do this, Y/n.”

He’s trying to intimidate you and despite your nerves begging you to cower away, you stand firm. “Kand—“
“Please!” His hands grip the top of your arms.

Gathering every ounce of courage you have, you meet his gaze. “I can’t stay—“

“And I can’t let you go.”

“Kandomere!”

Sadly he shakes his head. “¿Por qué no puedes ver? ¿Qué me has hecho, mi alma?”

“I don’t speak Spanish!” You yell, aggravated.

Your anger triggers his and he scowls down at you. “You do not listen, no matter what language I use. You say I acted in a professional manner but you are wrong. Did I not already tell you what should have happened? I broke the rules for you. For You. Not because you are an asset,” he barks, “not because you are an informant, no! I broke them for you. I hunted Inferni for you. I did it all for you. Are you so blind? Do you not understand? Have I not shown you?”

Ripping yourself out of his reach you point angrily at his chest. “You have shown me that you are a federal agent first and foremost—“

“Is that why I brought you here instead of my offices?” He roars. “Is that why I slept with you in my arms when you were hurting? Is that why I broke every rule to keep you safe? Do not hide behind naïveté just because I am telling you something you wish to discredit. I did these things because you mean something to me, Y/n. Everything I have done since finding you in tied up in that school has been to protect you, to apologise to you, to prove to you that I am not the elf you thought I was.” With a frustrated growl he turns away, slipping back into a flurry of Övüsi. Not that it matters, you couldn’t hear anything past the echo of his admission.

“But why?” The question falls from your lips as a whisper you don’t even realised you’ve said aloud.

Why would he break the rules for you? What could he possibly hope to get out of it? You’d already agreed to tell him everything you know, to work with him to stop the Inferni. What could possibly drive him to — The wand! He wants to know the whereabouts of the wand.

Rolling your eyes, you let out a huff. “Oh, I get it.”

Kandomere raises his brows at your tone. “Something tells me you don’t,” he retorts sarcastically.

“Okay, so you’re going to deny this is about the wand?”

His eyes widen and he scoffs loudly. “Unbelievable, even for you.”

“Please!”

You watch as he gathers himself, piecing back together the composure he’d let slip. Rolling his shoulders he straightens his vest before gliding his hands into his pockets, and just like that the blue haired elf is back on form.

“For someone so intelligent you are laughably slow. Or perhaps you are attempting to diffuse the situation with feigned stupidity. Either way, I shall spell it out for you.” He puffs out his chest and raises his chin. “I have grown attached to you, Y/n, in our time together you have sparked an interest that has flourished into something more. I was loath to admit this because you are dealing with enough emotional confusion but you have forced my hand. There is much you don’t know,
about me and my work, about how you have impacted both, but know this, understand without a single fragment of doubt, what I did, I did in order to allow myself to protect you. I broke protocol, I may have destroyed whatever this is,” he waves his hands between you, “but I did what I must in order to do my job and take care of you. It was a compromise. I was not happy about it, but I stand by my actions. Now sit down and eat the food I have prepared for you!”

Shock doesn’t even begin to cover the myriad of emotions swarming through you. Open mouthed and dumbfounded you stand, rooted to the spot, unable to fathom what to do with this newfound knowledge. Was it a trick? Was he being sincere? You had no idea of knowing.

After a few minutes of staring blankly into space, Kandomere lays his hands on your waist and tugs you to the table. Easing your bag to the floor, he guides you into the seat and gestures to the plate awaiting you.

“At least eat before you go. No point letting good food go to waste.”

When you don’t move he sighs and drops down into the chair next to you. Cautiously he hovers his hand over yours and when you don’t pull back he closes it around you, squeezing softly.

“You really had no idea?”

Owlishly you blink at him. How the hell were you supposed to know? At what point did he give anything away? He closes his eyes and licks his lips.

“I’m sorry. I should have handled this so much better but I allowed my emotions to get the better of me. After you’ve eaten I will take you to a hotel. I understand being around me is probably difficult for you right now, but that’s no reason for you to be out on the streets. Please, mi alma, allow me to do this for you. Let me take care of you one last time.”

‘Mi alma’. ‘Mi alma’, always with the ‘mi alma’. You’d never figured out what that meant. You’d assumed it was some sort of nickname he used just to annoy you, now though, who the hell knew.

“Why do you call me that?” Your voice is strained and distant, matching your troubled thoughts perfectly.

Slowly, his hauntingly anguished eyes open and lock onto yours. “I began using it at the hospital to sell our cover story to the staff. It’s a term of endearment, a lovers pet name. It provoked you, I liked that. Only it wasn’t long before you stopped fighting it but I couldn’t bring myself to stop. Shortly after we left hospital I realised it was no longer a frivolous moniker.”

Decoding his words you look at the plate of chicken and vegetables waiting to be eaten. “What does it mean?”

“Are you sure you want to know?”

“Yes. If you’ve been insulting me like I think you have, then I wanna know.”

A gentle laugh escapes him and he squeezes your hand again, “It is a term or endearment. It’s literal translation is, my soul.”

Your breath catches. You’d expected something somewhat derogatory if you were being honest, not this. This just adds a whole new level of fucked up to what is already a monumentally deranged situation. You can’t speak, not because the words are stuck but because you have nothing to say. How can you after all that? Instead you take your fork in your free hand and spear some of the chicken. Once the sauce coating it has finish dripping you put it in your mouth, at least this way
you have an excuse to stay silent.

Kandomere watches you intently, and you don’t know if it’s because he’s scared he’s broken you completely or if he wants to see how you react to his cooking. It doesn’t matter because as soon as you taste the delicacy on your tongue, you’re lost to a ravenous hunger. You’ve no idea how to handle what he’s said so you’re going to concentrate on the feast in front of you. The elephant in the room isn’t going anywhere soon, no point letting a damn fine meal go to waste whilst you try to think of ways around the big beast.

Loading your fork, you nod at the elf. “This is so good.”

His gaze softens and a proud smile tugs at the corner of his lips. “There’s desert as well.” He leans over to drag his plate across the table and just like that you fall back into the weird yet strangely comfortable domestic dynamic. Whatever happens next can wait. For now you’re just going to ignore the problems and enjoy the good food and maybe even that glass of wine or two.

Grasping the stem of the glass, you sit back in the chair and sip at the expensive wine. Despite it all, this actually feels… nice. Licking your lips you glance over the top of the crystal, meeting the gaze of the elf watching you. In the glow of the candle light he looks ethereal but soft. Gone are the hard lines and ruthless expressions, in their place you see sincerity and tenderness.

You admire him for a moment longer before your stomach demands you return to the plate. Devouring the meal, you contemplate your options. It’s late and you’re tired, having had very little sleep over the past twenty-four hours. Going to a hotel means facing the threat of the Inferni or Shield of Light discovering you and now that Kandomere has explained his actions in full perhaps you could navigate a way forward that avoided any further miscommunication.

Taking another generous gulp of wine you decide that you’ll wait until after dinner to make your final choice. For now, you’re going to allow yourself the enjoyment of great food and fine wine without the nagging question of what to do. That can wait, your stomach however, can’t.
Chapter Thirteen

You’re comfortably full and a little buzzed when you drop down into the welcoming cushions of the couch. If nothing else, Kandomere was one hell of a chef. Leaving the dishes on the table he grabs the bottle of wine and your glasses, tentatively joining you.

“Are you okay?” He tops up your drinks as he asks.

“Tired.” Reaching out you take your glass. Is this the third or fourth?

He sighs deeply and you can tell it comes from his very soul. “Can I convince you to stay?”

Truth be told, you’d already convinced yourself over dinner but the alcohol makes you curious to see what he comes up with. Biting the inside of your cheek you hope your smile doesn’t show. “I don’t know, can you?”

Sharp eyes zero in on yours and after a beat a slow smirk washes over his face. He’d seen through you. “What would it take?”

“What are you offering?” Feigning boredom you alternate twirling the glass in your fingertips with sipping your wine. You’d tried not to think during dinner, however, despite your best efforts, your mind had ticked away quietly, mulling over what Kandomere had told you. Slowly it was all making sense, the way he’d acted, the things he’d said. You’d been stupid not to notice before, elves were notoriously uptight and distant with the other races and yet he’d been open and affectionate. Affectionate for god’s sake! How did that not ring alarm bells? He’d gone about things wrong, that was for sure, but you could almost sympathise with the why. Or maybe that was just the wine talking. A seed of an idea begins to take shape and you wonder just how far you can push him.

“Anything. Name it.”

“Your room. I want your bedroom.

His reply is instant. “It’s yours.”

Okay, so that wasn’t a stretch for him. Licking your lips you contemplate your next move. It had to be something he was attached to, something he cherished. Something that would pain him to lose. Yes, you’re playing a petty game but it’s helping lesson the sting of his betrayal. You grin as you realise what you’re going to ask next.

“Your gorget.”

His eyebrows expose his surprise when they shoot up. “You want my gorget?”

Calmly and with your smile growing you shake your head. “No, I want you to stop wearing it.”

Oh those eyes. They burn hotter than the sun as they narrow. Sweeping from the top of your head all the way to the ankles he silently contemplates your request. “Fine, but if I’m not wearing it, you are.” He drains his glass and stands. Taking the empty bottle with him. When he returns he’s drinking whisky from a crystal tumbler.

“Why should I wear it?” You challenge, “it’s meaningless to me. Besides, you’re the one who’s supposed to be proving yourself, not me.”
“Ah, so that’s what this is.”

The alcohol has loosened your tongue as well as your sense and you nod, unabashed. “I want you to jump through hoops. I want you to suffer like I did.”

He slides forward, perching on the edge of the cushion and reaching out for your hand. Taking your now empty glass, he moves it out of the way so he can clasp your hands in his. “Every moment I saw you suffering was torture, mi alma. None of this has been easy on me. I have wrestled with how best to deal with everything, but if it’s hoops I must jump through in order to ease your mind then gladly I will.”

If only you could buy into his pretty words. If they could build a bridge over the hurdle his betrayal erected you could have so much fun with him. You’re not blind, you can’t deny the elf is gorgeous, and you’ve seen how tempting his body is. How easy it would be to take what he was offering, let loose a little, consequences be damned… You can’t though. You’re not callous enough to toy with his emotions that way, but if your were, oh the fun you could have!

He tilts his head, watching as you lick your lips again. “What’s going inside that head of yours, Y/n? What devious torture are you thinking up?” His very full, very kissable lips turn up into a flirtatious smile and for a second you genuinely consider letting go of your morals for the night. But the second is soon over when his cell mercifully rings. He holds up one finger as he digs the phone out of his pocket and checks the caller. “I have to take this,” he mutters, standing again and putting distance between you.

Blowing out a deep breath you lean into the cushions and thank your lucky stars. You’ve had too much to drink and you’re not thinking straight. If not for the interruption you dread to think what could have happened. How far you would have let it get. How complicated.

As the cushions envelop you, your muscles relax and your over worked brain slows. It’s quiet and warm, and you’re tired and tipsy. The combination has you quickly drifting between consciousness and dreamland. When Kandomere finally reappears he takes one look at you and chuckles.

“Come. Bed time for you.”

Through half lidded eyes you search for the bedroom door to assess how far away it is. Given how comfortable you are and the sheer volume of space between you and the bed, you decide that the couch will do tonight.

“It’s okay, I’m fine here. Have your room for one last night.”

His expression changes but you’re too tired and the apartment too dark for you to register the meaning behind it. Allowing your eyes to fully close you wave him off with a flick of the wrist.

Again he chuckles. “As serene as you look, I think you’ll enjoy my bed more. May I carry you?”

His words only just register through your sleep fogged brain and you manage a non comital shrug. Taking that as permission, Kandomere collects you up and holds you against his chest. He’s warm and his spicy scent releases comforting memories of restful nights. Acting on base instincts alone you nuzzle into his neck and close your arms around his neck. Sleep is only a breath away as he lays you on his enormous bed, kissing your head as he wraps the blanket around you. The bed dips as he backs away and the last thing you register is the low murmur of his accented voice muttering in Spanish.

“Buenas noches mi intrigante belleza.”
The bedroom is even more luxurious in the daylight and you find yourself propped up in the elf’s bed, staring around in disbelief. Dark wood bedside cabinets hold ornate lamps and a matching dresser is pushed against the dressing-room dividing wall. Two deep purple velvet seats accompany a small table in front of the window to your right and you can just imagine Kandomere sat there, sipping his coffee as he reads through work files. At the end of the bed you spot a bench matching the chairs, the arms stretching out and curling back on themselves, inviting you to sit and read a book or two. The whole design is grand but tasteful and it leaves you wondering what the hell you’re doing here. You’re still absorbing it all when Kandomere enters carrying a tray of food.

“Ah good, you’re awake. Hungry?” He makes a beeline straight for you and places the tray by your side. On it there are various breakfast foods, juice, coffee and your medication.

“Groveling?” You reply, and whilst it was meant as a joke it comes out harsher than you intended. He smiles softly, “I like to think of it as hoop jumping.”

Looking down at your hands you let out a small laugh. “Yeah, about that—“ Embarrassment colours your skin, flushing you with heat. You’re still upset with him, but that doesn’t excuse your behaviour last night.

“I meant what I said, mi alma. I’ll jump through every hoop you demand if it means there’s a chance you and I can move past this.”

Glancing up, you note that his gorget is missing from his suit. “You’re committed, I’ll give you that.”

In what you’ve noticed is one of his favoured moves, he slips his hands into his pockets and rolls his broad shoulders. “You have no idea.” He speaks quietly but not so much that you don’t hear his reply. He sighs. “I’ve been called into the office, there are some pressing matters that need my attention. I’m sorry, I have no choice. I’ll be leaving very shortly.”

“You’re leaving me alone?” The implications of this are massive.

He shrugs and cuts to the chase. “I will not stop you if you wish to leave. You’ve given your word you’ll stay in contact and you’ve proven I can trust you. That’s not to say I would be happy, far from it but that is because I am selfish. I want you to stay for me, not the case.”

His candid speech intensifies your blush and you turn your attention to the food just to avoid looking at him. “Well, I, ah, I mean—“ Words fail you so you pick up a piece of toast and stuff it in your mouth. What could you say? He’s just basically asked you to stay for him, yet he’s the very thing you want to run from, he’s the one who caused all your distress. That being said, he has apologised more than once as well as explained his motives which you now understand came from a good place. Plus he is trying to make it up to you, if only you could shake the expectation that he’ll repeat his mistakes a third time. If only you could forgive.

He clears his throat. “Continuing on this theme, I have left a set of keys on the kitchen counter. They are for you. I will understand if you are gone when I return, however it is imperative you know you are welcome here, always. You are free to come and go as you please. In addition to the keys there is money in an envelope.” He closes his eyes, refusing to acknowledge your imminent rejection. “If you cannot find it in your heart to forgive me and stay, then please be kind enough to
allow me this one luxury. Knowing you are not on the streets will bring me peace of mind and this in turn will greatly dissuade the unavoidable compulsion I will have to find you.”

Your head is spinning. “I don’t know what to say,” you admit, gaping up at him in astonishment.

“Say, hasta luego instead of adios.” Untucking his hands he bends at the waist and carefully kisses the top of your head. It’s not a quick kiss, he lingers and you know it’s because he thinks you’ll be gone when he returns. He’s probably right.

His face is schooled to a neutral expression as he gives you one last look and then he’s gone, striding out of the room with his trademark determination. As he disappears from sight the constricting sensation around your chest fades and you’re able to breath easier. You’re free! No one is stopping you from doing what you want, you can go anywhere, do anything as long as you keep your head down and avoid the two killer groups who may or may not be searching for you.

So okay, you’re not entirely free but you’ve got options.

Sighing in relief you smile happily. This is the lightest you’ve felt in weeks. Picking up the bowl of fruit you cheerfully pop a strawberry into your mouth and lean back against the headboard. Without Kandomere there’s no pressure, and without the constant sense of dread your mood becomes buoyant.

Life suddenly slows down and you’re able to take pleasure in the mundane tasks you’d usually taken for granted. You take your time to enjoy the breakfast he’d made you. Next, you dawdle under the blissful shower, experimenting with the many scented products Kandomere had pointed out the day before. After that you pick through the clothes he’d bought for you, and just for fun dress in the most outrageous outfit he’d provided.

Well, why the hell not, you’d reasoned with yourself, it’s not like I’m ever going to wear it for real.

The elegant black satin and lace skims your buffed skin from your collarbones to your calves, the perfectly tailored cut of the garment complementing your body shape effortlessly. Small diamantés added a delicate sparkle as they catch the light and whilst the dress has no labels it is without a doubt it was designer. Digging deeper into the closet you discover a number of unopened shoe boxes. Shaking your head, you peek into each until you find the perfect pair to match the dress. Letting your hair dry naturally, you run a comb through the tangles and allow it to hang loose.

It’s an interesting sight to behold when you brave the full length mirror. Gone are the dark circles framing your eyes, your skin is no longer pale and you’ve gained the bounce back in your step. The only blight in the reflection comes from the ugly bandages wrapped around your legs. Pursing your lips you impulsively kick off your shoes and reach down. The bandages are gone a few minutes later and you’re even more pleased to note the dress covers most of the damage. Slipping your feet back into the heels you spin, looking over your shoulder to admire the back of the gown.

“When was I ever going to wear this?” You roll your eyes. “Typical elf, more money than sense.”

Even as you mutter to yourself you know you’re being unfair. Kandomere was anything but a typical elf. Your thoughts drift back to your blue haired problem and you can’t help weighing up your options.

It had been suffocating, living under the elf’s watchful eye but now you’ve got some space to yourself, things didn’t seem so bad. Thinking about it, you’d only really come to dread the elf’s presence when he didn’t trust you, the rest of the time had been fine. More than fine in fact. Like last night, if you were being truthful with yourself you’d quite enjoyed the playfulness after dinner.
Who was to say now that the lines of communication were open, it couldn’t be like that more often? When he removed the stick from his ass, you actually found the elf good company, plus he was a stellar chef.

*Can you forgive him though? Can you?*

He’d admitted to having feelings for you. He was perfectly open about that, maybe, just maybe, if he continued to be transparent in everything he did, if he answered all your questions honestly you could move on from this nightmare.

Deep in thought, you remove the shoes and as you shimmy out of the dress you realise you're leaning towards an answer. It’s only when you’ve reapplied your bandaged, dressed in sweats and a t-shirt and put your hair up in a messy bun that you allow yourself to accept the decision you’ve made.

“Two weeks.” You look your reflection in the eye. “He gets two more weeks.” If you can’t get over what he’s done by then you know you never will, and then you’ll be able to walk away clean, knowing rather than guessing, you’d done the right thing.
Chapter Fourteen

Your day is quiet and peaceful, and as the afternoon progresses you become more and more relaxed until you’re thoroughly chilled out. After changing back into regular clothes you’d taken your time to wander around the apartment. Without Kandomere’s presence you were comfortable to look closely at the limited photos and trinkets he had out on display. You picked up a frame and studied the image carefully. In it Kandomere stood front and centre in a line up of suited men. He was the only elf. He looked exactly as he always did when out in public — regal, elegant and proud — and nothing like the elf that had bid you goodbye this morning. It was almost like he was two separate entities, the stiff, formal fed he portrayed to the rest of the world, and the caring, surprisingly charming man you’d encountered behind closed doors.

Moving on you were delighted to discover a plethora of classical books on the bookcase in his home office. Gleefully plucking a few from the line up, you grabbed a drink and strode out onto the terrace to curl up on one of the recliners dotted around. The sun was high in the cloudless cerulean sky and it called to you to enjoy it’s warm, soothing rays.

You’ve been outside reading for hours and as the evening begins to close in, the light changes, bringing your attention back to the here and now. Stretching out your limbs you head back inside and put the books back where you found them. Glancing at the clock tells you it’s later than you thought, much later. It’s almost six, so where was Kandomere?

He’d said he wouldn’t be long and that was this morning. What could have kept him? Resting your hands on your hips you frown to yourself. You’ve no way of contacting him to see if he’s okay, what if something bad had happened.

“Oh god!” The words spill into the silence and your eyes widen as you realise you’re actually worried about the elf.

What the hell!

Rubbing your eyes you take a deep breath and calm your thoughts. Okay, you were slightly worried, but realistically, he’s an elf, he can take care of himself. He’s also a trained federal agent with a side arm who’d most likely got held back at the office. He is head of the task force after all.

Rolling your eyes, you mentally slap yourself for your inconsistency. How can you want him gone one moment and then worry he’s late the next? Are you that screwed up? Grimacing, you wander out of his office, silently answering your own question. Yes, of course you are!

Fine, you think trying to distract your wayward mind, I’ll make good use of the time. I’ll repay some debts.

Diving into the fridge you pull out various items as you think through all the decent recipes you know. You weren’t bad in the kitchen, not that you could compete with Kandomere but you’re sure you can throw something together he’d appreciate. Besides, who didn’t love coming home to a good meal?

“How domesticated of you,” you mutter, hating that a part of you is actually excited to be cooking for the elf.
With the risotto cooking and the kitchen clean you looked around for something else to fill your time. You’ve yet to find a tv so that’s out of the question but you know where the music dock is. A few minutes later the silence is chased away by soft music which puts a smile on your face. Singing along, you decide to match Kandomere’s example, and digging in draws and cabinets for the necessities, you decorate the table with the placemats and candles he’d used last night.

On the counter in the kitchen is an opened a bottle of wine, some has gone in the risotto and the rest you’d been sipping as you went. You weren’t sure if you were supposed to, given you’d had some last night but you’re willing to take a chance. Pouring a second glass you tuck the bottle back into the fridge and make your way, half dancing, half walking to the couch. As much as you hate to admit it, you could get used to all of this.

Spinning around, you carefully set your glass down and are just about to drop into the cushions when another idea sideswipes you. What if you got dressed up for dinner? Looking down at yourself only confirms that what you’re about to do is a good idea. You’re sick of feeling like the beast next to his beauty. Why shouldn’t you get to feel marginally attractive for once? Where was the harm? With a grin set in place you collect your wine and hurry to the bedroom to begin the transformation.

You’ve just finished pinning up your hair when the music changes and a latino beat pulses softly in the background. You hadn’t chosen the music, you’d simply turned it all on and allowed one of Kandomere’s playlists to start but you’ve yet to be disappointed with a song. Clearly he has good taste in music — add that to his list of pro’s.

Tapping your foot to the beat you take one last look in the mirror and marvel at the difference the clothes make. You’ve slipped back into the stunning dress, removed the ugly bandages and put on the gorgeous heels and whilst you’re no elf, you have to admit you’ve scrubbed up nicely.

Collecting your drink from the dresser you check the time. If you want to food to remain edible you’d better turn down the stove. Your heels click against the floor and the sound encourages you to throw in a few more dance moves on your way. Swaying your hips you move with the beat, rounding the last corner to enter the kitchen. Checking on your risotto you’re met with the sumptuous scent and a pleased smile lights up your face. You’ve just replaced the lid when you hear the door close and Kandomere anxiously calling out your name.

Stepping out from behind the island you meet him with a timid smile, suddenly feeling foolish for going so over the top with everything. His gaze is fixed on the table and he wears an expression of absolute confusion.

“I don’t underst—“

The second his eyes find you his demeanour changes. His pupils dilate and he reaches out to grip the back of the dinning chair so tight, his knuckles blanch.
“Dios mío eres… exquisito.” His husky, low tone and hungry eyes warn you to tread carefully. Perhaps getting so dressed up wasn’t such a great idea.

Swallowing nervously you smooth down the dress by your hips, instantly regretting your actions when his eyes snap to follow the movement of your hands. You need to break him out of this trance, to cool the moment, because the way he’s looking at you is stirring up emotions you have no idea how to handle.

“I stayed.” You voice needlessly but wanting to answer him, even if you’ve no idea what he said. “I’m staying, for now at least, so I—“ Cocking your head to the side, you raise your shoulders and gesture awkwardly at the table.

“Quédate para siempre, déjame adorarte, déjame cuidarte, mi alma.” He sucks in a ragged breath and clenches his jaw. Shaking his head slightly, he licks his lips and you know that it’s not because of the aroma of the food. “When you said you wanted to torture me, I had no idea how thorough you would be.” His voice cracks and his eyes close, a crease pulling at his brows together.

“Kandomere.” You stop short when you realise how breathy you sound. His frown and breathing deepen as you say his name. “Por favor, hechicera, me rindo,” he whispers, dropping his head and biting his bottom lip.

Dear god, what have you done? You were only trying to make yourself feel good but somehow you’ve created this charged situation and you don’t know how to stop it. No, that’s not true, you do know how to stop it, you’re just not entirely sure you want to. You eye the elf warily, a little afraid and a little excited that he might snap at any moment. He’s locked in place, his expression one of sheer concentration and you can just about visualise his muscular body tensed beneath his three piece suit. That thought send vivid images running through your head.

“Kandomere.” He jolts as you call his name softly and you can’t ignore the delight you find in your new found power. “Kandomere, look at me.”

Feral moonlit eyes flick up from under a strained brow and he flares his nostrils as he breathes deep. It’s a predatory look from a deadly hunter and it does nothing to calm your racing heart. No one has ever looked at you like that before, no one has ever provoked such arousal without a single touch. Just what have you done?

He tilts his head imperceptibly, purposely sniffing the air and the muscles of his jaw clench. “Quiero saborearte,” he growls.

You’re trapped, unable to choose between walking away or walking towards. The way he’s staring, with a dangerous yearning, is too seductive to ignore if only your brain would stop throwing his previous indiscretions at you. What did they matter now anyway? And why the hell should you let his mistakes stop you from having some much needed fun?

In an unconscious move you take a small step towards him. You don’t know you’re doing it until you end up within arms reach. And that’s when he strikes. Before you can react he has you pinned against the solid muscle of his taut body. One hand grips your neck as the other dips into the curve at the small of your back to drag your hips snug against his. Wild eyes full of lust and aggression meet yours briefly before he crashes his mouth against you. Demanding, supple lips manipulate yours in a searing kiss where his tongue is quick to push into your mouth and dominate. This is not a sweet kiss, this in not a gentle introduction, instead it’s a promise of a passion so hot, the flames will consume you whole.
Gripping onto his lapels you allow yourself to enjoy a moment but you are no pushover. As he deepens the kiss, you snake a hand up and wrap it in the hair at the nape of his neck. Pulling as you close you fingers you lean back, breaking the kiss to trap his bottom lip between your teeth. He may have started the battle but you aren’t giving him the war. Biting down on the plush flesh earns you another growl which tightens the muscles in your belly and spurs you on. You do it again, only for him to grab your ass with both hands and grind his now hard erection into you.

You gasp as pleasure surges through your veins, your hands clenching at his hair and his waist, and he takes it as an opportunity to claim back the power. His tongue delves back in to taste you, sliding over yours as he rolls his hips. Hands, hot and greedy, slide over expensive fabric and he groans deep as you respond by arching into him. You’re lost to sensations, the intensity of the kiss wiping your mind of everything but the feel and taste of Kandomere. It’s breathtaking, literally.

Breaking the kiss you gasp for air but the elf isn’t done. His mouth descends, following the line of your jaw until he reaches the column of your throat. Once there he alternates grinding himself against you with scraping his serrated teeth over your sensitive skin then kissing the sting away. It’s too much. You become a pliant, panting mess of hormones unable to form a coherent thought beyond that of physical pleasure.

He begins to pepper his kisses with words you don’t understand. “Las cosas que quiero hacerte,” he growls before biting down, “las ideas que pones en mi mente.” You cry out in surprise as he breaks through your skin, cursing into the blue locks of his hair. “Quiero cada pulgada de ti,” he licks a stripe up to your ear, “escuchar cada jadeo, cada gemido.” A gentle tug on your lobe as sharp teeth slide over wet flesh is the final straw. Grasping his face you drag him back to your mouth and kiss him like it’s your last moments on earth. Nothing exists outside of his embrace, there’s just you and Kandomere and the blazing lust driving you both. You need him, there’s no denying the fact, not when you’re panting desperately for air to fill your oxygen starved lungs because kissing him is more favourable than breathing.

The door slamming registers somewhere in the back of your mind but it’s only when Montehugh’s gruff voice mentions something about the smell of food you regain some of your faculties. You tear yourself out of Kandomere’s grasp to lean heavily against the kitchen counter. Wide eyed and in a state of complete shock you gape at the elf who just about manages to control his own breathing before his guest makes an appearance.

“You’re still here!” Montehugh exclaims, turning the corner and freezing.

Suspended in disbelief you skate your eyes back to Kandomere’s to see him struggling to regain his self-control. Behind him Montehugh’s head is whipping between you and the back of his boss in bewilderment.

“Ah shit!” He booms. “Were you two in the middle of another argument? Is this because of me? Honestly, Y/n, he thought you’d be gone, guess he doesn’t know you as well as he thought, huh?” Holding up his hands he offers you a weak smile. “I’m gonna go. Call me if any new leads come up, yeah boss?”

Kandomere grunts, earning him look of surprise form his colleague before the red haired man shuffles quickly away. With your heart in your mouth, you’re glued to the spot, unable to contemplate what happens next. Thankfully, Kandomere takes charge. He’s watching you intently, reading your reactions, and for once he seems happy not to provoke.

“From you expression I can guess that was as unexpected for you as it was me, mi alma.” Closing your mouth you nod mutely. “I’m sorry, I—” he blinks slowly and holds out his hand to gesture at you, “you look beautiful, and this,” he turns to the table, “I am seldom overwhelmed, but walking
in tonight to this, to you, I was not prepared. You, ah mi hechicera, you are—“ he’s smiling as he turns back. “You have cooked and it smells wonderful. Shall we eat and I can tell you about the progress I have made at work?”

He’s steering you into calmer waters and you couldn’t be more thankful. Seizing his lifeline you scurry into the kitchen. “I hope you like chorizo and chicken risotto, it’s not my best dish but at least it’s something.” You’re babbling but it helps push the situation back to the realms of what you’re comfortable with.

“I’m sure it will be wonderful.”

You serve the meal, and sitting down opposite Kandomere, empty your wineglass in one fell swoop. Something tells you, you’re going to need a lot more wine and a lot more time to douse the blaze he’s started in your blood.

Damn that elf! One way or another, he knew just how to get under your skin.
Dinner was awkward and incredibly tense. You’re quiet, too quiet, and Kandomere is doing all he can to coax the conversation along but it isn’t enough. Shame had stolen your appetite and you’d, sprung up from the table as soon as he’d finished eating, busying yourself with the task of clearing away so as to avoid him. Only everything is clean now and you’ve nothing left to use as an excuse. Nothing to hide behind as he tries and fails to get you talking.

He knows you’re trying to distance yourself. Of course he does. You’re stiff and formal when you do answer his many questions and his exasperation hasn’t gone unnoticed. There’s nothing you can do about it though, nothing will erase the humiliation or disgrace of your behaviour. What the hell had possessed you to kiss him back? His actions you could understand, he’d been upfront about his growing feelings for you, but you? You had no excuse. And what if Montehugh hadn’t shown up? How far would it have gone? Would he have stopped it? Would you?

Kandomere is swirling whisky around his glass, watching you from where he’s perched on the corner of the couch. His metallic eyes following your every move. Having packed away the candles and placemats you’re now hovering by the dinning table trying desperately to think of reasonable grounds to avoid him.

“Please, Y/n, this isn’t helping anything.”

You can’t even look at him. Wringing your hands together and chewing on your bottom lip, you feel an anxiety attack fast approaching. Your heart is beating too fast and your vision wavers. What the hell have you done?

From his corner of the room you hear Kandomere sigh heavily and imagine his brows pinching together. “Mi alma, I assure you I will not forget myself again. What I did was wrong and I will apologise as many times as it takes for you to hear me. I know my actions were unforgivable, I know I shouldn’t have allowed my impulses to drive me, but I am truly and sincerely sorry. I never meant to upset you.”

Listening to him apologise, yet again, only adds insult to injury and causes your face to heat up with humiliation. “Stop! It wasn’t your fault. Please, just forget it.” Grasping the edge of the table for stability you bite your tongue to stop anything else accidentally pouring out of your loose mouth. You’d gotten yourself into enough trouble tonight, you didn’t need your runaway thoughts adding to it.

Kandomere sighs again. “I will drop the matter if you join me and we can talk properly about what we discovered today.” He’d brought up his work day over dinner but you’d been too self absorbed to listen. You realise you’re still too caught up in your own head to listen. The anxiety eating away at you was claiming all your attention as you tried to fend it off.

“Y/n—“
“I’m sorry,” you mumble, making a break towards your room.

“I want you to come to the office with me tomorrow.”

You halt, stopping dead in your tracks to finally look at him. He nods, answering your unspoken question.

“There is much to do. We were able to follow up some of the leads we acquired from Alexo, I’d like you to take a look at what we’ve found, see how it matches with your knowledge of the Vegas coven. You’ll be joining us as a consultant.”

His plan has succeeded. You’re no longer obsessing about what you’d done or the impending meltdown, instead you were thinking of the possibilities his proposal offered.

“What if I’m recognised?”

“Not possible, Montehugh has been running extensive checks on all our personnel since the incident. Any deemed suspicious have been moved to other cities and are under inspection. We are monitoring our people very closely.”

“But—“

“You will be stationed in the conference room near my office. I will be close by at all times. Extra precautions have been put into place for your safety. I have not come to this decision lightly, Y/n. There is someone coming by first thing to change your hair, your closet contains everything you could possibly need, and frankly I believe it will improve your state of mind to get out, so I won’t take no for an answer.” He stares you down, a glint in his eye almost daring you to argue, not that you have that kind of strength in you right now.

You’re positive you’ll be recognised, despite his best efforts to disguise you. The Inferni were not ones to give up, especially when it came to rogue bright’s who had stolen a wand. It was dangerous for sure but you had to leave this apartment at some point and at least in the MTF office you’d have some semblance of safety, at least compared to out there, on the streets. Plus, more people equaled less alone time Kandomere, which at this point was one hell of a selling point.

“Okay.”

His face lights up. “What, no argument?” He teases with a lopsided smile.

You shake your head, refusing to engage. “No. I’d better go to bed, early start and all that.” Your feet are moving before he can reply and you are almost in your room with the door closed before he calls out.

“You’re not sleeping in my bed?” There’s a husky undertone to his question that makes your heart lurch sickeningly.

Grabbing the door you whisper a quick, “No.” before closing it firmly, shutting out the elf and the memories of your misdemeanour.

Changing quickly you dive into bed and pull the sheets around you, trying to keep your thoughts locked on the oncoming day rather than where they keep trying to go. As you close your eyes, you’re once again surrounded by his scent, and automatically you remember how it felt to be pressed against him, yielding to his kiss. It’s only as you inhale deeply, attempting to settle your nerves that you realise the bed smells of him.
“Fucking idiot!” Of course it does, you’d swapped rooms last night and he’d slept in this bed. Tossing the sheet away and flipping the pillow does little to help and with a groan you realise that once again there’s no escaping your blue haired headache.

The stylist had looked down her perfect, button nose at you with an expression that did little to hide her disgust. You’d expected her to walk out when she’d realised that it wasn’t Kandomere she’d be working on but she’d stayed, offering him a tight smile. Her deft hands had skilfully and gently styled your hair but the Övüsi she spat under her breath warned you to stay absolutely still. This was clearly an elf who did not acknowledge racial equality.

“Finished.” She’d hissed, curling her lip in repulsion before walking out of your room and leaving you to it. Although she’d been openly hostile towards you, she’d been professional enough to style your usually unruly hair elegantly. For once it felt soft and silky. As you examined her handiwork in the mirror you were awed at how it fell exactly into place, regardless of how you moved or flicked it. What shocked you the most however, was the change it made to your whole appearance. Begrudgingly you had to admit that Kandomere had been right, you hardly recognised yourself so how anyone else was supposed to, was beyond you.

Stepping out of your room, you checked to make sure the coast was clear. It was bad enough having to face Kandomere without the extra pressure of making small talk with the stylist who obviously hated you. Thankfully she was gone. You found Kandomere finishing his coffee in the kitchen. His briefcase laid open on the island and he appeared to be organising some paperwork. You note that he’s dressed in another suit you haven’t seen before and that the gorget is still missing. Glancing up he blinked slowly as you came into his line of sight. He swallows thickly, his Adams apple bobbing in his throat before he shakes his head.

“Fóllame, eres hermosa.”

You frown an automatic response to his reply. “You know I don’t understand you.”

Snapping his briefcase latches closed he smiles. “I was simply commenting on your hair. It looks lovely. You look lovely.”

Tugging at the hem of your top, you squirm under his gaze. Compliments are not safe ground, not after last night, you need to move this along. “Shall we get going?”

Kandomere begins to collect his belongings as he hums. “Okay, mi alma, let’s go over this one last time. You are Y/n Rubin, a specialist in Inferni recruitment behaviour, drafted in from Vegas. You reached out to us after the recent trouble and I brought you in to profile the kind of victim they are most likely to pursue.

“You’ve already told me this a thousand times this morning,” you gripe, “I know what I’m saying.”

“If you get into trouble—“

“Find you, yes I know.”

He glares over the last of his coffee. “Y/n—“
Seeing a chance to rile him you shake your head and huff. “Please, for the sake of professionalism, call me Miss Rubin.”

Your jibe does not go down well. The clench of his jaw alerts you of his annoyance and in a perverse way it calms your nerves. A pissed off Kandomere was much easier for you to deal with than a caring or overbearing one.

“Come. We’re going to be late.”

The MTF building is an impressive maze of hallways, offices, holding cells and conference rooms. You’re shown around by a young agent whose warm brown eyes follow your every move. He’d been there to greet you and hadn’t missed his boss’ unusual cordiality when it came to your parting of ways. Since then he’s been overly fascinated with everything you say or do.

“And this is where you’ll be,” he says with a grin, showing you into a large dimly lit room. He strolls around the conference table and begins pulling at the cord to open the blinds. “I’m just down that way,” he points to the left. “And Special Agent Kandomere is directly opposite.”

You give him a polite nod of acknowledgement. “What about Agent Montehugh?”

“Montehugh—?”

“Someone call for me?” As if on cue the red headed giant pops his head through the door and grins. “Y/n! Great to see you,” his eyes flick over to the other agent before returning to meet yours. “Hope your flight over was better than ours, turbulence man, what a fuckin’ bitch.”

You chuckle. It was obvious he was talking from experience and you wonder how often he’d been forced to fly out to Vegas during this case. “It was fine, thanks. But now I’m here, you wanna show me what you’ve got?”

“No coffee first?”

You can’t help the genuine smile he draws out of you, there’s just something about the large gruff man you find so amiable. “Nope, let’s dive right in, I’m itching to get started.”

“Fine,” he scowls at the young agent, “Ford, go to the coffee cart down the street. I’ll have my usual and don’t forget Kandomere’s; cream, no sugar.”

The door opens a notch wider and the elf strides into the room. “Miss Rubin takes hers black with one sugar,” he’s looking at you as he talks, “there’s a lot to go through, you’ll be glad for the caffeine.”

You bristle under his authoritative tone but hold your tongue. Getting into an argument less than half an hour after entering his workplace would not look good, nor would it encourage him to bring you back and despite the constant lies, it’s actually nice to be talking to humans again.

“The files?” You ask, raising a brow.

“In my office, follow me.” Kandomere smirks, knowing full well that whilst you’re here, you have to do what he says.
His office is everything you’d come to expect. Large windows, sleek furniture and a shelves full of ancient looking tomes. Taking a breath you close your eyes briefly. The room smells of books and leather, and it’s pleasantly calming. Kandomere leads you in, sitting behind his desk and pointing to one of the chairs opposite. As you fold yourself into it he reaches for the first file and passes it over.

“Alexo mentioned an elf named Krien. Surveillance from the library where you met Mia brought this male to our attention. He appears to have a human companion who, like Mia, is looking for roommates.”

The file is full of grainy photos of the library you recognise well. Flicking through the images, a slow chill creeps up your spine and you shudder. If you shut your eyes and concentrate, you can almost hear the background chatter and clunking air con units that went hand in hand with every visit to the library.

Shaking the memory away, you point at a woman in half the photos. “That’s Claire. She’s one of the librarians. I never saw her with an elf but she did talk about her boyfriend, Kieran.”

“Hmm,” Montehugh grumbles, “Kieran, Krien, sort of similar, right?”

Kandomere stands and moves around to position himself beside you, looking down over your shoulder. “It could be a coincidence but better to be safe than sorry.”

Montehugh takes out his notepad and pen. “I’ll inform Agent May to add her to the watch list.”

The buzzing of a phone sounds and Kandomere returns to his chair. Collecting his cell from the desk he eyes the call display with displeasure.

Reading the situation Montehugh quickly stands and fastens his jacket. “C’mon Y/n, let’s go see where Ford got to with that coffee.” He catches your elbow, gently encouraging you out of the chair, towards the door. “Why don’t we head to my office, you can tell me what you know of this Claire there.”

“Sure.” You fall into step beside him as he begins chatting about the various departments you’ll likely encounter. As you reach the end of the hall, you’re about to turn the corner when Kandomere exits his office. His mouth is set in a grim line and his eyes are hard. He spares you a quick glance, nods once at Montehugh and then marches in the opposite directions.

“Guess it’s just you an’ me kid.” Montehugh smiles but it doesn’t quite reach his eyes. “Now where the hell is that boy with our drinks?”

Chapter End Notes

Translations

“Fóllame, eres hermosa.” Fuck me, you're beautiful.
Lunchtime rolls around and there’s still no sign of the elf in charge. What ever had called him away must be something very important. Stretching out your legs you look across at Agent Ford and his co worker Agent Ross. Both men have grown on you during your time with them and despite them being a little younger than you, you’d managed to find common ground to keep the conversation flowing nicely.

You’re finding that your unique insight into the Vegas Inferni coven is actually helping them identify possible victims and collaborators but it’s not all case chatter. The two agents are funny and charming and unlike when you’re with Kandomere, you don’t feel the need to watch everything you say. Of course you still have to be careful but most of the personal questions they’ve asked have been perfectly safe to answer honestly and you’ve found it refreshing to interact again without suspicion or guilt clouding the conversation. You’ve not laughed this hard in forever and you feel a little of your old self has found its way back.

Over lunch in the conference room, which Ross had brought up from the coffee stand, the conversation had turned to Kandomere and Montehugh, and both men had been fairly guarded until you mentioned your discomfort around their blue haired boss. That’s when the flood gates had opened.

“I always thought he had such a tight lid on his emotions, I mean, we’re taught at the academy to reign them in but he used to take that to a whole new level.” Ross mumbles around a mouthful of bagel.

“Unless he was pissed,” Ford interjected, waving his sandwich around, “he never tries to hide that.”

It takes a second for your head to catch up with what’s been said but when it does your interest is piqued. “Hold up,” you tilt your head questioningly and push your salad aside, “what do you mean used to? I’ve always thought he’s pretty hard to read, has something changed?”

Ross puts down his food, folds his arms on the table and leans towards you with wide green eyes. “You didn’t hear about what happened to the elf they dragged back from Vegas?”

Your answer is written all over your face and the two agents share a conspiring grin.

“Oh, Y/n, you’re not going to believe what he did.” Ford chuckles running a hand through his blonde hair. “I mean I knew he had it in him but, man, to see it first hand. That’s some scary ass shit.”

Your gaze flickers from each of the men as you wait, impatiently, for them to fill you in. “Well?”

You press when neither of them start talking. “What happened?”

Ross checks the door is shut before lowering his voice. “What do you know about the Vegas operation?”

Narrowing your eyes, you absently chew on your bottom lip whilst trying to decipher exactly which operation he’s talking about. “I assume you mean the one a couple of nights ago.”

Their excited smiles grow wider and slowly Ross nods. “You hear about the prisoner they caught?”
At that your mouth goes dry. Taking a gulp of coffee you meet Ross’ gaze and whisper, “Alexo?” Gripping tight to your disposable cup you shift in your seat to disguise the shudder his memory sends hurtling down your spine.

“You hear about the medical team that escorted him back?” Ford asks, finishing his sandwich, crumpling the wrapper up to toss into the trash can behind you.

“I— No, why what happened?”

The two agents look at you, their faces smug. “Apparently the boss had a personal vendetta with this particular elf and wasn’t shy about it.”

Your brows drop and you sit back in the comfortable chair as you try to piece together the fragments they’ve given you. Alexo needed a medical team and Kandomere—

“Oh shit!” Your jaw drops.

Ford laughs and Ross smacks his hand on the table jubilantly. “Bingo! The prisoner took one hell of a beating from Special Agent K, I heard that they had to pull him off to stop him killing the other elf, only it’s weird because no one seems to know what made him snap.”

Ford huffs, “I call bullshit. Montehugh knows, he just won’t say.”

“I dunno man, he seemed just as shocked by it all as the rest of us.”

“Nah, he knows.”

You leave them to argue amongst themselves as you try to remember exactly how Kandomere had looked when he’d returned home that night. He’d been slightly ruffled but nothing that would suggest almost beating someone to death. Oh but you hoped it was true!

“How sure are you? I mean stories get exaggerated all the time, how can you be so sure it wasn’t self defence or—“

“Nope, a buddy of mine was there,” Ross quirks an eyebrow smugly, “saw the whole thing. Said the boss man went feral and tried to rip the prisoners throat out with his teeth. Wish I’d been there though, man, what a show to miss huh? Still I’ve seen the mess he made, that elf don’t look so pretty anymore.”

You’re hardly able to hear him over the pounding of your heart. “How’s Ale— The Prisoner now?”

“Ask Montehugh, he’s been conducting the interviews.”

Ford drains the last of his drink and drops the cup on the table with a soft thud. “Well, they aren’t gonna let Special Agent Kandomere anywhere near the prisoner again, are they? Not when he threatened to finish what he started.”

A rush of gratitude surges through you as the Agents continue to discuss their boss’ volatile behaviour. Unlike them, you knew why he’d done it, you’d heard it from his very mouth as he’d held you tightly and confessed. ‘I broke the rules for you.’ You’d assumed he meant by not bringing you in, not that he’d virtually killed the elf who had tortured you.

You’re gripped by the urge to see him, to thank him, to— to what? You don’t know exactly, you just know that you have to see him now. Pushing your chair back violently you mutter an apology to the agents. Using Montehugh as an excuse you rush out of the room and across the hall to
Kandomere’s office. The door is shut so you knock once before trying the handle. It’s locked.

Minutes later you crash into Montehugh’s cramped and cluttered office, only to run face first into the Italian suited chest of the very elf you’re looking for. His hands land on your waist as he steadies you, concern etched into his resolute eyes.

“Y/n? What’s wrong?”

“Kandomere!” You’re breathless exclamation only adds to his concern.

Pulling you further into the room he glances at his subordinate. “Ulysses, can you give us a moment please.”

Montehugh wastes no time in vacating the office and closing the door firmly behind him.

“Mi alma, what’s wrong? What’s happened?”

Realising your mistake you backtrack quickly. “No, nothing’s wrong, everything’s fine, I just, I heard something and—” you inhale deep and slide your gaze to his. “Did you attack Alexo?”

He blinks, his hands flexing on your hips. “There is a silly rumour—”

Grabbing his chin you force him to look at you. “Don’t lie to me, Blue.”

“Bien, el rumor es—”

“Kandomere!”

His hands twitch and impulsively he pulls you closer to wrap his arms around you. It’s a bold move given that you’re in his workplace but he doesn’t seem to care. He doesn’t stop until you’re flush against his body from stomach to chest and you know you should mind, but you don’t. Quite the opposite in fact.

The position you’re in means you can no longer see his face, instead you’re getting an up close and personal view of his throat and you watch as he swallows nervously.

“I have acted rashly on more than one occasion when it comes to you.” He dips his head to speak lowly into your ear. “I have apologised for my indiscretions but this time, I stand by my actions.”

“So you did it?” You don’t realise your hands have moved until you’re grabbing his waist under his jacket.

“I checked his phone and saw what he’d done to you.” His breathing is morphing into angry pants and his fingers dig into your skin. “It was not a conscious act, I’m afraid I lost the ability to think rationally. I wanted to hurt him, to make him pay, to kill him.”

Rather than the fear his actions had instilled in his agents, you’re experiencing an overwhelming sense of security and gratitude at his confession. Turning your face away you lay your cheek against his shoulder and slip your hands around his back.

“Thank you.” A tear slides from the corner of your eye as the implications of what he’d done sink in. He’d protected you by incarcerating Alexo, he’d exacted the revenge you’d dreamt of when you’d been at Alexo’s mercy and he’d done it all knowing how it could damage his career.

For you. The words he’d said are even more heavily weighted now but somehow it doesn’t scare you like it had. Knowing what he was prepared to sacrifice to make things better for you
diminished the bad blood you’d been harbouring.

He nuzzles closer, burying his face in the crook of your neck and for a long moment you simply embrace one another. Enveloped in his arms, your breathing slows and your heart calms. With the elf holding you, you know you’re safe, that not even the Inferni could touch you because he wouldn’t let them. He’d proven himself without ever meaning for you to find out. He’d put your needs above his.

Inhaling his cologne you turn and mimic his actions, hiding your face in his velvety hair to once again repeat your thanks. His thick arms contract as he laughs softly and leans against you heavily.

“No hay nada que no haga para protegerte, mi alma.”

And for once his Spanish doesn’t annoy you. You smile as his musical reply fills the room, rolling your eyes at his obvious attempt at provocation.

“One day I will learn your language, and then what will you do?” You tease.

He huffs out another laugh, “Speak Övüsi instead.”

With a playful groan you rest your forehead against his shoulder and tut. “Smartass.”

You’re comfortable standing in the messy office, joking with and clinging to Kandomere. For once there’s no darkness to spoil the moment, no underlying gloom to wreck the tenderness of friendship. It’s nice. No, it’s more than nice, it feels damn good. Taking a cleansing breath you ease away from his powerful frame with your smile still in place.

“I’d better get back, I kinda ran out on Agents Ford and Ross. They’ll be wondering what the hell is wrong.”

His eyebrows raise and he crosses his arms over his chest as a tiny smirk plays on his lips. “So they’re the office gossips?”

“Hey! Leave them alone, they’re already wary enough of their scary boss.” You point a finger at his chest which he snatches and uses to pull you back towards him. Raising your hand to his mouth he kisses the back of it and winks.

“I was actually thinking of thanking them, it would appear they did me a favour.”

You manoeuvre your hand out of his and rest it on your hip. Pursing your lips to hide the grin that threatens to break free you tilt your head and take a step backwards. “Special Agent Kandomere, this is a workplace, I’d appreciate it if you’d treat it as such.”

He leans back to rest against Montehugh’s over flowing desk, tapping his fingers on the cheap wood next to his hips. “Is that so, Miss Rubin, is that so?” His eyes darken and the salacious look he gives you knocks your witty retort right out of your head. “Then perhaps you can spare me some time, alone, in my office to discuss your less than professional behaviour. Gossiping with my subordinates, about their superior no less, is a very serious offence.” His tongue darts out and licks his bottom lip slowly.

Is it you or did it just get rather warm in Montehugh’s confined office? Straightening your top you drop your gaze to the floor and swallow. You know he’s joking but your head is full of sordid fantasies of the many different ways he could punish you in his plush office and it’s causing a blaze to light up your now crimson face.
Oh shit, your mind groans conjuring up the memory of him ravishing you, what fresh hell is this?

“You’d better be getting back, Miss Rubin, my agents will no doubt be anxious if I keep you too long. After all, I am the scary boss, am I not?”

Your eyes flick up and meet his, and although his tone is light and joking his gaze is heated and full of dark promise.

You don’t think before you speak. The soft, “Yes sir.” is out of your mouth before you know it and you only realise the sexual connotations when his pupils blow wide and his fingers grip the desk.

Unable to take it back, you turn on your heal and make a break for it, all the while wondering how you’d managed to outwit the MTF, Inferno and Shield of Light when clearly your brain was a malfunctioning mess.

“Fucking, yes sir,” you grumble, smacking your palm to your forehead in disbelief. Reaching the conference room, you straighten your clothes and smooth your hair, attempting to collect your composure but no matter what you try, you can’t forget his reaction to those two little words.

Yes sir.

And if you’re being totally honest, nor do you want to.

No hay nada que no haga para protegerte, mi alma - There’s nothing I won’t do to protect you, my soul.
Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

One minute it’s a quarter after two, the next Ross and Ford are closing their files and cleaning away their stuff. A quick check of the time shows you it’s almost half past five and you’re surprised at how fast the afternoon went.

“I can see why they brought you in, Y/n.” You look up to meet the green eyes and awed smile of Agent Ross. “You’re good at what you do.”

The work had been much more enjoyable than you’d expected and your enthusiasm had shone through. Flipping your own folder closed you wrinkle your nose, “It helps that you two are on the ball, there’s no way I would have got through half the files without you.”

“Don’t sell yourself short, you did great work, accept the compliment already,” Ford laughs, clapping his coworker hard on the shoulder, “especially when it comes from this one. He can’t stand being besting at anything so if he’s saying you did good, you did good.”

You push wearily to your feet and roll out your stiff shoulders. You’d been hunched over the giant desk all afternoon and now you were paying the price. A wince crosses your features as you discover a knot in the muscles at the nape of your neck and despite cocking your head one way and then the other, it refuses to work free.

“I know that look,” Ford points at you as he crosses the expensive carpet to reach the door. In stark contrast to the impressively grand room, his suit is wrinkled and his eyes have lost their shine. He’s tired too. “That’s why I hate being stuck behind a desk too long, everything seizes.”

“You’re not wrong.” You grumble, reaching around to massage the awkward spot.

Ross tosses you a sympathetic smile as he shoves the files under his arm and Ford opens the door, waving you through.

“I’d suggest a hot bath, does wonders for shit like that.”

“You talking from experience?” Ford asks wearing a smirk.

“What if I am?” Ross fires back, waiting for you both to exit before pulling the door shut. Out in the polished hallway you can see directly into Kandomere’s grand office and you watch as he writes at his desk. He’s all poise and grace with his jacket off and his waistcoat hugging his chest. Quickly you look away, not wanting the agents to see you ogling their boss.

“I’m comfortable enough in my sexuality to admit it,” Ross continues thankfully oblivious to your actions. He turns to you with a smile in his friendly moss coloured eyes and throws you a wink, “besides I bet Y/n is no stranger to sinking in—“

“Agent Ross, a word.” Kandomere’s bark makes you startle and you’re not alone.

“Oh shit!” Ford mouths, backing down the hallway and shrugging helplessly at his colleague. He offers you a tentative wave before hurrying around the corner.

“Miss Rubin, don’t go anywhere, I’d like to speak to you too.”
Your heart stutters at Kandomere’s authoritative tone dragging your attention back to the elf in charge. Seeing him in his office, commanding his agents, frees the tight lid you’d been trying to keep on your wayward thoughts. There’s no denying his appeal, not now. His strong jaw, full lips and haunting eyes would be enough to bring you to your knees but without the body he insists on wrapping in expensive cloths. Underneath the flash suits, the elf is built. But it wasn’t his physicality’s causing your mind to wander. Since learning exactly what he’d done for you the scales had well and truly tipped in his favour. You’d seen him in a new light and his compassion, loyalty and warmth towards you had opened up a whole new avenue of feelings.

As you and agent Ross shuffle into his office, he doesn’t stop what he’s doing. With his head bowed and his concentration on the paperwork he points to the seat opposite him and offhandedly mutters, “Miss Rubin, take a seat please.”

You can’t help the thought that pops into your head. Somewhere in the back of your mind you register that what you’re about to do could be monumentally stupid but you do it anyway. You poke the bear.

“Yes sir.”

A deadly glare is sent your way as Kandomere leans back in his leather chair and steeples his fingers together in his lap. His eyes narrow and his jaw clenches.

“Agent Ross,” his focus moves but his gaze flits back to you more than once. “I would like a written report of today’s progress, on my desk, by nine am.”

You watch as Ross deflates, his shoulders slumping and spine rounding. “Of course, I’ll get to it right away.”

Kandomere nods curtly before staring pointedly at the doorway. “Close the door as you leave.

Ross is quick to follow orders. He doesn’t even attempt to say anything to you as he scrambles to leave. Shaking your head you wait for the click that signifies privacy before you speak. “That was a bit harsh wasn’t it? The guy’s been working his ass off all day, couldn’t you have given him a break? If you want an update so badly I’ll happily give it you.”

Once again you internally cringe at your choice of phrase when Kandomere finds amusement in it. One eyebrow quirks and a pinched smile draws his lips forward into a pout.

“Oh shut up,” you grumble, “you know what I mean.”

Urgh. Maybe poking the bear was the wrong choice, especially when his mind was so razor sharp.

He dips his head and grins. “Indeed I do, y me encantaría que me lo dieras.”

You glower at him before throwing your hands up. “What did you want anyway?”

His eyes sweep over his desk and the corner of his mouth twitches. “I refuse to answer that on grounds of self incrimination.”

It takes you a moment to catch his flirty drift, and as you stare in confusion he offers you a wide smile. As understanding dawns, you close your mouth and raise your chin. So he wants to play dirty?

Fine!
“Whatever.” You mutter, feigning annoyance and rolling your eyes. Shifting the chair, you turn to the side, pointedly ignoring the elf. Sitting tall you arch your back a little and reaching into your hair to drag your nails over your scalp, you sigh at the sensation. As your tresses falls back into place you move your hand across the back of your neck to rub at the sore spot. Kneading the knot you bite your lip and emit a small groan, at the same time lengthening your neck to the side, exposing your throat to the elf. He wasn’t the only one who could hit below the belt.

Unfortunately now that you’ve altered positions you can only see him in your peripheral vision but the way he suddenly stopped moving indicates he’s watching your little show. Risking a glance at your ‘prey’ you freeze in place and drink in his appearance.

Darkened, greedy eyes sweep the inverted curve of your spine and follow the delicate movement of your fingers until they come to rest on the skin of your neck. A small crease furrows his brows in concentration and his nostrils flare. His enticing lips part slightly and you’re rewarded with glimpse of his tongue as he runs it along his top teeth. The teeth you would love to have nipping at your throat right now.

You inhale sharply, reflexively licking your lips. The elf is temptation wrapped in a tailored suit and you desperately want a taste. Once again your brain throws the memories of last night at you and you find your arousal growing stronger. What had started as a game to tease him had become a dangerous foray against your overloaded senses. You’re surrounded by his intoxicating scent and as your eyes close you’re able to imagine it’s his hand working your tired muscles instead of your own.

“You are making it very difficult for me to keep my promise, mi alma, though I suspect that’s your intention.” His gruff voice drips with lust.

With great effort you ignore the fire that is blossoming in your lower stomach. “And what promise would that be—” his gaze locks onto yours as if he knows what you’re about to say, “sir!”

The sexual tension in the room is heavy, strained and intoxicating. You’re feeding off each others emotions and the electricity flowing between you his heady. His gleaming eyes roam your entire body and you feel naked beneath his heated gaze. But it’s not enough. Your blood is calling for him, singing in such a way that your whole body buzzes with a desire so potent you might never sate it. You want him.

His lips curl, flashing those dangerous teeth as a low, breathy snarl and a slew of Övüsi falls from his mouth. He clutches the arm rests of his chair tight, his blunt nails digging into the leather and it’s almost like he’s physically holding himself back. He looks wild and dangerous, and sexy as all hell.

Knowing you have an affect on such a beautiful creature bolsters your confidence and gives you the courage to pull yourself out of your seat and lean across the expanse of his desk. You’re stretched as far over as you can go without falling when you repeat your question.

“What promise?”

You’re pushing, testing the level of restraint you’re just not sure if it’s his or yours thats under scrutiny. As you come to a halt, his jaw flexes and there’s a change in his body language. He puffs out his chest, sitting straight to look down on you.

“Is this a game to you?” His eyes flash angrily. “Do you enjoy toying with my feelings?”

Your brows pull down and you’re thrown into a sea of confusion at his sudden turn in mood. How
can he possibly mistake your intentions?

Except the real question is why wouldn’t he? He has no idea of the epiphany you’d had this afternoon, he wasn’t privy to the inner workings of your tangled mind. It had taken even you by surprise so was it any wonder he was jumping to the wrong conclusion.

In a moment of madness you lunge, grasping his tie to drag him towards you. Despite his strength you’re able to move him easily and without a single sane thought in your head you press your mouth against his. It’s an uncomfortable position for you, leaning your weight on one hand whilst your other grasps his tie but as you kiss his lips, your aches fade away. You no longer feel the knot in your neck, the tension in your legs or the strain on your arm.

The kiss is muted and a little hesitant with neither of you daring to push the other too far but as you both relax into it the uncertainty fades. It becomes more like a first kiss should be; sensual, gentle, sweet. You move in sync, slowly learning your shared natural rhythm as his tongue smooths gently over yours, not searching, not demanding just caressing softly. It’s a far cry from your actual first kiss and whilst the passion simmers under the surface, this isn’t about uncontrolled lust, this is about opening up to one another.

Reluctantly you’re forced to pull back when you can no longer ignore the burn or tremors in your muscles. On shaking legs you fold yourself back into your seat and admire his glazed eyes that leisurely blink open.

“**I’m not toying,**” you confess quietly, “**though I will admit I enjoy playing this game with you.**”

He is looking your way but you’re not entirely sure he’s listening. His gaze is fixed somewhere in the middle distance and his mouth is slack. If you didn’t know better you’d say he looks dazed.

“**You’ve done things, Kandomere,**” that captures his attention so you hurry on, “**things to protect me, to help me. Things I only just found out about and it’s changed how I feel about you. For you.**”

A light goes on behind his eyes. “**You aren’t trying to punish me?**”

Pain lances through your chest at his understandable question you stand up to pace. You’d been hostile and nasty, lashing out at him when he’d tried over and over again to apologise and what had he done? Continued to bend over backwards to accommodate you, to make you feel comfortable in his home, to protect you. You are the monster here, you are the bad guy, no wonder his first thought is that you’re trying to play with his feelings.

Running your hand over your face it comes to rest at the base of your throat. The rise of emotions bubbling in your chest is choking you but no amount of tugging at your neckline will ease the pressure.

“**I’m not. I was, I mean I tried, but I was wrong and I’m sorry. You didn’t deserve the way I treated you.**” You’re unseeing as you resume your pacing, lost to the memories in your minds eye.

“**Don’t apologise, Y/n, you had no cause to believe me, no reason to take me at my word.**” He’s in front of you now, snaking his arms around you. “**I understand your inherent distrust, it’s what has kept you alive. Don’t apologise for that. Never apologise for surviving.**”

The safety and comfort he exudes calms your frayed nerves and lessons the noise in your head. Without thinking about it your hands run up his torso to rest against his chest. “**I’m sorry I was such a bitch.**”

His answering chuckle is reassuring. “**Never let it be said I run from a challenge. Now, I’m just**
about finished here, what do you say we head home?”

Home. The word holds a nice ring but it’s not your home, you didn’t have one any more. Inhaling a deep breath, you push that particular issue aside, you don’t have the energy to deal with anything else today. Looking up into his crystal clear eyes you smile.

“Yes please, I’m exhausted.”

“Take out?” He cocks an eyebrow as he releases you.

“Sounds amazing.”

“I have one last thing to finish, why don’t you go collect your things and I’ll meet you by the elevator.” He waits for your nod before returning to his desk to rummage through the scattered reports. Silently you take your leave.

You’re tired, wrung out and about ready to collapse into bed. It had been another testing day and you just hope that sleep claims you before the oncoming emotional storm closes in. Today was a good day, the best in a long time, but you can’t shake the guilt, displacement and ever present anxiety. It was creeping behind you, following your every step, just waiting for the opportunity to pounce.

Grabbing your coat and bag from the locker you’d been assigned, you try your best to ignore the sickening sense of foreboding, and concentrate instead on how best to right your wrongdoings with Kandomere. With any luck that might earn you some good karma points and you won’t feel quite so shitty about yourself.

By the time you’re ready, he’s already waiting by the bank of elevators, and you automatically smile as he turns to greet you.

“Ready?” He asks, tucking his hands into his trouser pockets.

“God yes. Let’s go.”

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

"y me encantaría que me lo dieras" - and I would love for you to give it to me
Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Summary

NSFW

Chapter Notes

Warnings:

Language and SMUT - completely NSFW

It’s another gorgeous LA night and you’re taking full advantage of the beautiful weather and views. Relaxing outside Kandomere’s bedroom, you let the peaceful tranquility wash over you and carry your mind away. Dinner had been comfortable and you’d chatted together about your experience at his workplace. He’d been attentive and asked questions, and you’d been open and forthcoming. It made a very pleasant change.

He’d excused himself after dessert, heading for a shower to wash the day away and you’d found yourself outside, wandering the terrace until you’d walked the width of the building to this, your favourite corner. Looking out over the city you soak up the last of the sun as it makes its descent. Burnt orange rays softly hit the buildings and cast long, impressive shadows on the ground. It’s calming and allows you a brief respite from your many woes.

The opening of the door alerts you to Kandomere’s presence moments before he positions himself behind you and gingerly runs his palms down your arms.

“Mi alma, tu nuevo deseo de estar cerca de mí llena mi corazón hasta el borde.”

Biting back a smile you roll your eyes. “I know you only do that to annoy me.”

He laughs softly as his hands find your waist and he steps marginally closer. “What on earth are you talking about, querida?”

“Fine, play dumb but you don’t fool me, Blue.” Your smile breaks through. It had been like this since the office, easy and sweet, you could get used to it.

He sighs happily as his chin rests on your shoulder. “Is everything okay?”

“Actually, I was just thinking about how good it is.”

“You don’t mind me touching you like this?”

His hesitant question has your heart swelling and leaves you feeling warm. “No, I don’t mind it at all. In fact, I’d be quite happy if you wanted to touch me like this—” Taking his hands in yours, you cross your arms over your chest so that he’s pulled flush against your back, hugging you from
behind.

“What a coincidence,” he breathes, nuzzling into the crook of your neck, “because I’m quite happy to touch you like this.”

Together you enjoy the sunset, the heat from his body soaking through your clothes, the weight of his arms keeping you close. It’s nice, no it’s more than that, its serene. You can feel your soul gluing itself back together as your heart floods with contentment.

“Thank you, for everything, Kandomere.”

He constricts his arms, crushing you to him as his lips press against your pulse point and he murmurs, “¿qué magia Bright has echado sobre mí que me hace tan obediente a tu voluntad?”

Your heart jumps as his soft lips caress your skin and your breath catches.

“Creo que haría cualquier cosa por ti.”

Craning your neck you attempt to look at him. “What are you hiding from me, Blue? What are you saying?”

“I am not hiding anything, Y/n, I am simply speaking my native language, it’s habit.”

You don’t believe him for a second but you let it go, all the while wishing he would continue his exploration of your neck. “Whatever, you keep your secrets and I’ll keep mine.”

“And what secrets would they be?”

With effort you turn, which isn’t easy when he refuses to relinquish his grip but totally worth it when you find him bare chested. Gently dancing your fingertips up the planes of his pale chest you meet his burning gaze. “Is it okay for me to touch you”— He cuts you off before you can even finish.

“However and whenever you like, mi belleza,” he states with an enthusiasm that has you chuckling. “Now, I believe you wanted to tell me a secret?”

You are transfixed by the smile which lights his face. It’s playful and full of affection. If his agents saw this side of him you’re sure they’d assume he’d been possessed. His silvery eyes roam over your face, periodically flitting back to meet your gaze. They’re captivating and you can’t help but stare. The elf is beautiful.

“A secret?” You breathe softly, moving your hands up to his shoulders. Nibbling your bottom lip you laugh as you think about the only secret you can share. Shyly you look up through your lashes, a blush dusting your cheeks. “Okay, I’ll tell you a secret. I kinda spent a lot of the day fantasising about my new elf boss.”

He stiffens in your embrace, eyes widening marginally before they fall shut. Hot hands grip you tight as words roll huskily off his tongue. “Mi alma, mi corazón se rinde un poco más con cada palabra que dices. Por favor no te detengas.”

Heat unfurls in your belly at his baritone, throaty tenor. The sensation expands, rushing through your veins until it permeates your entire body. You swallow thickly. “What does that mean?”

He looks down at you, his piercing gaze causing a spike in your heart rate. “It means,” he leans his face closer, “I need to kiss you.”
Your eyes close of their own accord as you submit without thought. His mouth finds you wanting and eager as he dips down to capture your lips. The second you connect everything else melts away and you pick up exactly where you left off at the office.

As he deepens the kiss, a soft sound leaves the back of your throat and your eyes roll back into your skull. Pleasure rushes from your head to your toes and you yield to his dominance. He takes encouragement from your response, winding one hand into your hair to guide you exactly how he wants you.

You’re panting now but your thirst knows no bounds, and even as your head spins you refuse to break apart. Tongues stroke, hands grasp and bodies press closer as you escape the world, diving head first into the absolute intoxication he offers. Kissing Kandomere is like flying; dangerous, adrenaline inducing and addictive.

As the kiss lengthens you lose more of your inhibitions. His skin is smooth and warm under your fingers and no matter how hard you try, you can’t satiate your greed. You want to touch all of him at once. Your hands descend around his back, following the curve of his spine to the dip just above his backside. Rational thought is a distant memory as you slide inside his sweatpants and grab gluttonously at his well defined ass.

Kandomere growls, a guttural, animalistic sound that is ripped from deep within his chest and rockets straight to your core. Passion throbs through you, boiling your blood and pushing arousal into every muscle. There’s a needy pulsing at the apex of your legs and you can feel your body answering his in the most primal way.

Without breaking the kiss, he grips your thighs and hoists you up, guiding your legs around his waist. Your hands fly to his face, cupping it reverently and holding him still as you claim his mouth in another searing kiss. At this angle he has to tilt his head back and it causes his velvety hair to cascade down his back. Opening your eyes you pull away to watch as you weave your fingers through his wondrous blue locks, allowing you to get a good handful and tug gently.

You’re belly flutters at the fierce sound your action pulls from him so you do it again. This time his response is physical. His hips rotate and he ruts up against your backside. Meeting his lust blown gaze, you drag your hands down, drawing them out of his hair and back to his jaw where your thumb rub back and forth as your fingers curve around his neck.

Your swollen lips fall open and you’re only vaguely aware of the words you rasp. “I need you, Kandomere.”

Black eyes flash with carnal want and a snarl leaves his lips seconds before they attach to the sensitive skin between your throat and shoulder. Serrated teeth scrape against you as once again he grinds against your ass.

You’ve never been so turned on. Clawing at his shoulders you cry out as he works you into a frenzy. You’re a lusty wreck and so far he’s really only kissed you.

“Kando—” You gasp loudly as his teeth break your skin but it isn’t painful. Instead it is the single most erotic thing you’ve ever experienced and you can’t hide the effect is has on you when you feel the dampness in your panties.

Your hands wind up in his hair again and you know you’re messing it up but hell if you care. Resting your cheek against the side of his face you suck the lobe of his ear before your tongue darts out and licks up to the tapered point. Beneath you he shudders violently, pulling his teeth from your skin to emit a roar that vibrates right to your aching sex.
He turns and in a few strides has you on your back on his bed. Clenching his jaw he takes a single step away and balls his fist. Every muscle in his body tenses as he places himself on lock down. Feral eyes rake over your body and he curls his lips back to show you his deadly teeth.

“Mi alma,” the voice coming out of him is not Kandomere’s although it’s pushed from his heaving chest, it’s deeper and rougher than you’ve ever heard before, “I swore I would never lose control with you again but if you continue as you are I’m afraid I won’t be able to keep that promise.”

His confession has you squirming as you feel yourself getting wetter. The thought of being able to strip him of his ability to hold back, to shatter the tight hold he has over his self control is too appealing. Especially when he stands before you, sweatpants riding low on his well defined hips and his bare, toned chest panting.

Sitting up you rip your top over your head and carelessly toss it aside. Next you stand and peel your trousers down your legs, unwrapping the bandages as you go. Kicking the lot aside you place your hands on your hips and pin the elf with a challenging gaze.

“I want you to lose control, Kandomere. I trust you. I need you.”

A pained expression crosses his face as his eyebrows scrunch up. “I don’t want to hurt you, I can’t—”

“I’m not breakable. I can take it.”

“No, mi alma, you do not understand—”

You’re patience snaps and instead of arguing it out you close the gap between you and grab a fistful of his hair. Yanking it to one side, you expose his throat and standing up on tiptoes you bury your blunt teeth into the skin where his throbbing vein pulses.

“¡Cógeme!”

He grabs you roughly and strong hands wrap around your biceps but he doesn’t try and move you. He just holds on as you savage his flesh. Sucking and biting, you relax your grip on his hair to move lower, peppering his pale body with various kisses and marks until you’re on your knees. You want to obliterate his poise and restraint and you know just how to do it.

His sweatpants offer no resistance when you yank them down and you’re pleased to find he’s without underwear. Holding his hips steady you waste no time in licking from the base of his erection to the tip but before you can do anymore he’s picked you up and tossed you on the bed. He looms over you, kicking off his bottoms as he crawls up the mattress muttering darkly in Övüsi. It almost sounds like a prayer.

As he reaches your thighs he leans down and pressing his nose to your underwear he inhales. Bunching the blankets in his tight fists his chest rumbles and he groans lewdly. His erotic display only adds to your arousal and as you draw in a shaky breath you know your underwear is now ruined.

It’s almost like he can read your mind when sharp eyes snap to yours and a salacious grin pulls up the corners of his mouth. This time he slides down your panties before burying his nose between your legs.

“Hmm, delicioso,” he groans, moving quickly to rid you of the underwear and wrench your legs
apart. Again he uses his teeth as a way of torturing you, gently dragging them up the tender skin of the inside of your thigh. He nibbles and nips his way up before descending down the other leg, completely ignoring your intimate area. He is careful to avoid your almost healed scars with his teeth whilst marking you in places that were no longer sore. Instead, he runs his tongue along the fading red lines that marble your flesh, humming softly in appreciation.

Just as you’re growing accustomed to his touch he lurches for you, pinning your hips to the bed and flattening his tongue against your core. Your eyes fly open and your hands grapple to hold on to something as he changes pace and begins licking over your swollen bundle of nerves. He is no longer gentle as he starts to devour you, sucking, licking and scraping his teeth in a manner that has your pelvis bucking against his hold.

You can’t think straight as the pressure in your lower abdomen builds. Your breathing is laboured and you claw at the pillows as once again, he shifts. This time he places a hand over your stomach, pushing to hold you still whilst he delves his tongue deep inside you and dances his fingers expertly over your clit.

Pleasure and pressure, and heat engulf you and you’re acutely aware of your internal muscles coiling tighter and tighter. Your legs are trembling and you gasp for air as his mouth tales you higher still. You call his name and changed up his assault. He latches onto your clit with his lips, sucking and flicking his tongue in tandem with plunging two fingers into you to stroke against your g-spot.

For a moment you teeter on the precipice, writhing against the unbearable pleasure he’s bestowing on you, until it all comes crashing down. The air catches in your throat, your jaw tenses and you arch off the bed, every muscle tense as gratification explodes in your belly and flows outward.

The euphoric ecstasy rolls down your legs causing your toes to curl, whilst your fists simultaneously seize the bedsheets. You hold your breath as wave after blissful wave of orgasm surges through your system, wringing pleasure out of every one of your atoms.

The rapture is ongoing and Kandomere is still taking his fill when your vision wavers and you instinctually gulp for air, fighting against the overwhelming physical pleasure, for the burst of oxygen you so desperately need. Forcing yourself to breathe seems to calm the sensations and your long climax begins to ebb until you’re consciousness engages and you’re aware of yourself. You come back down from the impossible high in a mass of squirming, trembling aftershocks.

Your heart is racing and you’re covered in a light sheen of sweat. Your heavy limbs are uselessly spasming as Kandomere crawls up your body, smiling triumphantly. You want to speak, you want to touch but your body is spent and your mind delirious.

“Mi alma.” He kisses your stomach. “Querida.” He pulls the cups of your bra down. “Hechicera.” His tongue lavishes your breasts as he alternates sides, drawing a low moan from your spent body. He doesn’t rush, he’s giving you time to recover from the mind blowing paradise he’d taken you to and as he worships your chest you can think of nothing but your desire to wreck him. As your resolve hardens you strength returns.

Taking a breath you hook your legs around his waist and push until you’ve swapped positions and are straddling him.

“My turn!”

Shuffling into place you grind your hips down and watch with gleeful satisfaction as he throws his head back and hisses. Given what you’ve learned from his earlier reactions you take a chance,
scraping your nails hard from his collar bone down his chest to his stomach, leaving red lines that cause his hips to buck against you.

Again you move your pelvis, but this time you lean forward, changing the angle and closing your mouth around his nipple to suck. He cries out in Övüsi, his hands flying to your waist to guide your continued movements. Swapping sides you swirl your tongue over his chest, leaving a wet trail that produces goose bumps when you blow over it. All the while you slowly rock against his hard cock, allowing him just enough friction to add to his need.

"Mi alma, I can’t—“ he chokes on his words as you lift up, align his swollen head with your sex and swiftly sink down.

His stomach tenses and his fingers reflexively dig into you but the only thing you notice is how good it feels to have him buried up to his hilt inside you. It’s too good. You can’t keep still, the urge to move drives you forward and resting your hands on his flexing chest, you set up a heavenly rhythm.

But it’s not long before he’s snapping his hips up against you, trying to take charge and control, and one such thrust send you tumbling forward on top of him.

He’s quick to roll you again and using his leverage to his advantage he fucks you hard, a mixture of Spanish and Övüsi mingling with your breathy grunts and cries. The pleasure is building within you again and you know that if he continues you’re going to surrender to him once more. It’s not what you want though, you want to take him apart, not the other way around.

Deviously, you run a trembling hand into his hair and pull him down for a kiss. It’s sloppy and frantic but it gets him to drop lower where you’re able to reach his sensitive ears. Licking up to the point, you clamp it gently between your teeth and move your jaw back and forth, applying constant pressure as your tongue teases the tip. Your plan works.

The elf buries himself deep inside you, his thrusts stuttering as he growls loudly. His whole body is vibrating with raw power and he comes hard, sinking his teeth into your throat. He bites with force, and you can’t hold back your climax, reaching your peak as he continues to thrust into you. Your muscles contract, your eyes clamp shut and you can do nothing but hold on as he rides you both through your orgasms.

As his movements slow you relax your limbs and catch your breath whilst you stare dumbstruck at the ceiling. You’d had plenty of sex before but never in your life had you experienced a pleasure or a high like this. Words can’t describe the ecstasy of the orgasms he’d given you.

Once Kandomere has come back down he collapses on top of you, his head falling over your shoulder onto the mattress and his full weight pinning you to the bed. Not that you care. You’re a boneless, satiated puddle of human and you’re doubtful you’re going to be capable of anything after this. You’re one hundred percent sure normal physical function is no longer possible.

Slowly he eases off you to settle to your side, his face tilted to the ceiling and his jaw lax. Neither of you speak. You’re too lost in post sex bliss to notice or care how long you lie there for until he props himself up on an elbow.

Turning towards him you take in the grim line on his forehead and down turned mouth. Bewildered, your eyes widen when you realise he’s looking at you in absolute horror.

Instinct moves your arms, and you grab what you can of the blanket to cover yourself whilst quickly shuffling away. Tears burn behind your eyes and your chest tightens as you realise why
he’s giving you that look. He’s repulsed by you, by what you both did.

“No, please, mi alma, I’m sorry.” His tone is hollow and he doesn’t reach out to try and stop you as you move off the bed.

You don’t bother with wrestling the blanket from the bed or collecting your things. All you can do is run, flee, get away from him and his devastating disgust. Your legs are like jelly but you manage to cross the room and barricade yourself in his bathroom before he has a chance to say or do anything else. It’s only when you’re sure the door is locked that the tears flow, and you allow yourself a moment to cry.

“Y/n, please, open the door.”

Scooting away from the barrier you sniff and angrily wipe at your cheeks. How dare he look at you that way, how dare he make you feel like less than you are.

“Go away!” Your voice betrays your emotions so you sniff and try again. “Leave me alone.”

“Mi alma! Mi amor!” His broken calls carry clearly through the dark wood and you’re shocked by the catch in his voice. “I’m so sorry I hurt you, please, don’t… I will do better, I—” He trails off and after a second you hear a grunt.

Taking a shaky breath you move back to the door. “You were disgusted,” you say flatly.

“I didn’t realise what I’d done,” he rushes, “I forgot how delicate you are.”

That catches you off guard. “Delicate? What the hell! You look at anyone like that and they’re gonna react the same way, I’m not fucking delicate.” Silence meets your rant and in a fit of rage you grab a towel, fasten it securely around you and open the door. You’re met with a semi naked elf, sitting on his haunches in only a pair of boxer briefs.

Once more his eyes travel the skin he can see and his pained expression worsens. “I hurt you. I’m so sorry.”

Things aren’t adding up, he looks anguished rather than repulsed. Crossing your arms you narrow your eyes. “What, exactly, are you sorry for?”

His gaze lowers and he seems to shrink away from you behind a curtain of blue. “I hurt you, I went too far and I hurt you, all over.”

“Wait, what?”

“Please, my love, I—” He sags and it occurs to you that you’d been wrong.

With your mind racing you amble back into the shower room and position yourself in front of the mirror. Opening the towel you look at yourself and your jaw drops. There are marks littered all over you, some angry looking and some bloodied. Closing the towel you point to the bloodiest bite mark on your neck, the one he’d left as he’d climaxed.

“Hold up, is this what your problem is?”

Guilt weighs heavy on him as he nods, unable to look you in the eye.

“Oh you idiot!” You chuckle, crossing the space between you and hooking your hands under his arms to get him to stand. “I thought you were disgusted by me when I saw you staring at me like
“Shut up, idiot, and listen. You don’t get to apologise for what we just did. It was,” biting your lips you search the heavens for the right word, “perfect. You were perfect. I meant it when I said I wasn’t breakable, don’t think for one second that what you see on my skin, that what you put there has in any way shape or form broken me. Idiot! It was amazing, it was beautiful, it was the best sex of my whole life, so stop being an idiot and looking at me like you killed my damn puppy!” Smiling at the basic misunderstanding you reach up and brush the hair back from his face. “Besides, do you see me regretting the marks I gave you?”

His eyes glance at the mirror and back before he cautiously puts a hand on your arm. “You aren’t hurt?”

“Well I’m a tad sore but it’s definitely not gonna stop me from doing that again.” You toss him a cheeky wink and salacious grin.

“But I—“

“Did what I asked.” A sigh bubbles out of you and you open your arms wide, holding him tightly while playing with his hair. “I promise, Blue, you didn’t hurt me, not even a little.”

“I lost myself,” he says softly, “I forgot for a moment how much stronger I am, how—“

“And yet you didn’t break me, not even a little bit. So stop it, stop worrying about what never happened and start gloating about being the best I ever had.”

He huffs a little breath before heavy arms slide around your waist. “The best you ever had?” Kissing his temple you chuckle. “Yeah, and if we do anything like that again—“

“When!”

“When,” you laugh, “I hope you don’t treat me any differently because that, what we just did, it was out of this world and I so wanna do it again.”

He replies in kind, using his lips to press against the bite on your neck followed swiftly by his tongue brushing over the spot.

You can’t help the shiver that runs through you or the gasp of his name as he carefully nibbles down to your collar bone.

“Do you know how that affects me, mi amor?” He sighs happily.

“What?” He’s flipping that switch inside you, and despite your earlier satisfaction, you find yourself becoming aroused again.

“When you say my name. Specifically,” he stands up straight and stares heatedly into your eyes, “when you say it like that.” As if to finish his explanation he rolls his hips against you and you’re delighted to find you’re not the only one excited.

With a smirk you wriggle out of the towel letting it fall away as press your lips to his ear. With one simple goal in mind you tug his lobe between your teeth and breathe, “Kandomere.”

He growls and lifting you onto the sink counter begins attack number two.
Chapter End Notes

Translations

Mi alma, tu nuevo deseo de estar cerca de mí llena mi corazón hasta el borde - My soul, your new desire to be close to me fills my heart to the brim.

¿qué magia brillante has echado sobre mí que me hace tan obediente a tu voluntad? - What Bright magic have you cast to render me so compliant to your will?

Creo que haría cualquier cosa por ti. - I think I would do anything for you.

Mi belleza - my beauty

Mi alma, mi corazón se rinde un poco más con cada palabra que dices. Por favor no te detengas - my soul, my heart surrenders a little more with every word you say. Please don't stop.

¡Cógeme! - Fuck me!

Hechicera - Enchantress
Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Notes

Warnings:

Anxiety and PTSD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sleep came easily for the elf that night. Keeping you tucked against his side with a thick, strong arm he’d drifted into unconsciousness with a smile. You, however, can’t settle. It’s not because anything is wrong, there’s no weighty doom hanging over you, no unease or argument to keep you up. You just can’t sleep. You’ve tried for hours without any success so now you’ve given up and have taken to watching your elf sleep.

*Your elf.* You liked that thought. Perhaps a little too much.

You’ve been watching his relaxed features in the moonlight, the silver hue of the moon only adding to his ethereal quality and beauty. Under his lids, his eyes flicker and every now and then he lets out a soft sigh. He’s dreaming.

Dropping your head to the pillow, you stretch out your legs and shift to a new position, wincing slightly as your muscles protest. You’re in a little discomfort but you sure as hell aren’t complaining. It’s a small price to pay for the absolute rapture you’d experienced at Kandomere’s hands. The elf was an insatiable, selfless lover who definitely knew what he was doing between the sheets.

Flexing your arm you raise it slightly to admire the marks he’d decorated you with. Some were bruises from his hands, some were sucked there and some were as a result of his teeth. You loved them all. He had claimed you for himself and here was the proof. After you’d reassured him he wasn’t hurting you he’d gone to town, and now you were so covered with blemishes it made you look like you had an illness. Pressing your fingers to some of the darker bites you bite your lip and smirk. God only knows how you were supposed to cover them all when you went into the office, not that that had been on the forefront of your mind as you’d been encouraging him.

“Mi amor? What’s wrong?” You startle at his gruff, sleep heavy voice.

“Nothing’s wrong, go back to sleep.”

“They hurt don’t they?” He sits up slightly and takes hold of your arm to inspect it, his frown lines deepening.

Whilst the concern is touching and appreciated, you need him to get over this fear, you need him to accept that these particular bruises and bites don’t hurt, quite the opposite in fact. Laying your hand on his cheek you smile, “No, querido, they don’t, I was just admiring them and wondering how I’m meant to cover them for the office tomorrow.”

He lifts a brow and cocks his head as you lay the Spanish term of endearment on him. “I thought you couldn’t speak Español, mi amor.”
You chuckle. “I can’t. I just googled the words you use frequently and picked up a few things.”

“I like it.”

“Good, so you’ll understand me when I say that I like these.” You nod towards your arm and he gets the point, all be it begrudgingly.

“You must promise to tell me if I ever take it too far.”

“I already did, now stop talking and go back to sleep.” You stretch your neck and place a chaste kiss on his lips. “Good night, Kandomere.”

His head tilts to one side as he watches you closely. “Y/n, how can you expect me to sleep when there is something so obviously on your mind? Talk to me, mi alma, let me help.”

A tug deep inside your chest makes you wriggle closer to his warm body and slide your arms around him. “There is nothing troubling me, Blue, I just can’t sleep. That’s all.”

Eyes that almost glow in the darkened room tear away from your face and he pulls back the covers. “Perhaps a warm drink—”

You reach out blindly, making purchase with his shoulder and gripping it to stop him. “Just lay with me, I’ll fall asleep eventually.”

“There must be something I can do to help?”

“Blue,” you urge gently, “I’m fine, really. Please just go back to sleep.”

His expression conveys his wariness but he does as you ask regardless. Laying on his back he stretches out an arm and stares pointedly at you. Smiling at his stubbornness you cuddle into his side and rest your head on his shoulder. His spicy scent envelops you and you breathe deep, drinking it in and revelling in the unique sense of belonging you get from him.

Kandomere holds you tenderly, his muscles locked in place and his eyes glued on you. It would be frustrating if it weren’t so damn sweet.

“Seriously, please go back to sleep!” You beg.

He tilts your head up and cups your cheek. “I’m worried about you.”

“Don’t be, I’m all good, I swear.”

“And yet you aren’t able to sleep.”

Turning, you kiss his open palm. “Has it crossed your mind that I can’t sleep, not because something is wrong but because too many things are right?” Propping yourself over him, you stare down into his eyes, hoping to convey the full weight of your emotions. “You have changed everything and I’m not used to it. I’m just getting acclimated is all. Happiness is quite a foreign concept to me.” It hurts to admit and you automatically cover your pain with a weak smile.

Once again his brows knit and he frowns up at you as his hold tightens. “Mi—”

It’s late, you’re tired and you don’t want to start anything heavy so you silence him with a quick kiss. “If there was anything wrong I promise I’d tell you. I’m okay, honestly.”

He opens his mouth to speak but then thinks better of it and with a nod, he tucks you back in place
next to him. Silence falls over the room and you return to listening to his even steady breaths. After a short while he moves again, positioning you both so his lips can reach your temple. He kisses you softly and murmurs what you assume to be endearments. Meanwhile his fingers trail lazily up and down your arm, soothing and relaxing you until your body is limp and your mind lulled.

“Vete a dormir, mi amor.” Warm lips ghost over your cheek and your eyes fall closed in response. He lowers his voice and you instinctively snuggle closer. “Mi hermosa ángel, mi dulce, mi querida, mi alma.” Each word pulls you that much closer to sleep. “Deseo que estaban dispuestos a escuchar las palabras de mi corazón tan desesperadamente quiere decir.”

Whatever he’s saying becomes a lilting lullaby pushing you into the waiting embrace of sleep. The last thing you’re able to make out before you slip away entirely is the gentle rumble of your name.

---

You wake with a frightening jolt to find you’re pinned in place, unable to move an inch. Everything is off balance and you don’t know where you are, what you’re doing here or who the elf is next to you. You recall being tied down, battling against Alexo, trying to pry his fingers from your body as he’d snarled insults, only now you’re somewhere else, in a bed in a different room, and the elf next to you isn’t Alexo.

Confusion muddles your thoughts and you can’t think straight, your subconscious is clawing at the back of your mind, trying to get you to remember something important but you’re too consumed with terror and the instinct to fight to listen. Your heart hammers against your ribcage painfully, a cold sweat covers your goose bumped flesh and try as you might you can’t stop the particularly savage shudder that wracks your body.

Oh god, I’m going to die.

Breathing heavily you risk a glance at your companion. A flash of silver fills your vision and you childishly close your eyes, hoping to hide from whatever fresh torment Alexo has dreamt up. Holding your breath you tense, awaiting the strike you know is coming, trying to stop the tears from squeezing out — it angers him when you show weakness — even though that’s what he likes best.

The weight over your chest eases, quickly followed by the weight on your legs until you’re free. Now’s your chance. As fast as your aching body is able, you swing your legs off the bed and run, but no matter how quick you are you can’t outrun an elf and he has you sprawled on the floor before you manage two steps.

You hit the deck hard, the shock and pain of the collision clearing your befuddled mind enough to for you to recognise your surroundings. This isn’t Vegas. Your gaze darts around the room, the light from the dawn allowing you to see your clothes littered at the end of the bed. This was familiar territory.

“Y/n? Can you hear me?” You look at the source of the question, meeting the elf’s gaze as his cautious expression melts into one of pain and anxiety. “Y/n?”

You attempt to move but something has you trussed up and confined. Dazed and confused you’re unable to grasp exactly what’s going on. “I can’t move.” You rasp.

He creeps to your side slowly, hands held up in surrender. “I can help.” He states softly. “I’m not
going to hurt you.”

You blink away the tears as he nears you and kneels, your eyes fixed to his face as his hands reach out.

*Don’t flinch.* You know what happens if you react and it’s not good.

“There, done.”

Blue hair. You know that blue hair and this scent, it’s right there on the edge of your memory. You know this elf, you trust this elf. Your heart leaps into your mouth and in a moment of clarity you come to your senses. You’re in Kandomere’s bedroom. You’re safe.

“Kandomere!”

Burying your face in your hands you curl into a ball on your knees, resting your forearms against your thighs. You’re alright. You’re safe.

“Mi alma?”

“It was a dream,” your voice is muffled but he understands anyway and this time when he touches you it isn’t a ghosting of fingers over your skin. He collects you up, lifting you without a sound and sitting down on the bed, he places you carefully in his lap.

It’s Kandomere. Your Kandomere. Your elf.

The relief is palpable and you lean heavily against his chest. “I was having a nightmare, I—“

He holds you close, his hand stroking your hair as his lips find your ear. “It’s over now. I’m here,” he whispers.

Tugging out of his grip you eye the door with trepidation. “You definitely got him, Ale—“ The name chokes you and you shudder again.

A firm hand grips your chin and forces your gaze from the door to meet his. “He is in a hospital bed in our facility, mi amor. He cannot hurt you ever again.”

“But—“

“He will *never* hurt you again, Y/n.” There’s an edge to his voice and a satisfaction in his eyes.

“How can you be so sure?” You hate that Alexo has the power to reduce you to this feeble, quivering wreck but just the mere thought of him makes you shake in your boots.

Kandomere exhales and pulls his gaze from yours. “Even if he could escape custody, he wouldn’t get very far. He’s paralysed from the neck down.”

You sit silently and contemplate the implications of what he’s just said. Alexo can’t physically hurt you anymore, he can’t physically do *anything* anymore. The tightness in your chest eases. “He’s… paralysed?”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you say something before?”

“Because I was afraid.”
A humourless laugh bubbles inside you but you push it down. “What do you have to be scared of?”

He shakes his head, the curtain of his hair falling to cover his face. “I didn’t want you to fear me, mi alma. I’ve seen what my kind has subjected you to, I didn’t want you believing I was capable of it also.”

“You—“ Sliding your hands up to his shoulders you bite your bottom lip. Something else to add to the endless list of things he’s done for you. “Why? Why do you keep doing these things for me?”

“Oh, Y/n.” He leans his forehead against yours and closes his eyes. “Don’t ask me questions unless you’re ready for the answers.”

A fissure of fear cracks your curiosity and you swallow down your intrigue. What ever has driven him to do all that he has for you isn’t important, not in this moment. “Look at me, Kandomere.”

Hesitantly he does as you ask you with gentle hands you sweep the hair off his face and tuck it behind his ears, being careful not to touch them.

“Blue. My Blue,” cradling his face you kiss his cheek, “you are dangerous, and you do scare me but not because of what you’ve done or might do.” Standing up you slip out of his reach and cross the room to the window. What you’re about to say will leave you raw and exposed and you know you can only manage it if there’s distance between you. Placing your fingertips on the cool glass you stare out at the city. “I’ve been trying to ignore this, because really, what good can come of it? But you keep doing this and I can’t— I can’t— I don’t know.” You growl quietly at the back of your throat, giving voice to your frustrations. “I think— Damnit, Blue! Okay, fine, here goes,” you sigh, “since Jay, I avoided stuff like this. I couldn’t deal, I didn’t want to but you, you make me—“ Curling you hand into a fist you hit the glass. This isn’t easy and you’re pretty sure you’re making even less sense than when you first woke him. “I feel things and I’m not, I’m not, I don’t know how to do this. To let myself feel what I think I’m feeling. You scare me because you make me feel this, this, this feeling.” Rolling your eyes you lean against the window and curse. “I’m no good at this, and I get you probably have no idea what I’m talking about but I want to make it absolutely clear that I don’t fear you, I trust you and I think a little part of me always has. That’s why I came to you in the first place.”

“And I thought you were at your most honest during the witching hour,” he deadpans.

“Clearly I just can’t keep my mouth shut when it comes to you.”

“Mi amor.” You hear his approach and turn to anticipate the embrace you’re sure is coming. Instead he hooks a finger under your chin and tilts your face to his. “Poco ladrón, que robó mi corazón, he caído en amor con usted, pero usted no está dispuesto a escucharlo todavía.” You stare, bewildered but silent. “Así, hasta que se le mostraré, cada día, en todas las formas posibles. Tú eres mi todo.”

There’s so much affection in his eyes it’s hard to look away and as his mouth meets yours you’re overwhelmed with emotion. Tears spill from your eyes and you pour everything you couldn’t say, every emotion you can’t understand into the kiss. Desperation has you fisting handfuls of his hair and he happily reciprocates, pressing his naked chest against you until you’re held between his body and the glass. The staggering kiss continues until you’re utterly overpowered and spent. Gasping and emotionally exhausted you pull your lips free and lay your head on his shoulder.

“Mi alma,” you whisper, closing your eyes.

“Mi amor,” he replies, burying his nose into your hair and inhaling.
As the sun rises on a new day, you welcome it, together. With arms wrapped tightly around one another you each start the day bathing in the warmth, safety and tenderness of the other and though no words are spoken you both understand the significance of what you’re doing. In silence you acknowledge the start of your new relationship and thank your lucky stars for whatever magic sent the elf your way, and whilst you know it can’t last, you’re going to enjoy the hell out of it while you can.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

Vete a dormir, mi amor - go to sleep, my love

Mi hermosa ángel, mi dulce, mi querida, mi alma. - my beautiful angel, my sweet, my darling, my soul.

Deseo que estaban dispuestos a escuchar las palabras de mi corazón tan desesperadamente quiere decir a usted. - I wish you were ready to hear the words my heart so desperately wants to say.

Poco ladrón, que robó mi corazón, he caído en amor con usted, pero usted no está dispuesto a escucharlo todavía. - Little thief, who stole my heart, I have fallen in love with you, but you aren't ready to hear it yet.

Así, hasta que se le mostraré, cada día, en todas las formas posibles. Tú eres mi todo. - So until you are I will show you, every day, in every way possible. You are my everything.
Chapter Twenty

Chapter Notes

Warnings for PTSD, Anxiety and Abuse

Another day has passed at the office and once again you’ve hardly noticed. Back in the conference room and immersed in the plethora of files, you, Ross and Ford have read through so much, your eyes are starting to water. You’ve not left the room since setting foot in it this morning, save for the odd bathroom break, and you’re all beginning to show signs of mental fatigue as you slump over the heavy desk.

“Coffee break?” Ford suggests hopefully, checking his watch for the time.

Subconsciously you breathe a sigh of relief and rub at your aching temples. The documents were information heavy and trying to pick out the small details you recognised was taking it’s toll.

“Sounds like a plan, let’s go to the nice place down the street though. I dunno about you two, but I’m ready for some air.” Ross states, running his hand through his messy hair.

Biting your lip you nod as your heart sinks. You can’t possibly join them, not outside the building, it’s far too dangerous. Plastering on a fake smile you grab a folder. You need an excuse to get out of coffee and you know just who to use. “I’ll meet you there, I need to check something in here with Montehugh.”

Thankfully neither agent puts up much of an argument and you’re able to convince them to head out without you fairly easily. Not that it stops them complaining about your workaholic attitude making them look bad. Laughing it off as good humoured teasing, you walk down to Montehugh’s office, slightly perturbed as they wait with you whilst you knock. When no one answers you tentatively try the door. It’s locked.

“Shit.” The curse is past your lips before you can filter it. Glancing sheepishly at your companions you shrug. “Sorry, I just really need him to take a look at something, it’s pretty urgent.”

Ford scrunches up his brown eyes and taps his chin. “You could try the holding cells, if memory serves I’m sure he mentioned something about interrogations this afternoon. Maybe he’s down there?”

A strange combination of fear and intrigue churns in your stomach at the mention of the holding cells. You’d heard about the cells but you’ve yet to see them, only you’re pretty certain that’s where they’re keeping Alexo.

At the mere thought of the elf your heart seizes uncomfortably before flipping in your chest and doubling its previous efforts. “I’m not sure I have clearance,” you whisper, fighting nausea.

“No problem, we can take you down, if he’s not there we’ll head on out for coffee and find him on the way back.”

You know you should decline the offer but a perverse part of you wants to chance it. A part of you wants to catch a glimpse of Alexo to see if he really is in as much of a state as you hoped. Before
you can really think it through you’re nodding your head and following the men to the elevators.

The floor where the cells are situated is below ground and lit by sickly fluorescent lights that make your head ache the second you step out into the hallway. There’s little to see other than the line of doors set into the white washed walls of the single, long corridor, each door adorned with a three digit number painted in black next to the handle.

Ford checks his phone as you walk, coming to a stop by a door about half way down the hall. He points to the grey barrier. “If he’s down here I’m gonna guess he’s in one of these cells.”

You’re not sure what you’d been expecting but you know it wasn’t this. Ford swipes his security card and a quiet buzzing lets you know the door is unlocked. Nervously you fall into step behind your unwitting accomplice, your eyes darting around his frame to see into the room, only it’s not a room but another corridor with another set of doors.

“These are the high security cells,” Ross explains, “this is where we bring the prisoners considered most dangerous.” He holds up his hand and begins to tick off his fingers. “You know the type, magic users like Bright’s, suspected inferni, the Shield Of Light soldiers.”

Known magic users like Brights. Brights like you. This is where Kandomere should have brought you.

Ford opens the first door and heads inside. Your anxiety levels spike as you cross the threshold and look around. You’re in a room with a giant window that looks into a cell, only it’s not a window, it’s two way glass. There’s all manor of video and audio recording systems in place, and a control panel that would have NASA engineers sweating. In the room beyond, a hospital bed sits proudly in the centre of the white, sterile space. Dotted around it are various machines, their wires like a complex map overlapping one another to reach their intended destination.

Alexo.

The room tilts and your legs buckle. Grasping onto the chair by the control panel you manage to stay upright but only just. Leaning heavily on the plastic seat, you fight the rising panic and face your demon head on.

The agents had not been exaggerating his injuries. His face is a distorted mess where they have literally sewn him back together and his arms and neck are wrapped in bandages like a cartoon mummy. There is colourful bruising decorating his once handsome face and his nose is swollen, but behind it all are the cold, merciless eyes you remember well.

“Told you he didn’t look so pretty!” Ross says under his breath as he comes to stand next to you. “So, we’ll see you down at the coffee stand after you’ve spoken to Montehugh, yeah?” He motions to the other man in the cell, the one you’re only just noticing despite his size. You try to speak but your voice has abandoned you.

“I probably should warn you to stay away from this switch because that activates the speakers and you’ll be able to hear what’s being said.” A finger points to a button just to your left and an elbow knocks your arm jovially as the agent chuckles.

“Don’t be long, you need break before we head back to it. Oh and Montehugh will have to let you out, access card and all that.” Ford calls.

You don’t react, you don’t move, you don’t even blink. You can’t. Your heart is about ready to explode and your eyes are watering but you can’t tear your gaze away from the motionless body in
the bed. He’s right there, just the other side of the two way mirror.

You watch the scene in front of you. Nothing much is happening, the two men are talking, but your vision is fixed on the elf. You know he’s lying, that he’s cheated the tests somehow and can actually move. You know it in your gut so you watch him. You’re so engrossed in he task that you have no idea how long you stare or at what point Ford and Ross left.

Montehugh is still talking to his prisoner and it begins to irk you that you can’t hear so you reach for the switch you’d been shown. Your hand is shaking so hard it takes three attempts to press down but the second you do you’re thrown back in time. His voice is just as cruel and just as calculating, his supposed injuries haven’t dampened his malevolence at all.

“You have no real evidence,” he’s sneering in his icy, detached tone, “my father’s lawyers—“

Montehugh cuts him off with a hearty laugh. “Can’t save you now, if they could you’d have been out of here already so cut the bullshit. We’ve all the evidence we need, you saw to that yourself, you sick, twisted fuck! Documenting it all on your phone was a monumentally stupid thing to do, you handed yourself to us on a plate.”

Alexo doesn’t miss a beat. “Those women were contesting actresses. It was all make up and special effects.” He laughs like he hasn’t a care in the world but then his smile slips and a sneer curls his lips showing teeth. “What about your boss? Doesn’t matter what I did, he attacked a detainee under his care.” The hatred on his mangled face melts away. “I’m so looking forward to the consequences of that.”

“We have it on record that he was acting in self defence from at least three agents—“

“Only you don’t, do you?”

Your knees give out and you sink down, managing to roll the chair underneath you before you hit the deck. What the hell? Why hadn’t it occurred to you that Kandomere would be in trouble for his actions?

The bloodshot, tired eyes of Montehugh search the ceiling as he tries to calm his temper. Alexo is getting to him. You can sympathise.

“Getting back on track—“

The elf suddenly turns his head and looks over at the mirror. Slowly he inhales, making a show of it, flaring his nostrils. “You know,” he smiles and somehow his eyes lock on to yours, “we elves like to keep busy.”

You convulse, your whole body shuddering furiously as you stop breathing, stop thinking, stop functioning. Unable to look away, you stare at Alexo who is watching you somehow and the trembling grows stronger. You’re aware of your blood warming. Heat surges with an odd pulsing sensation through your body, a feeling made all the more peculiar since your heart has stopped. Internally you’re screaming but externally you are becoming a statue, the shaking slowly ebbing until you aren’t able to move, not a millimetre, not even to blink.

Your vision goes spotty, the edges blurring and then suddenly it stops. You slump forward, collapsing onto the control unit and hitting various buttons and sliders as you go. You’re still not breathing but your lungs feel full, like you’ve taken a big breath and are waiting to let it out.

“There she is, my favourite toy. I knew you’d come back to me, my starlight.”
His voice is in your head, but it’s not an echo of the past, no, this time it’s real. This time he’s actually talking to you.

“You remember, don’t you? Our games, our fun.”

Your head is full of disturbing images swirling and morphing together to create a sickening cinematic reel of blood and gore. You see the pain he inflicted and you can literally taste his excitement. You watch through his eyes as he flays open your flesh only to sear it shut with the wand.

And then there’s nothing. Every sense is swallowed into an abyss and you disappear into a darkness so black you’re not even sure you ever really existed.

“Welcome home, my starlight.”

When you come too, you’re in unfamiliar surroundings in a room full of people you don’t know. Pushing yourself upright, you stare blankly at the black couch you’d been slumped on trying to recall how you’d gotten here, or where here even was.

Rubbing your eyes, you note the strange atmosphere caused by the relative silence and you frown. There are way too many people here for it to be this quiet. Peering at the gathered groups you can see them talking, but nothing is coming out of their mouths, no sound, no noise.

What the hell was going on?

It’s then that you see him. Kandomere. He’s in the centre of the room, a smile on his relaxed face, his arm draped around and holding a beautiful elf flush against his side. As if he can feel you watching, his gaze sweeps to yours. Your eyes connect and he tilts his head curiously, before his expression sours.

You blink back tears of frustration, bewilderment and jealousy as you try to remember what the hell is going on. But before you can figure anything out he’s striding towards you, curling his lip back and clenching his fists. He looks beyond pissed now, and a spike of fear stabs through your heart. Less than a second later he has his arms around you and his lips on your throat, but this is not the affectionate, gentle touch you’ve grown accustomed to. His pointed teeth slice through your skin, tearing it from your body effortlessly, leaving you a gurgling and bloodied mess. With crimson staining his pale skin and blood dripping fro his mouth he throws you to the floor…

You wake with a choked gasp, your eyes flying open and hands clawing at your neck wound. Only there is no wound.

“Y/n?” Wide eyed and terrified you stare up at Montehugh who is towering over you. “What the hell are you doin’ down here? Kandomere would shit a brick if he knew you were anywhere near the prisoner. What happened?”

There’s a storm raging inside your mind and your thoughts are being tossed from pillar to post as you try and make sense of the events. You’re still in the holding room with the control panel, but now you’re on the floor. You must have passed out.

“I need to go.” Your voice is eerily calm given your internal conflict.
Montehugh bends at the waist and tugs you to your feet with a grunt. “You don’t say, c’mon, let’s get you outta here before anyone sees.”

“Too late for that, starlight.”

You turn sharply to the window, your breath catching in your throat as the elf behind the glass laughs. His eyes crinkle and his demonic grin widens as he raises a brow.

“Did you think you could outrun me?” His voice is in your head again, clear as day, and you know this is not a trick of the mind. It’s him. “Oh precious, I’m your darkness, you can’t escape me. I’m the dark, you’re the light, remember?”

You clap a hand over your mouth as you dry heave. The more he says the more you’re thrust back into the memories of his sadistic torture.

“You okay?” Montehugh queries, looking you up and down with barely concealed panic.

Shaking your head you allow the large man to drag you from the room, but before you’re free, the elf makes one last promise, calling out to you before the door is fully closed.

“See you in your dreams, playmate.”

As the large Agent half carries, half drags you to the elevator he looks at you in annoyance. “What in the hell was that?”

You’re shaking, your entire frame vibrating with adrenaline and terror. This wasn’t just a possibility anymore, Alexo was back and you knew, deep in your heart, that every threat he’d made was true. You were his, there was no outrunning him, no escape.

With watery eyes you turn to Montehugh. “I’ve made a huge mistake.”

“Ah, c’mon kid, don’t be so hard on yourself.” He smiles kindly and exhales all the tension from his body. “No harm done, I am worried about why you collapsed though, I think we should get you to the doc.”

Covering your face, you rub the heel of your palm against your burning eyes. “I don’t need a doctor, I need Kandomere.”

“You sure you wanna go there—“

“No, it’s the last thing I want but there’s something you both need to know.”

The journey to Kandomere’s office is over far too quickly. Montehugh has tried to get you to open up but you’ve remained tight lipped until the door swings closed and you’ve dropped heavily into the chair opposite the elf. Leaning forward you cover your face again, hiding behind your hair and hands as you gather the courage you need to speak.

“Ulysses?” There’s apprehension in Kandomere’s voice.

Montehugh sighs heavily. “You’re not gonna like this, boss.” He sighs again and you hear him fidgeting. Your heart goes out to the poor man, it’s obvious you’ve put him in a difficult position, all through no fault of his own.

Taking a deep breath you blurt out, “I saw Alexo. I went down to the holding cells and saw him.” You don’t know what to expect from Kandomere so you keep talking. Before he can interject you
sit back, eyes closed, and try your best to explain what happened. “I was looking for Montehugh, using him as an excuse to avoid going out for coffee with Ross and Ford. We didn’t know— I got them to take me down — this isn’t their fault. Shit! I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have— I fucked up big time.”

Montehugh clears his throat. “She collapsed. I found her on the floor, barely breathing.”

“What?” Kandomere stands, his hands slamming down on his desk, making you jump.

“She was shaking, like seizure style, and I don’t think she could hear m—.”

“Alexo knew I was there.” You haven’t opened your eyes, you daren’t. Your heart is beating wildly and you just know that any minute now the other shoe is about to drop, and drop hard.

There’s a moment of silence and then Montehugh is talking rapidly. “There’s no way he could know. I didn’t even know until I came out and found you, you didn’t knock any of the intercom buttons and the glass stayed mirrored. There’s no way he could have any idea you were there, Y/n.”

You struggle against the rising urge to vomit. “He knew. He looked right at me, he spoke to me.”

“He— What? No, I was there the whole time—“

“No, Montehugh, in my head. It was him. He’s done something to me, he knows I’m alive, he knows I’m here.”

Slowly you open your eyes. Kandomere is bent over his desk, his face a mask, completely devoid of emotion. You meet his eyes.

“He spoke to me,” you whisper.

A slight twitch of his brow alludes to the effort it’s taking to remain composed. “What did he say?”

You shiver, suddenly ice cold to the bone. “He told me he knew I’d come back to him, that I can’t escape him. That he’d missed me.”

Kandomere turns to Montehugh, “I need the tape, bring it to me now!”

Montehugh steps over and gives your shoulder a quick squeeze. “Don’t worry kid, even if he did sense you or whatever, we won’t let the sick bastard anywhere near you.”

Pulling your feet up into the chair, you curl in on yourself and hug your knees. It doesn’t matter what they think, you know the truth, you’ll never be rid of Alexo. He was a part of you now whether you liked it or not.

“What on earth possessed you to go down there, Y/n?”

Kandomere’s exasperated question is weighted with something you can’t put your finger on. It makes you cringe.

“You wouldn’t understand,” you reply flatly.

“No, I don’t.” With a hand on his hip, he pinches the bridge of his nose. “What, exactly, makes you so sure he spoke to you and that it wasn’t a stress induced hallucination?”

He doesn’t believe you. Again.
Your heart plummets, dropping all the way to the basement floors as you realise the two of you are destined to repeat this same argument over and over. He hadn’t ever taken anything you’d said at face value, so why would he start now? More to the point, why had you not figured this out earlier? When would you learn that a leopard can’t change it’s spots?

In your minds eye you see the Kandomere from your dream, the one who had attacked you and it starts to make sense. Your subconscious had been warning you. It knew the elf would turn against you over this, it was his go to move.

The last of your courage and fight dissipate into the atmosphere leaving you dejected and alone. “I know. He said the words that triggered me the night on the balcony, the ones that brought everything back and there was no reason for him to.”

“What words?”

“Elves like to keep busy.” You’re distracted and only half listening to Kandomere as you consider your options. You could stay and try and prove what you’re saying, but all the while there’s the possibility Alexo gets a message to the Vegas coven. You could run, you’ll have to be even more careful than before as you doubt Kandomere will let you simply go, but you could find safety somewhere away from it all. Or you could kill Alexo before he got the word out. You’d killed elves before, you could do it again. Shouldn’t be too hard given his current situation. Of course you’d go down for it, and then you’d be locked up, and you’re pretty certain the Inferni would find out everything but—

“What happened when you passed out?” His tone is all business as he seats himself at his desk and starts scribbling down notes.

Resigning yourself to the interrogation you answer dispassionately, all the while trying to navigate your way through a plan of action that didn’t incriminate Kandomere or Montehugh or leave any of you dead.

Far sooner than you’d thought possible, Kandomere is pulling up a file on his computer and speaking brusquely to the person, you assume its Montehugh, on the other end of the phone. You tune out the video, unable to stand the sound of Alexo’s voice. You’re managing to blot it out until clear as a bell, he utters the phrase “we elves like to keep busy.”

Like you’re performing an action replay, you lose control of yourself. You crash out of the chair and land, twitching violently on the floor, unable to breathe. Your heart stops, your lungs freeze and you lose focus of everything except the ringing of his voice in your head. Unseeing and deaf, you fall into unconsciousness, and land straight back in the strange scenario you’d woken to earlier.

Kandomere is in the centre of the room, his arm around the same beautiful elf. You know what’s coming, and like words on a script it plays out exactly as you knew it would. Only this time, after he’s ripped out your throat he leans in close and breathes into your ear, “Arie minivì.”
You can’t recall ever seeing Kandomere worried. Not like this. He’d been concerned before and he’d been tense but this is a whole new level of anxiety. Groggily you open your eyes and take in the wide eyed terror on Kandomere’s face as he kneels over you. For a moment you’re caught between reality and your dream and instinctively you reach for your neck to try and stem the blood that isn’t there whilst trying to push the elf away. But it’s the same as last time. There is no blood, it was all just a dream.

As you open your eyes and move, Kandomere checks your pulse and inspects your face. “Y/n, can you hear me?”

Weakly, you bat at his hands. “Yes, I’m awake. I’m all right.”

With a ragged breath he sinks down onto his heels and drags you into his lap. “Joder, no vuelvas a hacer eso, mi amor, pensé que estabas muerto,” he rasps, resting his forehead against yours.

“It happened again.” You state needlessly, still blanketed by the confusion of your half conscious state.

“What happened, exactly? One minute you were sat and the next—“ He trails off and searches your eyes for answers.

“He said the words and I couldn’t breathe.”

Pushing against the floor you try to manoeuvre out of his grasp but he’s having non of it. He holds you firm, kissing the top of your head as he settles you down.

“Mi amor, you just passed out. I need to get you checked over.”

“I’m fine, it’s okay, I—“

“No, you may have hit your head. I’m not willing to take any chances here. Not until we know what he did to you.”

You stop struggling and meet his troubled gaze. “You believe me?”

“Of course now please, lay still and let me call the doctor.”

You blink slowly, allowing your eyes to lose focus as you acknowledge the rush of emotion engulfing you. The immediate elation of being believed morphs quickly into a sense of gratitude.
You don’t have to go it alone again, by accepting what you’d said, Kandomere had taken the burden from your shoulders and halved it in one fell swoop. He was going to stand by you this time. He was going to help. Relief overpowered your thankfulness and you lay back against Kandomere and cup his face in your hand.

“You believe me!”

A small crease forms between his brows and his head tilts. This is a look you have seen before and you know what’s coming before he speaks. “You seem surprised,” he states warily.

“I. I thought— I am, but—“ There’s a momentary flash of hurt on his features and it pains you more than you’d like. “I’m not used to anyone having my back. I’m sorry, I should have trusted you, I just thought, when you started questioning me—“

He exhales through his nose, looking away as you ramble on. “I had hoped you’d come to trust me. I see now I have more work to do on that front.”

The dejection in his voice weighs heavy on your heart and you hate yourself for not being able to read him better. You’d mistaken his tenacity for doubt and now you were both suffering from a severe bout of guilt, although his was needless. “Kandomere, I’m s—“

He presses his finger over your lips and quietly shushes you. “I fear I’m letting my growing feelings influence my expectations. Your reaction is understandable, no forgiveness is required. However, I beg of you to indulge me. Let me bring a doctor in, please querida, for my own peace of mind.” You’re stunned to silence which he is quick to exploit. “Let’s get you back into the chair and I’ll bring in our duty doctor.”

“And say what?” You want to put his mind at rest but how can you agree to his demand knowing that you can’t reveal any details.

Lifting you gently, he helps you into the chair before grasping the arms to cage you in and crouching down in front of you. “We’ll say you passed out.”

“That will only lead to questions I can’t answer like, what was I doing immediately prior to the incident and has it happened before.”

There’s confidence in his voice as he juts out his chin stubbornly. “Fine, tell them everything. I’ll handle the fall out. I don’t care what it takes, Y/n, you’re getting looked at by a professional.”

He’s still balancing on the balls of his feet before you, blocking your way, daring you to challenge him. He should know better. “Then I’ll lie. I’ll tell them I’m pregnant with your love child. That will explain away all my symptoms.”

“Y/n!” His harsh bark makes you chuckle which in turn sends him stalking around the back of his desk.

“See, Kandomere? I’m perfectly fine, besides there are more pressing matters if it’s my safety you’re concerned about, like what the hell he has planned next. If he can get to me then what’s to say he can’t get a message out, what if he has a psychic link to the others in the coven? I don’t even know if that’s possible but—”

“This isn’t an either or situation, we can get you looked at and deal with Alexo.” He snatches up his phone and presses a button. “Prisoner six-nine-five, code thirty-seven on my authority.” His eyes flick to yours. “Endangerment to life.”
As empowering as it is to have Kandomere on your side, his words bring you back to earth with a bump. The MTF had gone up against the Inferni many times before and their win to loss ratio was not overly impressive. Chewing your lip, you realise that very little has changed. Yes, Kandomere believes you and is going to try and stop what ever comes next but in all likelihood, all you’ve done is put him in the cross hairs with you. What if they tried to get to you through him?

Cradling the phone between his ear and shoulder, the elf turns his back to you, picks up his notebook and perches against his desk. “Yes, immediately and send the on call doctor to my office, It’s urgent.” He ends the call.

“Damnit Kan—“

His shoulders tense. “Do not test my patience on this matter, Y/n. I will stand your disregard on all manner of matters but not this.” He grinds out through a clenched jaw, still facing the window. “Tell the doctor what you must but you will be examined.” He spins around, scowling deep. “I will not allow that cabrón to take you from me, mi amor. Nunca volverás a ser de él.”

Fighting back the urge to run or shout you take a calming breath. He’s allowing his emotions to dictate his actions and that scares you. He needs to think with his head if he’s going to stand any chance of winning against the Inferni, but at the moment you can see the emotion controlling his thought process. You need to appeal to the analytical side of his brain.

“And if I tell them I passed out because of magic wielded by the Inferni prisoner? What happens to you then? What about Montehugh? Or Ford and Ross?” You speak in a measured voice, hoping to bring out the composed agent you know is in there somewhere. “How can you work the case if you’re suspended?”

He arches a brow and crosses his arms, looking down on you with an air of arrogance. “I am Special Agent in charge, a position that was not afforded to me lightly.”

You bow your head and nod to the floor. “Fine, but have you considered that on the off chance they do take you off the case, given your recent misdemeanour with him and now this, if they suspend you, how do you propose to stop him then? Out there you’re chasing ghosts, in here, granted it’s not much better, but you have resources, you have a chance.”

You’ve struck a nerve but not the one you were aiming for. His eyes harden and he lays his palms flat against his desk, towering over it and you. “Your argument would carry more weight if you had any notion of how this organisation works,” he growls. “Here we are a team. We watch out for one another. We fight collectively against all magic users and their allies. We are a united front and if it came down to a choice between me or him, I am without a doubt my team will support whatever decision I made. Magic and the individuals who use it are our collective enemy—“

“So why are you protecting me?” Your broken whisper cute through his rage fuelled tirade, bringing him to an abrupt halt.

His features soften. “Because you are different.”

“No. What’s different is—“

You’re interrupted by a sharp rap on the door drawing Kandomere’s attention away from you and causing his back to stiffen.

“Your obstinacy will be the death of me, woman,” he hisses before straightening up and calling out a curt, “enter.”
An elderly, portly man in a white lab coat ambles into the room, his gaze flickering nervously between you and the elf. “I’m Doctor Pierce.” His inflection makes the introduction sound like a question and sends Kandomere into defence mode.

Narrowing his eyes he peers intimidatingly down at the older man. “What is your speciality?” The doctor freezes under the elf’s scrutiny. “Well?” Kandomere snaps aggressively. “This is an urgent matter, we don’t have all day. What is your speciality?”

Dr. Pierce clears his throat and dips his head. From your vantage point in the chair you can see the flush of embarrassment creep up his neck. “I, ah, well, you see—“

Kandomere has had enough. “No, this won’t do. I need the best neurologist we have on staff. You’re done. You can go!”

The doctor is now bright red and sweating, and quite honestly you’re more concerned for his health than your own. Shooting a warning glare at Kandomere you stand up, swaying slightly as you let go of the chair.

“Hello Dr. Pierce, I’m Y/n Rubin. It’s me you’re here for.” Purposely situating yourself between the two men, you shield the doctor from the seething glower on Kandomere’s face. “I’ve passed out twice today and Special Agent Kandomere wants me cleared for service before he’ll let me do anything.”

At once the older man’s disposition changes. He straightens up and appraises you with a professional eye. His fingers close around your wrist, finding your pulse point as he checks his watch. Next he takes your face in his hands and tilts it up, producing a small light from somewhere. A second later he holds up a pen he plucks from his top pocket and smiles kindly, “Follow my pen with just your eyes please, Miss Rubin.”

You do as he says, all the while feeling the apprehension rolling off the elf behind you.

“Is there anything you can think of that caused your bout of—“

“I’ll stop you there doc. I know why it happened, what he want to know is am I physically okay now?”

Dr. Pierce purses his lips. “Do you feel nauseous at all?”

“No.”

“Headache? Ringing in the ears?”

“No, I feel fine.”

The doctor leans to one side and stares past you to Kandomere. “Has she shown any signs of confusion or memory loss since unconsciousness?”

“No.”

“And you say you know why you collapsed.” His eyes are back on you. “Twice,” he adds with a frown.

“It was an external factor that involving magic but that’s all I’m at liberty to disclose.” Your formal answer earns you two raised brows.
“Okay, Miss Rubin. Well, I can’t see any sign of concussion, however it could be delayed so I can’t sign off on anything. I’d suggest an MRI to check brain function if you want an accurate insight of what’s going on in there, but if it’s magic related, there’s no guarantee the readings will show anything untoward." He puts away his pen and light and pats his lab coat pockets. "I'm sorry but without a full work up and observation I can't make any solid conclusions. May I suggest calling in Dr. Liona, she's the most experienced staff doctor when it comes to magic illness and ailments."

Giving the older man a forced smile you nod once. "Thank you for your assessment, Dr. Pierce."

"You may go." Kandomere barks, sitting himself down and sighing.

"So, what now?" You ask cautiously, glancing behind you to ensure the doctor has closed the door properly.

Every muscle in the elf's body is tight as he sits ramrod straight in his leather chair. "Observation. I'm taking you home and I'll be monitoring your every breath until I am satisfied you are okay."

Treading carefully so as not to rile him further you manage to stop your eyes from rolling at the absurdity of his suggestion. "Surely you know how triggering works? I'll assume, for arguments sake, you do and as such you'll understand that as long as he doesn't speak to me and you don't play that damn audio again, I'll be fine. There's no need to go but there's every need to deal with him."

He waves a hand dismissively. "The order I gave means he's being placed in a drug induced coma as we speak. My main priority is you, mi alma."

"Wait, what?"

You know you're testing his patience by the tick in his jaw. "I fail to see what's so hard to understand." He moves to clear his desk and shut down his computer.

“You fail to see a lot,” you mutter walking backwards, towards the door. His gaze follows you and with every step his frown deepens.

"Y/n?"

“Kandomere.” You sigh. You don't want what comes next but for his safety and yours you have to do it. You can't watch your own back if you're too busy watching his so this is the part where you have to attempt to distance yourself, even though that’s the last thing you want. “I think--” He moves impossibly fast, capturing you in his embrace in less time than it takes for you to process what's happened.

"I hate when you say that, mi alma. Please, whatever you're thinking, don't. Let me take care of you. Lean on me instead of pushing me away." Tender lips press against your temple. "Yo te protegeré con mi aliento de muerte es que debo."

Getting over the initial shock of his rapid ambush you relax against him. "I'm scared, I don't know how much power he has over me or what he's still capable of. What if he's figured out our connection? What if he tries to hurt you? What if the Inferni are already on their way?"

Weaving his hands through your hair, he tilts your face to his. "That's an awful lot of what if's."

"Maybe, I still have to consider them all though."

His lips ghost over yours briefly. "What about a compromise? How about we go through the
possibilities together? I’ll get Montehugh to monitor the prisoner and we can work from home to determine if there’s been any movement of the coven.”

He’s throwing you a lifeline and as touched as you are, it’s not enough. “You didn’t hear him. They weren’t idle threats. I’ve got a target painted on my back and if they can get me they will, regardless of the fall out. Kandomere, I can’t have you in this with me. I can’t put you in danger.”

He chuckles dryly and locks his arms around your waist. “You seem to think you have a choice, mi alma.”

“Are you saying I don’t?”

He offers you a pointed glare and it chills you to the bone. “I’m saying you're stuck with me, Y/n, because you have my heart whether you like it or not. I'm saying that any attack on you is an attack on me, and will not be tolerated by the MTF. I'm saying that I've been a fly in the Inferni’s ointment long before you came along, and I've learned how to handle their threats so please, place your trust in me. If not in my ability to do my job efficiently then in the strength of my feelings for you. I will not let anyone hurt you again. Trust me, mi amor.”

Trust him. Oh how you want to. You'd give anything to sink into his embrace and let him take you home, away from the danger, away from him but Kandomere doesn't appreciate the levels Alexo will go to. He hasn't experienced the wrath and burning hatred of the Inferni elf. He can't possibly comprehend the consequences of standing between you and them. Even if you weren't harbouring feelings for the blue haired agent, you'd still refuse to put him in this position.

He must see the warring emotions in your eyes as his expression grows guarded. "Give me twenty-four hours to prove to you I can handle this."

"Kandomere." Sighing you give in to his demand, silently praying that your weakness doesn't get him hurt. "Fine, what's your plan?"

He stoops and rests his forehead against yours, a victorious smile on his lips and reflecting in his eyes. "I'm going to do what I do best, querida. I'm going to hunt Inferni."

Chapter End Notes

Joder, no vuelvas a hacer eso, mi amor, pensé que estabas muerto - fuck, don't ever do that again, my love, I thought you were dead.

Nunca volverás a ser de él. - You will never be his again.

Yo te protegeré con mi aliento de muerte es que debo - I will protect you with my dying
breath if I must
Chapter Twenty-Two

Warnings:

Panic attacks

Watching Kandomere work is quite something. He’s focussed, single minded and relentless in his quest to prove that he can keep you safe. It’s as sweet as it is painful to see him going to such lengths for nothing. He’s out of his depth and you’re annoyed that you caved and gave him another twenty-four hours when really you should have run, for his sake and yours.

To try and allay your fears, he has a live feed playing on a spare laptop, allowing you to see the comatose body of Alexo, statuesque in the bed. You’d sat glued to the feed for hours until your eyes had watered, your vision blurred and you’d admitted defeat. During your vigil, he hadn’t so much as twitched, you’re not buying it though. Montehugh has been quick to reassure you, on an hourly basis, that the elf’s brain function is within normal parameters for someone in a coma but really, what does that even mean? When magic is involved, what good are electronics or machinery? Doctor Pierce had said it himself, they couldn’t monitor magic. Nothing the elf did would be enough to convince you now.

It was just a matter of time before they came.

Pulling the throw tighter around your shoulders, you curl into the corner of the couch and resume drinking your coffee. Kandomere has been at it since you’d walked through the door and his hard work looked likely to continue into the early hours. You’d offered to cook as a way of easing your guilt but he’d declined with a quick shake of the head. You’d then tried to make him coffee only to be waved away by the distracted elf. In the end you’d just given up and resigned yourself to mutely watching him pointlessly do his thing, which is exactly what you’re doing now.

Kandomere has the phone to his ear and he’s pacing back and forth across the room. One eyebrow raises as he listens intently to who ever he’s talking to. Your curiosity is piqued when he starts speaking Övüsi but you’d agreed to stay out of the way and let him work, so you bite back the question on the tip of your tongue.

He’s scowling now. A heavy glare aimed out of the window as he curls back his lip and sneers aggressively. He is exquisite in his beauty and intimidating with his pent up fury. You’re both terrified and drawn to him as you watch his predatory stalk up and down the apartment. He must sense you watching as he pivots and briefly flicks his gaze in your direction, only to look away just as fast.

Sighing, you unwrap yourself and quietly return your mug to the kitchen. For the millionth time you glance towards the corridor leading to the front door and wonder if you’re doing the right thing. Being a passive spectator in the trouble you’d caused isn’t sitting well, especially when you know that Kandomere wouldn’t be doing any of this if it weren’t specifically for you. If you’d never come to him he’d probably be out socialising now, enjoying himself and relaxing, not staring down the barrel of a gun, or wand as the case may be. If you’d stayed away he’d be safe, he’d be free from the imposing threat of the Inferni. But you hadn’t, and now you’ve pulled him right
down beside you, directly into the crosshairs of your enemy.

Your eyes drift back to the elf pacing the floor and your heart aches. He was breaking his back trying to achieve the impossible and it was killing him. You can see it in the way his shoulders are set and his hand worries through his hair. He’s losing a battle he never should have been drafted into.

Outside the moon is bathing LA in its waning weak silvery light as it pokes out between the dark clouds. A storm is brewing and you’re just waiting for it to break, knowing that at any moment the sky will split apart with a voracious show put on for your enjoyment by mother nature herself. Maybe you should take a leaf out of her book. Maybe all this waiting around was just putting off the inevitable. The storm is blowing in and you can batten down all the hatches but it’s still going to devastate and tear apart everything you’re trying so hard to protect. Perhaps you should get out before—

“Y/n.”

You whirl around guiltily as Kandomere says your name, your heart racing as if he somehow knows what you’re thinking. But he isn’t looking at you, he’s staring outside, one hand holding his cell, the other on his hip. His image is reflected in the large window and you can clearly see his exhausted, pinched expression in the glass.

This isn’t fair. You’re hurting him.

Backing away, you move slow so as not to attract his attention. Using the kitchen island as a guide, you trail your hands across the surface behind you, guiding your way. When you come to the end, you step carefully, keeping your gaze fixed on Kandomere, and holding your breath. With your heart pounding, you creep to the hallway, and then by some miracle all the way to the door.

Your hand is resting on the door handle, you can almost taste your escape, all you have to do is twist your wrist and…

Closing your eyes you grasp the handle hard, enjoying the way it bites into your palm. You hold it tight and take a breath, attempting to school your racing heart before you leave. It doesn’t work. There’s a twisting in your stomach and your body runs cold. Can you really do this? Can you walk out on the man you’ve caught feelings for in order to protect him?

Resting your forehead on the door you blink back tears of frustration and curse under your breath. Just one more step, open the door take one more step and you’ll be on your way. And he’ll be free. Free of you and the curse you seem to have accumulated.

Gripping tighter you let the tears fall knowing full well that even though you should run, you can’t. You don’t want to leave the elf, you don’t want to be out there on your own, you don’t want to start again. You’re too selfish, too greedy to do the right thing and leave so you slip your hand down to your side and move away. Backing up, you slide down the wall next the door and hug your knees to your chest.

The apartment is silent as you contemplate your failings and in the back of your mind you recognise there’s another problem on the horizon. Resting your head on your knees you sigh and massage your temples, trying to soothe away the ache that refuses to go when it hits you. The apartment is silent. Where’s Kandomere? Has he noticed your absence?

You’re about to scramble to your feet when a jangle of keys pulls your attention to the door. Folding yourself up tight you watch in surprise as the door opens, swinging just wide enough to
allow a svelte female access. She flicks her wrist to close the door and saunters away without ever noticing your presence, you presume her focus must be locked on the elf at the end of the corridor, the one who has just ripped his gaze from you to the approaching newcomer.

“Congratulations, Kandomere, you got me here.” The woman’s voice is rich and impatient and she addresses him without fear.

He glances back to where you’re curled into a ball. “You let yourself in.” It’s more an accusation than a statement. “I thought I asked you to return the key.”

“Oh you did, I just haven’t found the time yet, after all, it’s only been a few weeks.” The mystery woman snaps.

Kandomere narrows his eyes and crosses his arms over his chest. He’s annoyed but trying to control his temper. “You can return it before you leave, but for now—“

“Yes, for now, let’s take a look at your little pet project shall we? Where to? I assume your bedroom.” Bitter contempt is rolling off the woman in waves as she stomps past the elf, leaving him looking at you.

You’re looking back, unseeing, mentally slotting the pieces together to figure out what’s going on. It’s obvious this woman had been close to Kandomere, so close that she had her own keys to his apartment therefore it wasn’t a massive leap to assume they’d been serious up until a few weeks ago. The shudder than wracks your frame as you work out the probable cause of their breakup is powerful enough to steal your breath.

“I’d like Liona to take a look at you. She’s the best doctor in the city when it comes to magically inflicted illnesses.” He interrupts your thoughts, speaking at rather than to you and avoiding eye contact.

Liona? Dr Liona. Dr. Pierce had mentioned her back at the office citing her as the only doctor who could help you. Of course she would happen to be Kandomere’s ex.

“Please, Y/n, just let her take a look at you. She won’t take long, I promise.”

His arms unfold and he takes up an open stance as he waits patiently for you to respond. He’s trying to look non-threatening and it would be funny if you weren’t so distracted by your current situation.

“Kandomere!” Liona barks, her voice echoing through the apartment.

He sighs and the muscles in his jaw dance. “Y/n?” He’s becoming agitated, whether at you or at her you’re unsure. His mood isn’t helped by the unmistakable sounds of heels clicking against the hardwood floor indicating the return of his ex. “Y/n, please!”

Y/n. That’s three times in as many minutes he’s called you by your given name and not one of his usual pet names. Guess it’s safe to say you’re the cause of his growing temper then. Deciding against annoying him further you get to your feet, standing just as the first flash of lightning streaks across the night sky.

Your eyes automatically glance to the window as the heavens open and LA is drenched in a sudden deluge of water.

“Kandomere! Where the hell is— Oh.”
As the other woman rejoins you, you turn to greet her, only for the air to rush into your lungs with an audible gasp. Wide eyed and dizzy, you take in the female elf next to Kandomere. Her long blonde hair and pretty blue eyes are exactly as they were in your dreams, right down to the stern arch of her perfectly plucked eyebrows. Even the way she holds herself is the same. The two beautiful elves, side by side and staring at you, bring it all rushing back and for a moment you can feel Kandomere’s teeth ripping your throat open.

As if on cue, another flash of storm charged light illuminates the corridor and casts menacing shadows over the faces watching you, twisting their features menacingly. Unthinking you slam back against the wall, the urge to flee so strong it's obliterating any cognizant or rational thought processes. Hitting your head on the unforgiving wall you blink back the double vision and blindly reach for the door handle.

“What is she doing?” Liona questions, her calm voice eerie in the darkened hall.

“Leaving.” Kandomere states flatly.

Yanking open the door you run out into the entryway and frantically jab the call button for the elevator. You've lost track of what’s happening and you've no idea where you’re going or what you're doing. All you can think of is the desperate need to escape.

“Where will you go?”

You startle as Kandomere speaks, you hadn’t noticed him leaning against the open doorframe. Again you impulsively back away, your hand reaching back to your throat, your eyes widening in fear.

At your reaction, he tilts his head and frowns. “Y/n? What’s wrong?”

The elevator arrives with a shrill ‘ding’ and again you jump before rushing the doors as they roll open. You're unaware of everything except the panic telling you to run. You're single-mindedness makes you clumsy and crashing into the mirrored box at speed you knock yourself to the floor, landing with a painful thud.

“Querida?” Kandomere puts his hand on the door to stop it closing. “Why are you looking at me with such fear in your eyes? What do you see? Can you hear me, Y/n?”

“Oh this is ridiculous,” Liona grumbles. Brushing past Kandomere to stride over to you, she spits out something in Övüsi and leans down and stabs you in the arm with a syringe. Dazed from your fall you're unable to do anything except watch as the plunger pushes what ever it is into your veins. The effect is instantaneous. You hear Kandomere growl and the last thing you see before your eyes slip closed is his furious face advancing towards you. Unable to move, you’re overpowered by both the elf and the drug, as one picks you up and the other drags you down into unconsciousness. Not that that’s any better. As the darkness engulfs you, a sinister chuckle fills your ears.

“Ah my little starlight, have you come to play?”
Confused, naked and bleeding you hurtle down the never ending hallway, your feet slapping against the cold stone floor. Behind you Alexo strolls along calmly, an iron rod in his hand scraping along the floor, the noise it makes echoing off the walls.

“I do so love when you run.”

You’re bloodied, beaten and exhausted, and even though you know what happens when he catches you, your legs slow to a stop.

“Why are you doing this?” You cry for the hundredth time.

Hands snake around your waist and drag you backwards into an embrace you don’t want. “Because you’re mine. Arie minivi.” He drifts into Övüsi and smiles. “My starlight, my beautiful, powerful starlight, are you ready to talk or should the games continue?”

You shake your head emphatically. “Please, Alexo, no more. I can’t.” Heavy tears roll down from your eyes, coating your face in a fresh layer of salty tasting water. “No more,” you beg.

“Shhh.” He smooths your hair, away from your face and tilts you so he can deftly lick your cheek. A lewd groan rumbles through him at the taste of your pain and anguish. “Tell me where the wand is and all this will end.”

“Alexo—“ Your pleading morphs into a scream when he tears open your skin with the jagged metal bar.

“I don’t want any more of your pathetic whining, Y/n, I want the wand. Tell me where the wand is.”

You’re panting as the pain radiates out from the point of impact and it’s hard to concentrate on anything other than your agony. You don’t remember how you got here, or when Alexo captured you, but you remember every deplorable attack he’s taken pleasure in inflicting. Blood seeps out of every split he’s created in your flesh, every punch left a bruise, every jab with the mental rod a mix of both. You’re sure you’ve cracked a rib or two and your left hand is pretty much smashed beyond repair. But you won’t tell him, no matter what he does. He can’t ever be allowed to get his deranged sociopathic hands on that particular weapon. So you resign yourself to what you know is going to come next.

“Starlight.” His tone is one of warning and it makes you shudder. “I am darker than ever, please don’t make me kill your shine.” He smiles again. “Or is this a gift? Do you want me to punish you? After all you know how I enjoy it.” He pulls away and without his support you drop to the ground. “You came for me, didn’t you? After the magic feds caught me, you came for me, for your master, because you know who you belong to.” Sharp beady eyes snap to you. “You know
you’re mine.”

He lunges, snatching up your left hand and squeezing it hard. You scream until you’re hoarse but he doesn’t let go. Instead he brings it to his lips and kisses your palm tenderly.

Somewhere deep inside, something snaps. You try to yank your hand back, gasping as the world tilts and you find yourself sitting in the centre of Kandomere’s plush bed, your hand in his. It’s a world away from where you were and your befuddled brain can’t figure out what the hell is going on. Blinking rapidly you scan the room, making sure everything is where it should be and that this wasn’t some sort of sick ploy by Alexo.

“Mi amor,” Kandomere straightens his back, leaning away from you slightly and readjusting his position on the bed so he’s sat on the edge. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you.”

Hesitantly you reach out and brush your fingers against his arm. When flesh meets flesh you snatch your hand back and stifle a sob. He’s real.

“Y/n?”

Being snatched from Alexo’s reach and plunged into Kandomere’s bedroom has disoriented you but as you breathe in his musky scent your sluggish mind catches up.

“She drugged me, the doctor drugged me.” The doctor you had dreamt about previously. The one you’d seen before Kandomere tore out your throat.

Kandomere extends his hand out to you, laying it close enough to touch but leaving the choice up to you. “I didn’t know that was her intention, I’m sorry.”

Meeting his gaze you wring your hands together in your lap, pulling them away from him. You should tell him you’d seen them together in a… a what? A vision? A dream? A memory? How could you explain what you didn’t know? What you should say falls away as you open your mouth to speak. “Alexo, he found me.”

The disappointment he wears at your rejection quickly changes to worry. “What do you mean? Did something happen whilst you were sleeping?”

The way his eyes flit over you sets your nerves on edge. He’s looking for something. “I dreamt I was back with him and he—“ You don’t want to say it, don’t want to relive it.

Kandomere closes his eyes, his lips moving silently. Something about what you’ve said is troubling him. That in itself is enough to spike your anxiety.

“What is it?” You ask warily.

His chin drops and his face disappears behind blue hair as he turns away. “The moment you were sedated, Montehugh called. Alexo’s brain activity skyrocketed. His parahippocampal gyrus in particular showed a great deal of activity.”

You shook your head in bewilderment. “And that means?”

Scubbing his hand down his face, he glances over his shoulder to hold your questioning gaze for a second. “We don’t know for certain, we can only make educated guesses. You showed a great deal of activity in your frontal lobe, parietal lobe and cerebellum.”

“Okay, wanna translate that into English?” You snap impatiently, dread the driving force behind
the anger. Staring at his back you know that he’s avoiding giving you the bad news.

“Y/n—“ He pauses.

“The dreams were real weren’t they? It was him. He’s actually done something to me, something you can’t understand, something magical.” You’re greatest fear is coming true, you’re somehow linked to the masochistic elf, there’s no getting rid of him now.

“There’s a correlation between the readouts of your brain activity and Alexo’s, yes, but—“

“He was there,” you interrupt, unable to listen to Kandomere try and avoid the truth. “In my dreams, he was somehow there.”

“You dreamt of him hurting you?” He angles himself so you see the raw pain etched into his eyes. Biting your lip you nod.

The elf clenches his jaw and for a moment it looks like he’s going to approach you. He reaches out as if to hold you but then thinks better of it and moves away to seat himself in one of the chairs by the window. As the distance between you grows, you ignore the tightening sensation in your chest, refusing to recognise the gulf opening up between you both.

“The parts of your brain that were most stimulated are those linked with fear and pain.” He drops his head into his hands. “I should never— What— What did he—“

“Don’t.” He’s blaming himself. Maybe because it was his invitation that brought Liona here, maybe because he didn’t finish the job when he almost killed Alexo, maybe because he’d promised he wouldn’t let anyone else hurt you. Whatever the reason, you can’t muster the strength to talk about the latest torture you’d endured, even if it hadn’t physically taken place. “Tell me what the Doc did, what she found out.

Abruptly he stands and announces, “I need a drink.”

Dragging a hand through his hair he strides out of the room without so much as a glance in your direction.

“Kandomere?” Scrambling across the bed you follow him, bemused by the speed at which he’s apparently running away. “Kandomere!”

He ignores you, choosing to busy himself with his favourite elven whiskey instead. The first generous tumbler is swallowed down in one and he’s quick to refill. Again he knocks it back in one fell swoop.

Folding your arms around yourself for comfort you scowl deeply. “What the hell?”

After the third glass is emptied he slams down the crystal so hard it shatters. Ignoring it completely he rounds the kitchen island and grips his hips hard, looming down at you. “You were leaving.”

His voice is cool but his eyes burn with pain. “Moments before Liona arrived I saw you. You were leaving. Sneaking away.”

Sucking your bottom lip into your mouth you nod. There’s no point in lying.

“You were leaving me until her arrival stopped you. And you were leaving again when she sedated you and sent you straight back to his hell.

Holding yourself tightly you stare at your feet. “I was, but it wasn’t, it’s not how it looked,” you
whisper. “I wanted to run and take the danger with me but… the thought of leaving you, it hurt, even though I knew— know it’s the right thing to do, the only way to protect you, I still couldn’t do it. I couldn’t leave you. Until she came and—”

In two long strides he’s on you, his hands pulling you flush against his body before cradling you tenderly. “You promised me twenty-four hours—”

“Kand—”

“No! It’s time for you to hear me. There has been no movement of the Vegas coven, or any others we’re monitoring. If, and that’s a very big if, Alexo managed to get word out, they’re not acting on it. Chances are they’d assume it was a trap created by us anyway.” His voice raises and becomes forceful. “You don’t get to protect me. You don’t get to make that choice. I protect you.” He growls, releasing you from his grip and marching into the kitchen to snatch up the whiskey bottle. “Did you think of the consequences at all?” He roars, yanking another glass from the cupboard. “When you dreamt up this hair brain scheme to run, had you considered my part in all of this?”

He’s livid and although you know he would never hurt you, you’re scared. Timid and wary you try to make yourself smaller. “You’re all I considered.”

“So you stayed for me?” He snaps, pouring a glass full of amber liquid. “Stayed because you knew how I’d crumble without you?” There’s sarcasm dripping from every his word. “Stayed because you couldn’t break my heart?”

Your eyes fill with burning tears. Humiliation heats you from the inside and uncertainty robs you of any remaining courage.

“I have been patient,” he’s not done, not by far, “I have tried to step gently to avoid scaring you and yet you still insist on running. What am I to do? Perhaps I should have locked you up to begin with, kept you in an ivory tower away from the perils you’re so quick to pursue.” He finishes his fourth glass of liquor and starts his fifth. “I cannot fathom you, I try so hard to keep you from danger, to meet your every need, to take care of you,” silver blue eyes pin you in place as he breathes reverently, “to love you! And yet you fight, you resist and you always, always run.”

He loves you? He loves you!

Storming past he leans against the back of the couch, the half empty bottle swinging from his hand. Perching his backside against the furniture he takes another hefty mouthful as he glares over at you.

“The first time he made me pass out, in the cell, I dreamt of you. You were with a beautiful elf at a party. When you saw me you came over and,” your breath catches in your throat. You hadn’t meant to confess, it just slipped out, but no point stopping now. “You ripped me open with your teeth, leaving me to die on the floor.”

He gapes at you in horror.

“The second time, in your office, it happened again, only this time you whispered something, words I don’t know, Övüsi I think.” Your voice is trembling. “I freaked when I saw Liona because she was the elf with you in my dream. I hadn’t planned on, I mean,” a heavy sigh drains the last of your energy leaving you swaying precariously. “I’d tried to leave but couldn’t because I’m selfish and weak. It hurt too much and even though I knew you’d be safer with me gone, I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t walk away from you. When I saw you and her together, I don’t— I ran. It wasn’t a conscious decision, I just had to get away, away from the feeling that what I’d seen was a
premonition and not a dream. Away from the Kandomere in my head who,“ your head shakes, “who kills me.”

“I’ll kill him!” The elf thunders. “I will tear out his vital organs one by one with my bare hands. I will inflict such pain he won’t recall his own name let alone yours!” He stalks past you, murder in his eyes and his fists balled, muscles coiled and ready to strike. These aren’t empty threats.

“I’m so sorry.”

You speak under your breath but his superior hearing catches every guilt ridden word and stops him in his tracks. Slowly he uncurls his taught body and turns to face you.

“He put those images there to punish me. He used my form to terrify you and exact revenge on me. It is not you who needs to apologise, mi amor.”

“I don’t understand.”

Kandomere swallows thickly and upends his glass to his waiting mouth. Setting the bottle and empty glass down on the kitchen island next to the shattered remnants he bows his head.

“What he showed you were two memories combined. He’d seen Liona and I at a ball some time ago. Of course I had no idea of his identity at the time. I recall vividly how he’d watched us but arrogantly chalked it up to jealousy. The attack, that’s what happened in Vegas. He goaded me, taunted me with the things he’d done to you. Laughed about your death. Seeing you at the facility, it wouldn’t have taken him any time to unravel your presence there. He’d know you were under my protection. He’s trying to make you fear me by using his own memories to warp your opinion.”

“Does he know? About us I mean? Can he— Can he read my mind?”

“I don’t know.”

You’re unable to stand any longer. Either exhausted from the emotional trauma or weighed down by the guilt of dragging him into all of this, you sink to the floor. You never reach it though. Kandomere swiftly takes you in his arms, one arm around your back and one under your legs, and carries you to the sofa. Placing you down gently he arranges you so that he’s knelt on the floor between your thighs, his hands caressing the sides of your face. Drawing you gently forward he leans his forehead against yours.

“Please, mi amor, say you don’t hate me. Tell me you don’t see me as you do him.”

Stunned you try and pull away to look at him. You’re shocked to the core, astounded that he could possibly think you’d ever tar him with the same brush as Alexo.

“Kand—”

A flash of silver catches your eye and for a second you see his panic stricken expression before desperate, demanding lips seize your own. Kandomere kisses you frantically, his tongue pushing into your mouth and dominating yours in a whiskey and despair fuelled frenzy. Hot hands rake at your clothes, pulling and tugging relentlessly until he finds bare skin. Gone is the reserved, composed elf you’re used to as he forces you to yield to his touch. He is wild in his endeavour to have you, effortlessly and carelessly manipulating you into a position that allows him full control. He lies over you, covering your body with his, using his weight to immobilise you.

His sinful mouth only leaves yours, once he has you down to your bra and trousers, by which point you’re too breathless to speak. Gulping down oxygen, you continue to push against his shoulders,
but it’s futile. Either he doesn’t feel your resistance or he’s ignoring it.

“Kandomere, sto—“

His kiss returns with renewed vigour so you turn away and gasp, “I don’t hate you!”

He stills, half an inch from your turned face and stares down at you. Cautiously you roll your head to meet his tortured gaze.

“I don’t blame you for any of this, not even what Liona did.”

A crease forms between his brows as he contemplates your words. His eyes dart over your features, drinking you in, watching for any sign of a lie. Cupping his face you slide your hand down to his strong jaw, guiding his lips back to yours for a soft, languid kiss. Taking the lead you calm his hectic pace and lock your arms firmly around his neck. This time, he allows you to break the kiss without argument.

“I’m not going anywhere without you.”

He screws his eyes tight and breathes in heavily through his nose. “Can you promise me this?” It’s hard for him to speak and his words are ground out with a clenched jaw.

“Look at me.” Hesitantly he does as you ask. “I can, yes. I couldn’t go through with it. When I tried to leave, I couldn’t, so yes, it is a promise I can make.”

“Mi amor.” He closes his arms around you and rolls you both, putting you above him. “There is much you may not understand when it comes to elf culture and behaviour. I know this and yet you constantly make me forget myself. I’m a possessive elf, I fear I may have proved this in the worst way tonight—“

“Enough, I can’t listen to any more apologies.” Laying one hand on his hard chest for leverage you to push up and silence him with a finger on his perfect lips. “I am scared, Kandomere. I don’t know what Alexo has done, I don’t know if he can hear me now, I don’t know if the others are coming. But I do know you will protect me, I know I feel safe with you and I know that no matter what happens, I’m so thankful that I chose to come to you.” Biting your lip you settle back onto his chest and listen to the rapid beat of his heart. “I don’t say this lightly, and I hope you’re able to fully comprehend the weight of these words; I care for you, a lot, more than a lot but given my track record—” you sigh, not wanting to drag Jay into this moment. “Let’s just struggle through this together, okay? Accept that we’re both going to make mistakes but we’ll learn together.”

His heart quickens. “You really mean this, mi alma?”

Raising up on your hands you climb off him and offer him a smile. “There’s no where I’d rather be than with you, Kandomere, no one I’d rather end the day with.” Grabbing his wrist you tug gently, encouraging him to get up off the couch. As he reaches his full height you continue to pull until he’s walking behind you as you lead him to the bedroom.

“Let me show you what you mean to me,” you whisper over your shoulder.
You don’t want to think you just want to get lost in the feel of him, the touch of his skin against yours, the carnal joining of your bodies. Too much is in doubt, too many unknown factors at play to determine what happens next, so why waste time worrying when you could be spending it like this. His hand clamped in yours, you tow him to the bedroom with only one goal in mind. Where words fail you, your touch won’t, you’ll worship him, you’ll revere him and you’ll show him everything you can’t say.

He obediently follows you soundlessly and you know from the tension in his arm that he’s stuck in his head, picking through every last thing that went wrong today, everything he could have handled differently, everything he wished he could change.

Reaching his room you let yourself in and surprise him by turning left and entering the en-suite. Spinning to walk backwards you release his hand and wrap your fingers around his tie, gently working it free and pulling it off.

He opens his mouth, inhaling as he does, readying himself to speak so you shake your head and lay a finger back against those plush, warm, tempting lips. Catching his eye you slowly shake your head. He swallows before closing his eyes in acquiescence. A swirl of disappointment pulls at the corer of your consciousness, you wished he wouldn’t hide his eyes, you want to see him, all of him, the good, the bad and the hidden.

Sweeping your gaze down his lean body, you slip your hands under the lapels of his jacket and up, removing it from his shoulders. He shrugs it off and you’re careful to lay it on the counter so it doesn’t crease.

Kandomere in a vest and dress shirt is a breathtaking sight so you allow yourself the time to admire him, letting your hands and mind wander as you do. He’s so unlike the other elves you’ve come across, where they’ve been violent, he’s been kind, where they’d been volatile he’d been cautious, where they’d been haughty, he’d shown love.

Under the fine clothes covering him, you feel the flex of his strong muscles. He’s strong, not only elf strong but muscular and you can’t wait to strip him naked. But you refuse to rush, not tonight. Tonight you’re going to build the anticipation, enjoying each second of impatience, relish the exploration of every perfect expanse of skin.

You feel his gaze on you, heavy and expectant and you can’t help but look deep into his intense eyes. He’s stressed, strung out, anxious and it’s your turn to soothe his afflictions. Stepping around him you loop your arms under his and hold him from behind. Resting your cheek against his shoulder you splay your hands open, one on his chest the other his stomach, pulling him close. You breathe deeply, slowing your thoughts and heart. He is everything you ever wanted, kind, smart, caring and understanding, you can’t understand why you’ve fought against him for so long.
Pressing up onto your tiptoes you hook your chin over his shoulder and unbutton his vest, your fingers slipping down the smooth material with ease. As it gapes open, you deftly pull on his dress shirt, untucking it from his trousers. Starting at the bottom you work your way up the buttons until that too hangs open. This time you’re less careful, peeling both items off at once and dropping them to the floor behind you.

Your eyes are fixed on the miles of skin covering his wide, powerful shoulders that taper down to his waist. Muscles twitch beneath the creamy flesh, the cords flexing and tightening as he fights the urge to move.

Closing your eyes you press your lips to the middle of his shoulder blades, your hands sweeping his hair aside to allow you access to his neck. Purposefully you shower him with chaste kisses, pressing your mouth to every available spot.

You need him to know, want him to understand, but how can he when you have no idea yourself. Your feelings are growing, morphing, becoming something more, you’re just not sure what they’re transforming into. Could it be love? You don’t know, the only love you’ve known, with the exception of Kandomere’s, has brought nothing but pain and heartache.

Once you’ve had your fill of the valleys and plains of his impressive back, you lightly stroke your hands down his arms that hang at his sides until you reach his hips. Hooking your thumbs into the waist band of his slacks, you slowly move them to the fastening at the front, giving him plenty of opportunity to stop you. He doesn’t move a single inch so you press on, unbuttoning them and giving them a gentle shove down. They fall and pool at his ankles.

Unclasping your bra, you toss it aside and move around your stoic elf. His eyes are closed and his face tilted ever so slightly upwards. He looks angelic under the stage like lighting in here, his serene features lit in such a way it makes your heart clench. He is perfect.

Standing facing him, you start with your hands running through his hair, allowing them to continue down his heated body once you reach those impossible shoulders. A low grumble of appreciation rumbles in his chest and you step closer, impulsively kissing him over his thudding heart. Your lips connect to his firm chest, the pulsing beat of his heart clearly noticeable despite the stunning layer of muscle. His scent invades you, and for a moment you simply pause to take it all in, the touch of him under your hands and lips, the unique aroma of spice and musk, the sound of his clipped breathing.

He is truly something else.

Your lips move of their own accord, following the lines of his pectorals. Again you take your time, laying a thousand kisses over his neck, clavicle, chest and stomach. Your fingers work out the tension in his arms, finally coming to rest in his hands, you lace your fingers with his.

You find the sight of your hands entwined fascinating. The way they fit together so perfectly, so absolute. Bringing your hands together you kiss the back of his and marvel at the implications. These hands that would do anything to end your suffering, that have brought you pleasure, that have carried you when you couldn’t walk.

Oh god what you wouldn’t do for him in this moment. You’re too full of emotion, you can feel it expanding inside you, filling you up to your complete capacity. And for once, you’re unafraid.

Setting his hands on your hips you take hold of his briefs and tug them down. Dropping to your knees and out of his grasp, you push them all the way down, helping him out of his shoes, socks, trousers and underwear. Again you take your time to massage his legs, showing them the same
This time he doesn’t stop you when you open your mouth and lick the tip. This time he groans and clenches his fists but remains still. You kiss him, darting out your tongue to lightly run around his red, engorged head. You work him gradually, not wanting to push him too far too fast. He deserved every second of pleasure you could give and he could take, there was no hurrying tonight.

Tentatively you open your mouth and take him in, softening your tongue you slide down his length, listening to his trembling inhalation. Backing off you start to suck, before sliding back down him. You set a gentle rhythm, dancing you tongue around the tip every time you reach it only to flatten it out and run it along the underside as you descend.

The noises he makes are music to your ears. Breathy hums and the occasional gasp accompany your movement and you allow him to wrap his hands in your hair and tenderly guide your movements.

“No hay nada en los cielos por encima o en el suelo de abajo que podría igualar mi amor por ti, nunca he y nunca querré otro como yo, tú,” he breathes. “Mi amor, mi hechicera, eres dueño de mi mente, cuerpo y alma. Soy eternamente tuya.”

He bends, slipping his hands from your head down under your arms and you’re pulled up. Glazed eyes bore into yours, the pupils so wide you can see your own reflection. He rids you of your trousers and underwear and you’re glad you’re no longer wearing your bandages. Stepping out of your discarded clothes you grab a bottle of body wash and pointedly look over your shoulder at the shower.

“Can you get it started?”

“Cualquier cosa por ti, mi amor.” Unblinking he answers and then reaches past you to turn it on. The water starts instantly, the heat filling the space instantly. “Which hair product do you prefer?”

He doesn’t look away from your gaze and still hasn’t blinked. “What ever you choose, I care not.”

HIs unwavering attention has your insides clenching and you have to remind yourself that tonight is about him, no matter how desperately you want to forgo the foreplay and claim him. Gritting your teeth you smile tightly and snatch up the closest bottle. Taking the bottles you make your way into the shower. You don’t need to see him to know Kandomere has followed you into the water, his presence is like a physical touch burning against the skin on your back.

As the water rains down you tilt your face up, allowing the hot liquid to push the hair away and over your shoulders. Suddenly hands slide around your waist and you’re caged against the wall of elf muscle. He leans over you, tightening his grip and wrapping himself around you until you’re almost fully protected from the spray.

Dropping the bottles on a shelf you clasp your arms over his. This was exactly what you’d hoped for and everything you needed. Closing your eyes you give yourself over to the feelings he’s evoking. Desire, arousal and love.

Your heart lurches as the truth of the situation washes clean under the expensive shower head. Years of failed relationships and unrequited love are stripped away and you jerk out of his arms with the need to distance yourself, protect yourself.

Spinning and flattening yourself against the wall you stare wide eyed and terrified at the glorious
man before you. His taut body glistens and eyes full of uncertainty dart over your naked body. There is nothing about him you’d change, not one hair on his perfect body or one character trait in his personality. You love everything about him, even the things that aren’t so great, because they make him so completely, uniquely him.

Exhilarated by your epiphany you let out a startled laugh and then quickly clamp a hand over your mouth. Your emotions are sky rocketing and unable to keep them in check you shake your head, trying to regain your composure. Focusing on the rivulets cascading down Kandomere’s body, you take a cleansing breath. He loves you and you finally understand, because you love him too. Two steps is all it takes to carry you back to him. Wrapping your arms around his neck you pull him down, holding him close to position your lips to his ear.

“You.” A smile graces your lips as you try to get the words out. “You are something else.” As you talk he relaxes against you, accepting your embrace and reciprocating it. Pressed against him you kiss neck and twine your fingers through his dripping hair.

“Kandomere, look at me.” He does as you ask and you’re struck again by his ethereal beauty. “What did I ever do to deserve you?”

His answering kiss is deep, stealing your breath and thoughts in one fell swoop as his hands seize your thighs and hoist you up. Wrapping your legs around his waist you delight in the sensations he draws from your body. Pleasure tightens the muscles in your stomach and when he rolls his hips to slowly enter you, you break the kiss with a gasp.

Gently he pushes all the way in, and you don’t know if it’s the angle or the fact that you’ve never experienced this connected to anyone before, but you’ve never felt anything so fucking good in your life. Locking your eyes to his you watch in awe and adoration as his gaze drinks you in, his expression changing from lust to devotion. His eyes search yours, shining brightly as he watches you watching him. A thrust of his hips and you’re reduced to a whimpering mess. There is only Kandomere, nothing else in the world exists. He is everything.

A feather light touch of his lips to yours and he begins thrusting at an unhurried pace. This isn’t sex anymore, this is making love. Time stands still and the earth pauses its rotation to allow you to join with him, mind, body and soul. Nothing you’d ever experienced before could compare to the rapture of sharing your heart with him as he slowly makes love to you in his shower.

Touching your forehead to his, you close your eyes and give yourself over to the orgasm spreading through your nervous system. Your mouth gapes and as the very fabric of your being is wrenched apart in blissful gratification you fix your gaze to his and confess, “I love you.”

Your declaration send him crashing into his own climax and his pupils blow wide as his thrusts stutter. You twitch and throb, suspended in a state of nirvana as he trembles in ecstasy, gazes glued to one another, souls entwined.

“I love you,” you repeat, the tiniest of smiles lighting your face.

At that his eyes finally close, rolling back into his head as he nestles it in the crook of your neck. “Say it again,” he begs shamelessly.

Your smile blossoms into a giddy laugh. “I love you, Kandomere.”

His head shakes back and forth and for a second you think he’s doubting you, but then you hear his rumbling chuckle. “Again!”
Tossing back your head you shout loudly to the heavens above. “Te amo!”

“Mi alma! Mi amor! Mi corazón, te quiero más que las palabras pueden decir.”

He kisses your neck, shifting you to set you back on the floor. As he straightens up he cups your face and you meet his glowing smile with a timid grin.

“It’s true?” He asks, barely able to conceal his glee.

“Yes. I’m in love with you, Blue.” You’re lighter somehow, and it’s not just the after glow from sex. You’d loved before but it had always been toxic, not like this. “Now bend your ass down and let me wash your hair.”

He chuckles and you decide that it’s a sound you need to hear more often. Complying to your wishes, Kandomere makes a show of dropping to his knees and bowing his head.

“Good elf,” you smirk, ruffling his wet locks playfully.

You wash his hair, massaging his scalp and pulling some deliciously sinful groans from his gaping mouth. Once he’s done you move on to his body, and only when the water finally runs cold do you exit the shower. Drying him with a fluffy towel you tow him to his bed and pull back the covers, pushing his complaint body down to sit.

“Sleep, you’re exhausted.” As you try to move away he snatches you back and yanks you down into his lap.

“And how can I do that without you in my arms, mi amor?”

“I can’t. You know I can’t. Until we’ve figured out what’s going on in here,” you tab your temple with your finger, “I can’t risk it.”

“Then I can’t rest either—“

“No, Kandomere. One of us needs to be on top of this. Besides, I just had a long sleep.” You smile wryly, causing him to frown. “How about a compromise? I’ll stay with you until you’re asleep then I’ll go get some coffee.”

He’s pained by your suggestion but to your amazement he doesn’t argue. He nods, laying down and opening his arms to you. “If we can’t unravel his hold over you—“

“We’ll get it—“

“No, mi amor,” a forceful tug on your hand unbalances you and sends you sprawling down on top of him, “if we are unable to solve this within twenty-four hours I intend to kill him.”

You freeze, as scared by his words as you are relieved. “Kandomere, I—“

“I know,” he arranges you over him, laying your head on his chest and your body on top of his, keeping as much skin on skin contact as possible. “but he is endangering your life and I won’t, I can’t allow this to drag on. I will not lose you.” Gentle hands brush through your hair, totally at odds with his threat.

“Let’s just look at this fresh in the morning, okay? Until then, sleep and remember, I love you.”

He hums softly before whispering quietly, “I will never tire of hearing that.”
Shifting your hand from under your face you stroke his face, smoothing your thumb over his brow until his breathing evens out and you’re sure he’s found sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:

No hay nada en los cielos por encima o en el suelo de abajo que podría igualar mi amor por ti, nunca he y nunca querré otro como yo, tú. - There is nothing in the heavens above or the ground below that could match my love for you, I have never and will never want another as I do, you.

Mi amor, mi hechicera, eres dueño de mi mente, cuerpo y alma. Soy eternamente tuya. - - My love, my enchantress, you own my mind, body and soul. I am eternally yours.

Cualquier cosa por ti, mi amor. - Anything for you my love.

“My alma! Mi amor! Mi corazón, te quiero más que las palabras pueden decir. Te amo. - My soul! My love! My heart, I love you more than words can say.
Chapter Twenty-Five

Chapter Notes

NSFW - Smut

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Your naked body is an interesting sight, to say the least. The scars that marble your legs are changing colours but despite the adjustment, it’s still an unwanted and apparently permanent addition to your limbs. Sadly you acknowledge the fact that you’re never going to wear a short skirt again without something to conceal the disfigurement.

Ghosting your gaze over your body brings your mood back up. The rest of your skin is bruised and marked from your time with Kandomere, these blemishes you don’t mind though, these are symbols of pure, unadulterated pleasure. They’re also a reminder that you’re not alone, that no matter what Alexo tries, you have another elf on your side, one willing to stop at nothing to protect you.

Towelling off your hair from where you’ve just washed it, you turn to check your back. The fingerprints at your waist brings a particularly sensual memory to the forefront of your mind and you trace over the marks lightly. Yes, these bruises you’d happily accept on a permanent basis.

Hanging the towel back on the rail, you reach for Kandomere’s discarded shirt and throw it on. His scent surrounds you and a blossoming warmth envelopes you. Oh yeah, you’ve got it bad for your blue haired beauty.

Out in the bedroom Kandomere sleeps soundly. He’d found restfulness far faster than you’d anticipated and sneaking out of his bed had been much less problematic as well. Thankfully your earlier drug induced slumber meant you were well rested and not likely to feel the effects of sleep deprivation for at least a day. Creeping quietly into the hallway you pull the door closed and head directly for the kitchen. Coffee is your newest ally and you intended to abuse it.

It’s daybreak when Kandomere wanders through in just a pair of sweatpants that hang too low to be considered decent. His iridescent eyes narrow suspiciously at the laptop open on your knees but he says nothing. Instead he heads to the kitchen, refills the coffee pot and makes two fresh cups of expensive coffee. He places them on the table before joining you on the couch and snatching the computer away.

“Is this how you spent your time?” He grumbles, scowling at the open webpage and scoffing, “Magical incantations and how to counter them? You know this is all bullshit, it’s no more effective than crossing your fingers.” He tosses the laptop to the floor angrily, not caring if it survives the impact. Sweeping you onto his lap he places a finger under your chin and tips your face to his. “Mi amor, I do not like waking up without you by my side, I will not allow it to happen again. Tonight you will grace my bed, you will sleep peacefully and all without the use of silly rhymes found on a frivolous website. My best people, experts in their respective fields, are working on the situation. One way or another, you will be entirely free of that cabrón by tonight.”

You long to believe him but you know Alexo, he doesn’t and you doubt anything short of death will end your torment, even then you’re sure he’d find a way through. Still, Kandomere had proved
himself a force to be reckoned with so perhaps you should trust in his unwavering faith. Smiling up
at his unbelievably handsome face you slide your hands around his neck.

“Let’s not start the day off talking about him.” Pulling him down you plant a kiss on his full lips.
“Morning, Blue, sleep well?” You mutter against him.

He inhales deeply and from your vantage point you see an instant change in his eyes. His pupils
dilate and his gaze zeros in on you as he lets out a low and long growl. “I would have preferred to
awaken in your arms,” his voice is rough and tight, “but I slept well, thank you.”

Large hands grasp your bare thighs, prying them apart and another low appreciative rumble clues
you in to what’s about to happen.

“Your scent is making me ravenous, mi alma. I think it’s time I ate.”

A gasp is all you manage before he’s manoeuvred out from under you to drag your naked hips
towards his waiting, smirking mouth. The last thing you see, before throwing your head back
against the cushions is his tongue darting out and the devilish smile reflected in his eyes.

He starts slowly, teasing you with barely there brushes which have you squirming against his iron
grip. He knows exactly what he's doing but your lust addled mind can't think straight and it doesn't
occur to you that the more you struggle, the longer he intends to torment you. Sparks of pleasure
fire through your nerves, and you twitch in response. You have no control over your body, it's
responding to his touch only and he knows this.

"Tell me again!" He commands, stopping his ministrations and lifting his face to look at you.

You've no idea what he's talking about, you can barely think clearly enough to make out his words,
let alone unravel their meaning. "Tell you what?"

He glares at you, fastening his mouth to your hip he nips you with his teeth. "Tell. Me. Again."

You're still non the wiser and with him looking like he's about to devour you whole you don't have
the ability to figure it out. “Kandomere, please!”

He groans loudly, his eyes rolling back and teeth bared. "Oh, mi único, the sound of you begging!
What it does to me!"

His tongue snakes out, over your stomach as he crawls up you to reach your breasts. His hair adds
to the sensual thrill, tickling up your sides and sweeping across your torso, Closing your eyes you
sink into the satisfaction from his gluttonous bites and soothing licks until he's hovering over you,
caging you in with his biceps bulging next to your head.

"Your scent, mi amor, can you detect it?" Lowering his pelvis he settles between your legs,
wickedly dragging his covered erection against your aching clît."It is delicious. You are temptation
and I cannot resist." He finds the juncture of your throat and bites gently, chuckling as you buck in
response, searching for the friction you so desperately need. "Your scent is perfection, it's all you
with the right amount of me. There's no denying who you belong to now, every elf and orc will
know you are mine." His voice is harsh and feral and he's panting hard. "Tell me again, tell me you
are mine, tell me you love me."

The words fly from your heart to your mouth, unchecked and full of honesty. "I love you."

He rewards you with another purposely slow roll of his hips. "Tell me you're mine."
You'd be scared if you knew this possessive streak wasn't born from his ignited passion, but you'd spent enough time denying him to know that he would never hurt you to get what he wanted. You were resolute in your belief that he would control his urges until you gave him express permission to do what he wanted. You trusted him.

"I am yours and yours alone, Kandomere."

With a snarl he reaches down and pulls himself free of his sweatpants. He lines himself up, thrusting home in one stroke as he grabs a fist full of your hair and pulls your head aside to bare your throat to him. His teeth sink deep as he plunges back into your heat, setting a brutal pace that sweeps you away in the current of your oncoming orgasm. He's ferocious in his desire for you, his untamed need only adding to your already unmanageable arousal.

Untangling his hand from your hair he slams it down on the cushion, shifting to use his other hand to reposition your legs. He slings one over his hip, holding you in place as he fucks you relentlessly, the new angle allowing his length to slide hard against your swollen clit, adding the right amount of pressure to throw you into a breathtaking climax. Your body bows beneath him, every muscle clenching as he rides you through your peak until it all crashes down and you’re unable to even hold your own head up.

Boneless and satiated you pant heavily, catching your breath as he slides lazily in and out. Fierce eyes skim over you and when he’s sure you’re wrung out he dips down and sucks a vicious bruise over your collar bone.

"Ese es uno," he purrs, and then snaps his hips to thrust back into you hard.

You yelp, the sensation too much after such a powerful orgasm but he doesn’t care. His brows are furrowed, his muscles tense and bulging as curses drip from his mouth.

"Kando—“ The rest of his name is stolen away by a scream when he grasps you tightly around the waist and swings his legs around, dragging you into his lap as he sits up.

Just how strong is he?

You don’t get anytime to ponder that question, your thoughts interrupted by the fluidity of his hips and the pleasure this new position brings you. You brace your hands on his chest and raise up slightly, giving him more leverage and power with which to find his own release.

“Look at me, amor.”

Forcing yourself to concentrate on his face, you grit your teeth and fight to keep your eyes open. Though it becomes almost impossible when you actually look at him. His hair is mussed, his teeth bared, his nostrils flared and his expression intense. He looks wrecked. When he lays his head against the back of the couch, reverently breathing your name and pumping hard and deep inside of you its enough to tip you into the turbulent embrace of another climax.

You stiffen momentarily and you feel yourself pulsing around him, but it’s over soon and you tip forward, landing heavily and breathlessly against his still moving body. He nuzzles into your neck, kissing softly before once again sucking another mark onto your collarbone, next to the first. “Eso es dos.”

You barely hear him, you’re gasping for breath and trying to control the various twitching causing your body to dance.

“Mi amor,” he chuckles and carefully lifts you off, “I need you to stand.”
Shaking your head you protest, “I can’t, I, Kandomere.” You’re not sure what’s going on, your brain is awash with chemicals clouding your judgement but you’re aware enough to know this isn’t normal behaviour.

“Yes, you can.” He lifts you and carries you around the back of the couch. “I know you can do this.” He murmurs, putting you down, and turning you so your back is pressed against his chest. His lips seek out the spot where your neck meets your shoulder and he lavishes it with attention. And despite being over stimulated and worn out, you allow him to bend you over the furniture and slide home once again. It isn’t without it’s difficulties, more than once your knees give way and when it becomes obvious you’re struggling he spreads a hand over your stomach and holds you in place.

You lose the ability to think, unable to even complete basic functions like blinking. Every cell in your body thrums with a strange mix of excitement and exhaustion, and yet he is relentless. He covers your body with his, wrapping his arm tighter around your middle, his other hand gripping the back of the sofa. Words of love and praise are whispered into your ear and the sound of his thick, hoarse voice tightens your inner muscles once more.

“Yes!” He whispers, picking up speed. “Come undone for me, mi amor, let me take you apart one last time, do it for me.”

You cry out, the crest of this wave far higher than you could handle. Your vision fades to black and you become nothing more than atoms vibrating in unison, thrumming to the beat of pleasure so unbearable it verges on painful.

With a grunt, Kandomere’s thrusts stutter and he buries his teeth into your throat once again, not that you’re aware enough to pay attention. You’re floating above the world, high on an intoxicating combination of dopamine and oxytocin.

Softly, Kandomere untangles his body from yours, being careful to hold you up as your legs give way. He gathers you in his arms and takes you back to the bedroom to lay you out on his bed.

“Stay with me, Y/n. Don’t fall asleep.”

You blink slowly, unable to focus just yet, but nodding to acknowledge him. Moments later he’s cleaning you up with a wash cloth, working gently over the area’s he’s gripped a little too hard or bitten a too deep. You’re sore and your neck is stinging from his brutal onslaught but you don’t feel attacked, far from it in fact, you feel utterly worshiped and loved.

By the time you’re able to think clearly he’s settled into the space next to you and is lazily trailing his hand up and down your side. Stretching your legs out you try to disguise the wince as pain lances through you. Plastering on a smile you brush the hair away from Kandomere’s face and stretch up to kiss him briefly.

“Well, that was all rather unexpected.”

His eyes fix on your neck and he sighs. “Have you ever dated an elf before?”

The flash of Alexo’s sneering face jolts you enough to make you sit up. “No, but I am aware of the differences between elf relationships and human ones. Alexo was very vocal about the need to display his ownership of me. He taught me a lot about how elves behave and why.”

Kandomere stares at you, horrified. Stroking the back of your fingers over his cheek you watch him with a soft gaze. “I understand that it’s in your nature to bite, to break the skin and taste the blood
of your partners. I know that it’s about much more than territory and ownership for you. I get that instinct drives you far more than it does humans, I’m not clueless on this matter.”

Catching your wrist he pulls it to his lips and kisses your pulse point. “I have never broken the skin before, not with any past lovers. I never felt the need. Blood is your life force and by drawing it, ingesting it, I’m joining with you. I literally take a piece of you with me, you become a part of me. It’s more than just the physical act, it’s everything it represents. For an elf, to bite so deep is an act of absolution. It’s a statement that is not often reciprocated.”

Your mouth falls open. “You’ve never—?”

“No. I never had the desire until you.”

You try to sit up only to find your body unable to follow the instructions given by your brain. Again you wince and Kandomere frowns.

“I am sorry I hurt you.”

Rolling your eyes you huff loudly, “I’m a little sore that’s all. I get this way after a good work out, it’s part of being human I’m afraid, and something you’re gonna to have to get used to if you plan on sticking around, Blue.”

He glares at you like you’ve cursed his bloodlines and insulted his heritage. “Did you not listen? I drew your blood, I am wholly yours, I intend to stay by your side until the last breath leaves my body and my heart stops beating.”

You’d laugh at his dramatic response if he weren’t being deadly serious. “I just meant, never mind. I’m a little uncomfortable but when you put on a performance like that it’s bound to happen. Not that I’m complaining!” You add quickly before he gets the wrong idea.

“I had thought I was being gentle.” He sighs sadly. “I will endeavour to treat you—“

“Is this a conversation we’re going to have every time we have sex? I get it, you’re an elf, you have to watch yourself with me because I’m such a delicate, pathetic human, but don’t sweat it. It’s normal, you’re not the first—“ You bite your tongue hard to stop yourself saying something monumentally stupid to your insecure elf. “Female humans quite often feel a little uncomfortable after extremely good or athletic sex. Surely you’ve been with other human women? This can’t be new to you.”

“Everything about being with you is new to me. I have been with others, yes, but they never affected me as you do, I was always present enough to control my urges. Despite my best efforts I continue to succumb to my fundamental instincts when you’re involved.”

“Is that really such a bad thing?” You’re trying to figure out where he’s coming from with all this. It’s not like you hadn’t already had this very same discussion a few nights ago.

His gaze travels to the window and he mutters, “I could easily push you too hard.”

Laying on your back you take a breath and sift through the breadcrumbs he’s laid out. He’d admitted that he acts on instinct when it comes to you and rather than triumphant over his morning conquest he appears more remorseful. “Wanna talk about what brought this morning on?”

“We are not so dissimilar and I despise this fact.” He swings his legs out of the bed and rests his forearms on his thighs. “We are both compelled by the same basic instinct and it’s what made him sadistic, barbaric and territorial. You were his toy, a thing he owned, he saw it as his right to do
what he pleased with you. I fear I am not so different. I was possessive and single minded. I could think of nothing beyond bringing you pleasure, making you mine through physical satisfaction. I decorated your skin with sigil’s, the same as he, the only difference was the way I inflicted them.”

With a great deal of effort you get to your knees behind him, slinging your arms around his shoulders you rest your cheek against his.

“You are nothing like him. Your instincts are not the same. If I’d asked you to stop, you would have. You did not try to inflict pain, you only wanted my pleasure. You didn’t want to see me bloodied and bruised, you don’t see me as an object. You’ve made this clear time and time again. A scalpel wound from surgery and a stab wound from a gang fight both look alike in the end, but the intention behind them couldn’t be further apart. You’re the one saving me, he was the one destroying me. You are nothing, nothing like him.”

His head hangs lower and he grips his hands together. “You’re wrong. I wanted to bite you, to pierce your flesh, to take from you. I still do. I wanted the marks there for the world to see that you belong to me. You’re mine and they are not to touch you.”

“You want to take from me? What exactly do you want to take?”

“Your blood, your heart, mi amor, I want to taste you, to own you, to keep you as my own.”

Your heart thuds uneasy at the darkness of his tone. “If I said you were scaring me,” you inhale a shaky breath readying yourself for his reaction, “if I said I wanted to leave…”

Ripping himself out of your grasp he strides towards the balcony, aggressively wrenching open the door. “Take what you will of your things, there is money in the kitchen drawer still, call Montehugh and he will drive you where ever you wish. I won’t stop you but I cannot watch you go. I will wait here, you have my word I won’t harm or bother you.”

Oh god, you hadn’t expected this! You’d only wanted to make a point not torture him.

“Kandomere, no! You see? You are so completely different to Alexo. Not only would you let me go, you’d help! This is why I love what you do to me, because it’s not vicious, it’s not meant to hurt me or degrade me. You do it to show you care, to prove your love.”

He glances over his shoulder and you almost break at his haunted, desolate expression.

“You are the opposite of everything he is. I will never stop running from him, hating him, despising what he did, but with you? I am yours Kandomere, you have my heart. I don’t ever want to be without you.”

A furrow pulls his brow down. “You don’t fear me?”

“No! God no! I was trying to—” Shaking your head you hold out a hand. “Come and help me up would you?”

He’s back in a flash, carefully supporting you as you stand. When he goes to move away you grasp his biceps and narrow your eyes. “Stay exactly where you are, Blue. I’m not done with you yet.”

“Mi—”

“Yeah I know, mi amor, mi alma, blah-blah-blah. Shut up and listen. I know what I’m doing. You aren’t forcing anything on to me. We’re in a relationship now, if I don’t like something I’ll tell you and the same goes for you. In it together remember? I get that you’re scared of going too far but
you haven’t yet and honestly, I doubt you ever could. You don’t have the desire to hurt me so stop over reacting and chill okay?”

“I worry—“

“Too much.” He isn’t convinced but you can tell you’re breaking down his wall. “If I asked you to bite me, would you?”

His eyes light up momentarily but he’s quick to school his face and cover the eagerness. “Why would you want that?”

“Because I like it. Because I want to bite you too now that I know why you do it.”

There’s a hint of a smile as he cocks his head. “You want to bite me?”

“Yeah, I want to prove to you how fucking serious I am when I say I love you. But I don’t have your teeth, it’ll hurt you—“

He stretches his neck out and moves the hair away. “It will not hurt, quite the opposite. It is a sensual, erotic act that will only be intensified by your blunt teeth.”

Taking hold of his waist you get closer. “So this pain will make it more pleasurable for you?”

Tipping his head down he glares at you. “Are you trying to make a point by ruthlessly tempting me with the thing I want most?”


He sighs, the scowl he wears deepening. “You are cruel.”

“And now you truly know what kind of a woman I am, I don’t feel bad about this,” you tease, placing your mouth over his neck and biting. You start gently, afraid of hurting him and frankly unsure if you’re crossing a line. Whilst the connotations it carries are endearing the actual act is quite savage and strange. But then again, you’d experienced his bite and it had liquified your insides and filled you with nothing but lust. Clamping down harder he drags you closer and runs his hand through your hair.

“Yes!” He hums, dragging out the word.

Encouraged, you bite harder, the barest hint of a metallic taste on the flat of your tongue. Carefully you remove your teeth and lick at the open wound, shivering as he groans loudly. Thankfully there isn’t a lot of blood and you realise the experience wasn’t worth the anxiety. It was a little nip, but it meant so much to both of you. Pulling away, you meet his passionate gaze and grin.

“You’re all mine now, Blue.”

His answer is to kiss you roughly and press his swelling erection against you, pushing you all the way back to his bed. You definitely wouldn’t be able to walk if his insatiable appetite continued. Not that you were about to complain.
Ese es uno - That's one

Eso es dos - That's two
Your quiet Saturday morning is disturbed around eleven. You’d been curled up on the sofa, draped over Kandomere, attempting to learn more about each other when his phone cut through the relaxed atmosphere. He looked at the screen, then you with caution.

Pressing the screen he answered the call with a clipped, “Liona?”

He’s on his feet and all but running to the bedroom seconds later, causing your stomach to flip with nerves. Something bad was going down. With effort you followed him, watching him hurry to dress in a deep purple suit, listening to his increasingly uneasy replies.

“When?… Did the cameras pick anything up?… Which direction?” His gaze settles on you and he stares blankly. He’s trying not to scare you and it’s unnerving to say the least. “No, I’ll bring her in.” He hangs up and slips the phone into his pocket. Turning away he puts on his vest and quickly buttons it.

“Get dressed, we’re going to the office.”

His tone gives nothing away and you can’t help but jump to old conclusions. He’s taking you in, something has happened and he thinks you’re a part of it. He’s taking you to the holding cells, he’ll lock you up and you’ll be tortured for information you don’t have, or worse the location of the wand.

You shake your head, trying to clear it of the toxic thoughts. There’s no way that’s what’s happening. This is Kandomere for god’s sake. He wouldn’t do that to you, not after everything.

“Hey,” he calls softly, “hey, querida.” Grasping your chin delicately he pulls you out of your internal debate. “There’s been an incident with Montehugh, I have to go check on him. I want you with me, to keep you safe, nothing more.” A gentle kiss is placed on your lips before he lets you go.

Coming to your senses you nod. “Of course, yeah. Is he okay?”

“He’ll be fine, I’m just anxious to talk to him. Don’t worry about dressing up, there won’t be anyone on our floor, just wear something easy to throw on.”

Ambling as quickly as you can to your room, you throw open the closet and grab the nearest clothes. Dressing in a hurry you wriggle into the jeans and silk blouse before tugging a brush through your unruly hair and wrapping it in a messy bun. It’s the most casual you’ve looked outside the apartment.

Kandomere is waiting by the hallway to the door looking every inch the calm collected agent he
usually is, but there’s an undercurrent that sets your nerves ablaze.

“What happened?” What you really want to ask is if this has anything to do with Alexo but that seems too insensitive and self obsessed.

“He’s been working too hard, refused to take his days off and as a result he’s been involved in an accident. Don’t fret, he’s okay, just a little worse for wear.” Entering the elevator, he slips his arm around your waist, gripping your hip. “Stay close to me at all times, mi alma. No running off today.”

Watching him carefully in the reflective doors you nod. “I— yes of course.”

“I mean it, you don’t leave my sight, not even for a second.” His arm tightens and you have no choice but to slip your own around his waist to steady yourself.

“I promise I won’t go anywhere without you.”

He dips his head and the conversation ends but he doesn’t let you go until he’s walked you to the passenger side of his car, helped you in and closed the door behind you. Either he was really worried about Montehugh and trying to distract himself or this went deeper than he was letting on.

There’s extra security on the door when you arrive at the MTF building and it takes longer than usual to get through. They’re being incredibly thorough, to the point where Kandomere looks like he’s going to murder the agent who’s spent the last three minutes patting you down.

“That’s enough, agent, she’s clean,” he barks tossing the poor guy a withering look that makes him shrink back. You join the elf, falling into step beside him as he shepherds you along with an arm, not quite touching you but close enough.

“He was only doing his job.”

“He’ll only be losing his hands if he tries to touch you again.” Kandomere growls.

The building is much emptier than you’re used to and it allows Kandomere the opportunity to keep you pinned by his side without too many questioning gazes. In the elevator he hovers next to you, twisting his fingers with yours until it rolls to a stop and two men step in. The second the doors open he snatches back his hand and moves in front of you, at first you’re stung by his rejection but you quickly come to realise he’s shielding you from their eyes, not because he’s ashamed but because he’s worried. The set of his shoulders, the way his hand drifts closer to his side arm and the reflection of his frightening expression warns you that there’s more to this Montehugh situation than he’s letting on.

He doesn’t relax, not when the two men get off on the floor below you, not even when the doors open to his office floor and he leads you out. He’s on edge the whole time, his gaze darting around the building, his hand clamped around your waist as he all but drags you to his office.

“Kandomere, I’m not stupid, I know something’s going on.”

He closes his door, locking it from the inside and testing the barrier with a firm wrench on the handle.

“I’m aware. Sit.” He points at his own chair and waits for you to navigate the large desk. “You are to stay in that chair, in the top drawer of my desk you’ll find a small hand gun. I trust you’ve used
one before?”

Okay, this escalated quickly.

“Should anyone try to get in, should anyone somehow best me, you are to shoot first and ask questions later. Do you understand?”

Your first instinct is to question him but his expression warns you otherwise. “Yes.”

He relaxes a little. “Good. We won’t be staying here long. I’ve come to collect a few items, check on Montehugh and then we’re leaving.”

“Are you going to tell me what’s got you on high alert?”

He scowls. “I haven’t yet decided.”

Massaging your temples you lean back in his comfortable chair. “What are you afraid of, Kandomere?”

“Your reaction,” he states bluntly, folding his arms. “I fear you will try to run.”

There’s the red flag you’ve been waiting for. “It’s Alexo isn’t it?” You don’t need an answer, you already know he’s going to confirm it. “He hurt Montehugh.”

“Yes.”

“What happened?”

He watches you, silently, taking in every tiny detail with his sharp eyes. Slowly he blinks, keeping his eyes closed and wearing a deep frown. “Please don’t try to run.” As he reopens his eyes your blood runs cold, the colour drains from your face and you just know that your biggest fear has come true. “He escaped.” His gaze slides away, one hand find his hip the other his head. “He attacked Montehugh, stole his card and fled the building. We have him on tape entering the elevator and riding down to the basement. He took one of the unmarked cars but it was found four blocks away. We don’t know where he is now but I have a good idea of where he’s heading.”

Your heart stops, literally stops and the room spins. He’s out there somewhere and he knows you’re alive. At best thats where it stops, at worst, he knows exactly where you are and what you’re doing thanks to the motherfucking magic link he’s tethered you with.

“You think he’s going to your apartment.” That’s why he dragged you with him.

“Yes. He’ll head there first, he will want revenge for the humiliation I caused him. I am quite sure he doesn’t know of your involvement with me, if he did, he would have already attacked. As it stands, I’m hopeful that upon entering my apartment our combined scents will distract him enough to diminish any possible casualties.”

“You’ve set a trap?”

“Yes.”

Your mind drifts to the big read haired softy you’d come to grow fond of and worry claws at your heart. “Will Montehugh… Will he be okay?”

Kandomere nods. “It appears that Alexo did little damage to Montehugh, his main priority being escape. He is concussed and a little bruised but otherwise nothing to report.”
You let out a sigh of relief. He got off lightly, thank god.

Smoothing out his jacket, the elf pulls the sleeves taught and stands tall. “I need to speak with him and I want you to come with me.”

“Where—“

“He’s in our medical facility on floor two. We’ll speak to him and then head to the car. I have a safe house on the outskirts of the city. We’ll head there as soon as I’m sure it’s safe.” An arched brow challenges you to disagree and it irks you that he always assumes the worst.

“Fine. Whatever you say. You don’t have to pull that face.”

Offering you a quick nod, he opens up a cupboard to his left and bends down to reach into the back. Swivelling the chair around, you glare out of the window at the city. Nausea causes your stomach to roll knowing that somewhere out there, Alexo is free.

Minutes tick by, accompanied by the clatter of Kandomere searching for god knows what in the depths of his office. As a harsh curse meets your ears, you turn back to see what the hell he’s doing.

“¡Joder! Que se joda todo al infierno. ¡Joder!” He glances up, eyes narrowed and nostrils flared with fury. “Someone has been in here. They have taken the keys to the safe house.”

You scoot to the edge of the seat, your back ram rod straight as your gaze sweeps the office. It had to be Alexo, you don’t know how, but you just knew it was him. He’d been in here. That thought makes your skin crawl.

A knock on the door startles you, drawing Kandomere’s gaze your way. “Top draw,” he breathes, pointing to his desk.


With trembling hands you grasp the draw handle and pull. At the same time Kandomere withdraws his gun from his holster and aims it for the door. Stepping forward he undoes the locks then puts himself directly in front of you, calling out a firm, “Enter.”

Ford opens the door, his hands shooting up in surrender as he spots his boss. “Whoa! Hold on, what the fuck?”

Kandomere is quick to holster his weapon and usher the agent into the room. “Report.” Ford attempt to look around him to greet you but the elf refuses to let him lay eyes on you. “I said, report, Agent Ford.”

Ford clears his throat, “Of course, sorry sir. The surveillance cams flagged nothing and as yet no sightings in or around your complex. We don’t know if he’s still in the city or not but there has been no movement within the Vegas coven.”

“And Agent Montehugh?”

There’s a pregnant pause before Ross blows out a puff of air. “He’s okay, not making a lot of sense but Dr. Liona is convinced it’s just the concussion talking. Sir, I’m sorry, if I’d known—“

“There’s no blame to be allocated, agent, my understanding is that protocol was followed to the letter.”
“But still, if I’d just got there ten minutes earlier…”

“Then it could well be both of you on the medical floor. You did your job, now do it again, you can escort us down to Montehugh. Keep your eyes on Y/n at all times. Do not allow her to leave your sight.”

“Ah, you may want to hold off on that visit, boss. There’s a lot of movement down there right now. Montehugh wasn’t the only agent injured, there’s a shit ton of foot traffic in and out, families, medical personal as well as superiors trying to fill out paperwork.”

Kandomere checks over his shoulder, looking you up and down. “Very well.” If he had any further to say, it’s interrupted by his phone. With a huff of annoyance he moved to pick it up, allowing you to finally catch sight of Ross. His suit is dishevelled and he looks like he hasn’t slept in weeks. He’s smiling, but upon actually seeing you his face changes into utter disbelief. His eyes grow huge and you feel them roaming your skin until they settle on your neck. Your blouse is open slightly and although you’d been careful downstairs to cover the evidence of your nights with the elf, it’s clear you’ve exposed one or more of his bite marks.

“¡Mierda!” The phone is slammed down so hard the desk rattles.

“No!”

“¡Mierda!” The phone is slammed down so hard the desk rattles.

“Problem?” Ross asks tentatively.

“Yes, they’re demanding my presence downstairs.” His eyes flit to you and you can see he’s torn. “There are questions being asked and conversations that you are not be permitted to hear. I cannot take you with me nor can I stay.” With a roar he sweeps the phone to the floor and grips the edge of the desk. “¡Mierda!”

“Okay,” Ross holds his hands up in surrender again but at least this time he’s smiling, “why don’t I wait with Y/n here? I’m not sure what’s going on but it’s obvious you’re keeping her away from crowds.”

“No!”

“I’ll stay with her at all times, please boss, let me make up for what happened with Agent Montehugh.”

You sit quietly, not wanting to coerce Kandomere in any way. You don’t want him to leave you, not even for a second but you also don’t want to jeopardise his job.

Ford straightens his posture and looks Kandomere in the eye. “I won’t let anything happen to her.”

“No.” This time the rebuttal is slightly less firm.

“I’ll protect her with my life.”

Kandomere’s cell starts to ring, causing him to close his eyes and pinch the bridge of his nose. He lets the call ring out and sighs. He’s in an impossible situation but the longer you sit here, the more chance of Alexo or one of the others coming back and finding you.

Rounding your shoulders you sigh and put your head in your hands. “We should go to another office. If Alexo has figured it all out, if he knows, he’ll come here. Let Ford take me, but blindfold me, I don’t know how deep the connection goes and I don’t wanna risk it. If I don’t know where I am…”

Two sets of eyes burn into the top of your head and once again silence engulfs the room.
“Kandomere, we’re wasting time. Let’s just get this over and done with.”

“No.”

“Boss—”

Ford is interrupted by Kandomere’s cell and another growled curse from the elf. He answers this time with a scathing, “Unless Montehugh is on his death bed I suggest you hang up now!”

Who ever is on the other end doesn’t heed the warning though and as they talk Kandomere’s expression goes from wrath to defeat. “Two minutes, that’s it, I have more pressing matters to deal with.”

It’s decided then. Looking to Ross you attempt a tight lipped smile but his concerned expression tells you you’re not quite hitting the mark.

“You!” Kandomere glares down at Ross and points aggressively at the young agent. “You stay with her at all times. She does not leave your sight, you do not even blink. If the prisoner comes back she will be one of his main targets, she is wanted by the Vegas coven and fuck knows who else. She is to be protected by any and all means possible. Any hostility shown towards either of you is to be treated as an attack, shoot to kill, agent. Do not take any chances.”

You feel sick to your stomach as Kandomere lays it on the line but you do your best to hide it.

“And you,” his tone is much softer as he moves to sit on the desk in front of you, “please be careful. Listen and comply with Agent Ross’ commands, he is well trained and one of the best of his graduating class so he knows what he is doing.” He cups your face, running his thumbs up and down your cheek bones gently. “Mi amor, I’m deeply unhappy about this situation, if there were any other way—”

Placing your hands over his you manage a genuine smile. “It’s okay, really. Let’s just get it over with and then we can figure out what next.”

“Promise me you won’t run.”

Turning your face you kiss his open palm. “I promise.”

Ignoring Ross entirely, Kandomere leans in and presses a chaste kiss to your lips. “Be safe, mi amor.” Standing he motions to Ross, “Use your tie to cover her eyes. She must not know where she is. You may take her to an appropriate room and lock the door. Stay within the building and keep me informed of your whereabouts. If anything happens to her I will not be held responsible for my actions, am I clear?”

Ross looks visibly shaken for a second before collecting himself and tugging at his tie. “Yes, sir.” Sliding the material off, he tilts his head and throws you a look of embarrassment.

“It’s all right, Ross. Do it.”

Minutes later you’re following Ross down the hall, your hand on his shoulder, your elf guiding you from behind. As you reach the elevators, Kandomere kisses the back of your neck and whispers a quick, “Be careful.” before he disappears.

“Just you and me huh?” You mutter, after you hear the elevator doors close.

You hear Ross’ exhale, “Yup.”
“Are you sure about that?” A deadly, familiar voice asks as you’re tossed to one side and gun shots fire. You hit the wall and fall, your hands reaching for the material over your eyes but before you can remove it you’re wrists are restrained.

“Silly boy!” Alexo snickers, his voice millimetres from your ear. “Thought he could out manoeuvre me.” You’re dragged upwards by your arms, your hands pinned over your head, your back slammed into the wall.

“And you!” His body presses into yours, reminding you of his strength, as if you’d ever forget. “You forgot who you belong to, didn’t you? You thought you could erase me with his blood, his heart, his scent. Oh starlight, I thought I taught you better.” His free hand traces down your cheek to your lips, where he grips you viciously. “But don’t fret my beauty, there’s still hope for you. I’m nothing if not merciful.” You think he’s going to kiss you but thankfully instead he tips your head forward and then slams it back ferociously, sending you reeling into unconsciousness where this time there’s no one waiting.

Chapter End Notes

Translations

¡Joder! Que se joda todo al infierno. ¡Joder!- Fuck! Fuck it all to hell. Fuck!

“¡Mierda!” - shit!
You wake to fingers gently carding through your hair as your eyes flutter open and adjust to the bright sunlight pouring through the window. Your bed is soft and welcoming, and the low hum of the ceiling fan is a comforting white noise that threatens to send you straight back to sleep.

"Good morning, Starlight, I trust you slept well?"

The blood running through your veins turns to ice and your breathing stutters. His voice is so close, too close and it brings everything rushing back. You're fully awake now, frozen in place, eyes fixed to the endless field you can see through the window. You aren't in LA anymore.

"You must be hungry," Alexo purrs, tucking you under his chin and spooning you from behind, "I have all your favourites in the kitchen." He tightens his arms, dragging one powerful leg up and over your own, completely dwarfing you with his embrace. "And please, little Light, don't fret about the marks inflicted by that cur, I will erase them entirely once we get the wand, as I will, him!" His hand drifts up and caresses your throat, his fingers brushing the spot Kandomere had bitten you to take your blood.

You can't speak or react, you have no control over your body. You're too terrified to even breathe. Everything he'd done in your dream was about to become reality. Every lash, every strike, every bone breaking grip. You were laid with your head in a lion mouth, just waiting for the jaws to close.

"I assume you were taken under duress, the bruises he left would certainly infer that to be the case, so for now I will not punish you for his barbaric actions." He grips your neck tightly and jerks you back, setting his mouth next to your ear, "Besides, we have a wand to collect, don't we?" He shakes you like a rag doll and as your teeth rattle you whimper. "Now you are free of that wretched excuse of an elf, you can tell me exactly where it is without the fear of it falling into the wrong hands."

You want to scream, want to laugh in his face and tell him he's the reason you hid it in the first place. Quite honestly you don't know if he's delusional or toying with you but neither are good options and both will lead to violence so you lay still, trying to control your reactions, trying to become small and inconsequential.

"Tell me, do you feel it? Does it call for you? Can you taste the power?" He licks your ear and chuckles. "It's close, I know it is, I can feel it."

Now that he's said that, you can feel it too. He's right, the wand is close and you can feel the pull of it, the call of the sleeping power thrumming through your veins, begging you to claim it.

Alexo laughs, startling you. "I knew it!" His nose skims along your neck and he inhales. "You smell a little better now, a little less like him, it's cleansing you, much more thoroughly than I
could. Soon you won't be able to resist." A kiss to your cheek has you gritting your teeth but thankfully he doesn't notice. "Come, I've something to show you!" He jumps over you, landing lightly on his feet and offering out his hand. You know better than to snub him so reluctantly you take his proffered hand and allow him to drag you into the next room.

His touch makes your insides churn and it takes all the self control you can muster not to vomit or snatch your hand back. On shaky legs you're pulled into the adjoining room and shoved into a large leather chair. Across from you, Agent Ford is propped against the wall, his hands tied above his head to an exposed pipe, blood dripping from his wrists. His shoulder is stained crimson where he'd been shot, but it's not fresh blood at least. His face is paper white and there's a sheen of sweat on his forehead. You can just make out his shallow breaths, at least he wasn't dead, but he looked close to it. He needed help and fast.

"I kept him for you. Your captor. I'd originally planned to sacrifice him but I wanted to give you a gift, something to show that I know you were there under duress, something to prove my affection, little one." He grins and you stare at him in horror. "You can practise on him when we get the wand."

The second he mentions the wand, you hear it calling for you again, like a gnat circling your head it buzzes incessantly, chipping away at your resolve. It wants to be found, needs to be used. Gripping your head, you close your eyes but that only makes the sensation worse. Your blood itches, physically itches and you can't help scratching at yourself, digging your nails in deep enough to leave a bloody mark.

"Oh it's so close I can almost taste it." Alexo sings, dragging his nails over your scalp.

God you need to think, need to breathe, need to get away from this psychopath. Only you can't, not whilst every beat of your heart is increasing your need for the wand. Yanking your hands through your hair you hold your breath. Think!

"Tell me, Starlight!" Alexo's lips brush against your ear as he leans down over you, his arms gripping into the chair. "Let me get the wand for you, then you'll be free. Free."

Your head swirls, intoxicated by the promise of an end, the wand singing softly in the back of your mind, pledging itself to you. Only you. Closing your eyes you lean back and exhale. The wand is all you can think of, all you need. You're craving it, hungry to have it back in your hands, the energy flowing through your veins, the strength it gives you. With the wand you're unbreakable, you're immortal, you're everlasting.

"Yes!" Alexo breathes, leaning closer so that his exhale blows against your face.

You open your eyes and his jaw drops. "Oh yes! So close." He strokes your cheek, "I can see it, smell it. You reek of power. I see it changing you, making you stronger. Tell me. Tell me!"

"Cemetery." The word drifts past your lips before you can stop it.

Alexo cries out triumphantly and begins talking rapidly in Övüsi. You don't know what he's saying and it's jarring enough to pull you from whatever spell he'd managed to put you under. Breaking out of the wand's influence you think fast. Shit you'd told him the general vicinity of the wand but thankfully you'd planned for this, purposely choosing a town with six different cemeteries in case anyone ever dragged the information from you. No doubt he would feel the pull from the weapon as soon as he entered the right graveyard but still, by using this town, you'd bought yourself some time. His large hands rest against your face and he tips you upwards, meeting your clouded gaze. As your eyes connect you feel yourself slipping back under the control of the spell and your brain
becomes foggier.

"Starlight," he sighs, his lips curved up into a horrific smile that shows his frightening teeth. "Tell me which cemetery, where is it? Where did you put it?"

Gritting your teeth you close your eyes and try to imagine something, anything other than the whereabouts of the wand. Your minds eye trawls through memories, showing you scenes from your life all the way up until the last few weeks. As a vision of Kandomere floats before you, you concentrate on every little feature, from his tapered ears to the curve of his cupids bow. You fight to remember the feel of his lips on yours, the touch of his hand as he cradled you in bed, the sound of his laugh. You can almost, almost remember the taste of his tongue, it's just out of reach when Alexo growls and a hard slap stings your cheek. Your eyes fly open and you're met with the sight of pure vengeance.

"You filthy little whore!"

Grabbing your wrist, Alexo pulls it to his mouth, tearing through your skin with his knife like teeth. He slices through you like you're nothing, letting the blood gush down your arm until you're close to passing out. It's a small mercy. Because of the blood loss you're only barely able to feel the death grip he had on your throat and the other vicious bites he's inflicting. It's all becoming a blackened blur until he tears your blouse off you and wraps it around your wrist. He pulls taught and then ties your arm to the chair.

"You stupid, discourteous, ungracious, whore!" His face is a fury filled abhorrence. Your blood drips from his fierce teeth, down his chin and stains his neck, his wild eyes are full of rage but the most fearsome thing of all is the deranged smile he wears. "I'd wanted to wait but you've given me no choice." You've never known terror so potent as you watch through half lidded eyes whilst he bites deeply into his own wrist. "You will succumb to me. You are mine to own. You will realise this!"

Grasping your hair he jerks your head back and yanks open your mouth, only to stuff his dripping wrist in. You're too weak to fight him and his blood pouring too fast to do anything but choke it down. It's bitter and thick, and vile, leaving you gagging and gasping for air. But that's not the worst of it, not by a long shot. You can feel it, snaking through your veins, changing you, corrupting you, tainting you with his own brand of evil. It's smothering all the hope, snuffing out any light it finds, twisting you into a shadowy version of the person you used to be.

Gasping and blinking hard, Alexo pulls his wrist from you and staggers back to lean against the window. His gaze searches you, a gleam in his glassy eyes and a sneer on his bloodied lips. And then he falls, collapsing to the ground only inches from where Ford is still slumped, oblivious to the events that just unfolded before him.

You're too weak to move so you sit and feel. There's magic in his blood but it's dark and ugly. It vibrates deep inside you, starting in your heart before rushing through your entire being, shredding any semblance of humanity. You throw your head back and pant against the tightening in your chest until finally, finally it all stops. Everything is still and silent, and it's a blissful change from the last few months of torment. You inhale through your nose, a long deep breath that expands your lungs and fill you with life. You're stronger now, faster too and you know it's because of Alexo's magic. He's woven into the very fabric of his life-force and he'd shared it with you. Stupid elf!

Ripping your arm free of it's leather you stand up and stride over to the creature passed out on the floor. Resting your foot on his shoulder you shove, hard, rolling him onto his back. He doesn't stir, but he's alive. Narrowing your eyes you estimate he'll heal and be awake within the hour so you move fast. Ransacking the house you find a change of clothes and snatch the car keys that are in a
bowl by the front door. Bounding out of the house, you roll your eyes at the sight of the ostentatious supercar sitting in the driveway. Only Alexo would be idiotic enough to bring you here in that! Shaking your head, you settle behind the wheel and start the engine. At least the ridiculous car would help get you to your destination and back speedily.

* * *

The wand had practically screamed at you as you'd arrived at the mausoleum. Taking the heavy sledgehammer and utilising the new strength Alexo had gifted you, you smashed into the stone and decimated the resting place of the recently deceased grandmother with ease. You hadn't even given her or her family a second thought as you'd wrecked the coffin to claim your prize. Leaving the cemetery you'd had a quick look at the mess, wondering if you should use the wand to put it all back together again but then decided why the fuck should you? These people were meaningless and your time precious.

The wand had sung as you'd cradled it in your hands, it's dark power lighting your blood with a fire so hot you'd felt your soul sear itself to the magic tool in your palms. It had been a euphoric experience and now it was beyond you why you'd ever tried to hide it in the first place. The things you could do, the absolute power you wielded. Unimaginable. The drive back had been silent. No more fear, no more longing, just a tranquility, the likes of which you'd never known before.

Back at the house you'd found the two males exactly as you'd left them with the exception of the agent who was now awake. His eyes had closed and he'd sighed in relief when you'd walked through the door but his solace had been short lived when he'd really looked at you. Not that you paid him any attention. He was insignificant and unimportant. No, it was the elf you'd come for. Standing over Alexo, one foot planted either side of his body, you called his name softly. Once, twice, three times and then he stirred. Dulled silver eyes opened, and then widened as he saw the glowing blue weapon gripped in your hand. You heard the agent gasped but Alexo's laughing drowned him out.

"Starlight, star bright, look at you shine!"

Ignorant elf! He had no idea what was coming his way.

Narrowing your eyes you peer down at the thing on the floor. "You created me."

His smile grows wider and he nods.

"You tore me apart and built me back up with your own blood and magic."

"I told you, you were mine."

You bristle at his assured words. "Oh no. I was never yours." Tilting your head you lick your lips and assess him. "You were mine. The sacrifice needed to complete the ritual. The blood donor. The catalyst. You were an integral part of the change, but I was never yours. I can't be owned. Not now."

Alexo laughs and pulls himself to a seated position with his back against the wall. "Did you ever wonder why I called you Starlight?"

You consider his question. "No."

His grin widens. "Because there can be no darkness without light and in order to resurrect the Dark Lord, we need the brightest of stars. You were the brightest, even before, you radiated such
resplendent light not a single Inferni could deny it. You are the third."

Stepping back you lower the wand, intrigued by what he's saying. You'd planned to torture him, make him scream in ways so horrendous, the Inferni would use it in their teachings. But he was managing to talk himself into a few extra minutes of life. "What makes you think I'll agree?"

He stands, taking one tentative step forward. "Because you want the purge the Dark Lord promises. You have the power to change the world, and the desire to rule. It's in your blood!"

And for the briefest of moments you acknowledge the truth in his words. He's right, but oh so wrong. With your lips twitching into a smirk he takes another step towards you, and that's when you strike. Letting the power flow through you and out of the wand you pin him to the wall, using your fury to split open every vein in his pathetic, deplorable body. His agonised scream is music to your ears and you laugh as he thrashes against your magic.

"You're wrong, Alexo, it's in your blood. Those are your aspirations and your devotion to the Dark Lord. I just want to see you like this, screaming for mercy as I tear you to shreds from the inside out."

Moving away, you take a seat in the chair he'd put you in earlier and laugh as his strangled wails grow louder and louder. Turning to the agent on the floor you chuckle and nod towards the dying elf. "I hope you feel avenged now." His petrified gaze only adds to your amusement. You're laughing merrily to yourself, overcome with joy when the door bursts open and three men rush into the room. Whipping your head around you see two swat team members flanking a very familiar elf but before you can react, one bullet tears through your neck swiftly followed by another in your chest and a third in your gut.

The wand drops to the floor, Alexo along with it, and as you bleed out into the leather, your head explodes with the noise of a dozen or more men shouting instructions to one another and you. This time the pull of unconsciousness approaches much faster than when Alexo had torn open your wrist and instead of fighting it you give in. Closing your eyes you feel hands pressing against you but it's too late, you're sucked into the darkness, surrendering to death and there's nothing anyone can do to save you.

Chapter End Notes

This is not the end!
Chapter Twenty-Eight

The very first thing you notice is a fury so immense it scorches you from the inside out. This isn’t simply anger, this is a ferocious frenzy of a storm raging inside your very blood. It’s tearing through you, stripping away all that was feeble, all that was human, all that was frail.

You’re still you, but better, stronger, more focused, less emotional. You are detached from the pathetic wants and needs you once suffered through, now there is only blood lust, anger and revenge.

Before you even open your eyes you recognise the foul stench surrounding you. It's clinical, sterile and abrasive, it offends you to your very core. Your lips twitch, suppressing the snarl you so desperately want to emit, but can’t, not yet. You need to assess the situation, figure out your next move without showing your cards, be subtle, be clever.

There’s someone nearby, you can hear the low murmur of their voice; they're talking about you, about how deadly you are now. They aren't wrong. Words are being slung around, dangerous, destructive, brutal, hostile. Yes! That’s exactly what you are now.

Remorseless predator.

Opening your eyes, you squint against the onslaught of bright, fluorescent lights illuminating the holding cell. To your right a large panel of glass reflects the image of you in a hospital bed, your body covered by a white, paper gown, no blanket to hide you. You try to sit up but a pull in your chest dissuades you from moving. Instead you make to run a hand through your hair, only you can't, you’re cuffed to the bed, arms and legs. This only serves to add to your infuriation. Baring your teeth you yank against the restraints but they don’t move, the leather covered steel holding firm despite your efforts.

Turning your head you glare at your reflection, trying to look through the reflection to see who it was you'd heard conversing on the other side. It’s a futile exercise though, you can't make out anything other than your feral, silver eyed reflection and whilst your appearance should probably shock you, you let it go. Alexo's blood had transformed your very essence, it made sense it would alter your physical appearance too. Not that you cared.

Having had enough of your current location you reach out with your mind, searching for your wand. Your main priority now was to get it and move on. You had a list of names and every intention of ending them, after considerable pain had been inflicted. Relaxing into the mattress you concentrate hard, ignoring the slight fizzing of the magic users in the building to seek out the magnetic pull of your immeasurably powerful wand. Only, no matter how hard you push, there’s nothing there to feel. Closing your eyes you let your thoughts wander, desperate to detect even the slightest twinge of its power or the most minute of flickers to suggest the wand is nearby but there’s nothing.

Gritting your teeth and balling your fists a murderous fit of rage engulfs you. How dare they take your wand! Who were they to separate you from the very thing that had saved you, time and time again. You would make them pay dearly for this atrocity.

The door to the cell opens and light, measured footsteps carry someone into the room. Calming your bitter rage, you inhale subtly, scenting the newcomer and internally scoffing at the predictability. Of course they would send him, they’re testing the waters, seeing what you’ll do.
“Y/n?”

You sigh. “Kandomere.”

“Look at me.”

Quirking a brow, you open your eyes to peer down your nose at the agent, fixing him with an unwavering glare. Who was he to give you orders? He’d had you shot! He’d come storming in with his team and they had viciously attacked you. For all intents and purposes he’d sentenced you to death, after all he’d no idea what had happened before his arrival. You should be dead, you’re pretty certain the only reason you aren’t is down to Alexo’s blood magic, but he hadn’t known you’d been pumped full of it when he came floundering through the door. No, this hypocritical elf who’d claimed to love you had come barging in, literal guns blazing and mown you down mercilessly.

You would see him pay for his actions.

Your haughty glower becomes a barely concealed smirk as his face flashes with pain. Regret and guilt settle deep within his eyes and you grin when he can’t bare to continue looking at you. Good! Let him feel the weight of your wrath. Joyously you watch as he takes a deep breath and attempts to compose himself.

“You are being detained—“

Oh so that’s how he wants to play this! No apologies, no deceleration of love, no compassion. Only formality. So be it, then.

Cutting him off with a bored sigh, you roll your eyes. “Where is Alexo? Is he dead?”

His jaw muscles tick, a sure sign of his tenuous hold on his emotions. “You are being det—“

“What about my wand? I assume you’ve confiscated that.”

His nostrils flare and as he inhales he glances quickly at you. You see it clearly, even though it was less than a second, the heartache and sorrow is written all over his features. He knows you’ve changed, grown stronger with the wand, become less human and more ruthless.

He knows you’ve evolved. You’re not his little pet human anymore.

“You are being detailed in this facility under section fourteen of the Magic Code of Conduct as specified in—“

You’ve heard enough. It’s obvious he’s not going to play ball unless you change tactics. Letting your lips quiver, you soften your face and turn towards him with dewy eyes.

“Kandomere,” you sob, blinking rapidly as if to hold back your anguish, “help me! I don’t know what I’m doing. I—“ Forcing yourself to shiver you squeeze out a tear and look down at your cuffed hands.

The elf regards you with a stern face, he’s not buying your little show, you’re going to have to work harder.

“I can feel it inside me,” you whisper, pushing out more crocodile tears. “It takes over and I can’t stop it, I can’t fight it…“
He moves his weight to the balls of his feat, subconsciously leaning towards you. You’re starting to draw him in.

Biting your bottom lip, you drag your gaze to his cold glare and pinch your brows into a forlorn expression. “I’m so sorry, I should have fought harder, should have… I tried, I really did but he was too strong. He was too much.” Your face is sopping wet with fake tears and you can see the effect it’s having on him behind his stoic mask. Time to go in for the kill, “He shot Ford! You left me, Ford was down and I was alone with him. There was no one there to help. I was alone.”

No sooner had the words left your lips, the agent turns on his heel and strides out of the room. You’d broken him! You’d succeeded. His guilt was palpable and delicious in the stark, clinical room. Chewing the inside of your cheek to stop your smug smile breaking free, you drop your chin and pretend to cry. If you were ever getting free, you had to sell your story, and that meant commitment.

A moment later another familiar body joins you in the white room. This one would not be manipulated though, this one would happily see you chained up and locked away for the rest of your days.

“Y/n,” Liona states in her no nonsense tone, “it’s pointless trying to talk your way out, we’re running constant blood and brainwave analyses, we know you’re infected with some sort of magical disease. It’s attacking your very DNA. You’re being detained under medical advice,” she smiles and clarifies, “my medical advice. You’ll stay at this facility until I’m sure you have no latent magic abilities and your wounds have fully healed. At such time you’ll be transferred to the most secure prison we have. No amount of emotional manipulation will see you walk free so I suggest you work with us to ensure your time left is as productive and meaningful as possible.”

Meeting her eyes you level your gaze and stare. There’s a vibration surrounding the doctor and if you listen hard enough you can hear it ringing. A subtle high pitched, constant squeal that’s as annoying as tinnitus. She doesn’t wilt under your scrutiny, instead she stands straighter and places her hands on her hips.

“I remember you.” Keeping your voice low and meek, you drop your gaze, intentionally rolling your back and slumping your shoulders to appear smaller, weaker. “Your anger, your disgust.”

She can’t help the triumphant grin, the arrogance that comes with being an important elf bolstering her self confidence.

“The superiority you assumed.” Oh, you can all but taste her death on your tongue. How ironic it will be, but how just. It’s because of her you’re here, her recommendation, her diagnosis. She knows you’re bursting with power and yet she’s taunting you, either too foolish or too stubborn to understand the implications. But she’s going to!

Flicking your gaze to hers, she instantly drops the smirk in favour of a gasp, taking a step backwards in fear. Her sudden spike in anxiety amuses you no end. “You can run little lion heart, but it won’t help.” Her mere presence the catalyst you’d been waiting for, triggering your vengeance enough to build your magical strength and this time as you look over at the mirror you can see straight through to the gallery of people watching you.

And there, right in the middle, centre stage is the elf who couldn’t keep his promise. 

*You!*

His eyes widen and he leans forward, his palms slamming against the glass between you like he’d
been punched in the stomach.

You hold his gaze and speak slowly. “Free me and I will not harm a soul in here.” You arch a brow and snatch your head back to Liona. “Keep me here and you will all die.”

As if she can feel the weight of the five men in the other room all looking at her, she turns to the mirror. Her confidence has been knocked and in her expression there is a fissure of fear. She shrugs her shoulders and a disembodied voice floats through the room from the speakers above you.

“Sedate her.”

Liona nods, heading for the exit but your steely voice stops her. Muttering in the old language, the one the Inferni had forced you to learn, you draw on the power surrounding you. Grabbing hold of the loose threads in your mind, you tug, feeling the untapped energy unraveling from its current guardians.

Behind the glass divide, the men all turn as the door to the corridor is opened and another agent rushes in, his face pinched with unease. “Something’s happening!”

You can hear their conversation as clearly as if they’re in the room with you now and you realise, Liona has the cell door open. That’s when it hits you, the agonised screams floating down the corridor from the various magic users they’d locked up in this antiseptic drenched void of a building.

They shriek and wail as you forcibly remove the magic from their bodies, calling it to you through the walls. It snakes in to the room, twisting and rolling like waves as it gathers above you, a growing tempest. It swirls, agitated and excited, until it is a giant cloud of moonlit smoke billowing down the walls towards you.

You own it. It belongs only to you.

Above the shouts from the agents, the pained cries of the other inmates and the roaring of the power above, you make out the soft prayer being uttered in Övüsi by the blue haired elf pressing against the glass. It’s old Övüsi, calling on the Lords of the North, South, East and West to protect and watch over those in dire danger. His voice carries over the din, his silver eyes glued to your form and you shake your head at his pathetic attempt to help himself.

They’d had their chance.

As the magic descends toward you, you just make out the last words of his invocation. He offers his soul as a bargaining chip, pleading to the old, long forgotten deities to watch over you, protect you, keep you safe.

And then the power hits you like a freight train.

Lights blow, glass breaks and alarms sound. Chaos ensues as you drain the life force of all the other magic wielding inmates, devouring it in great gulping lungfuls. People are running, the building is shaking and in the middle of it all, you’re basking in the radiance of a power so entire, you could wipe out LA within the hour.
The restraints around your wrists fall away as darkness shrouds the room and you climb to your feet carefully. Through the glass you could feel his eyes still watching your every move and you wondered idly if he would attempt to stop you. If he did, you would put him down, there was no question of mercy or leniency. Not now. The only thing that stopped you from immediately dealing with him and that infernal doctor was the deepest yearning for revenge.

“Alexo,” you hissed, closing your eyes. Allowing your magic to creep out into the corridors, you felt your way through the building, tasting each soul you came across with invisible tendrils of power. With each fresh person came disappointment until you realised Alexo wasn’t here.

Incensed, you strode into the joining room, your superior sight unencumbered by the gloom. Three men, one elf agent and one elf doctor had remained. Gritting your teeth, you will them to remain motionless, locking them in place with your magic.

Rounding on Kandomere, you hiss an impatient, “Where is he?”

The elf stares, unwavering at you. “He’s dead.”

You feel him out, your magic twisting itself around his body, smothering him, assessing him, reading him. He tenses at the foreign experience of being cocooned by magic and his breathing stutters.

“You’re lying.”

“Y/n?” The doctor’s voice trembles. “Please listen, you’re infected, it’s attacking your system and if we don’t act fast it will kill you.” She rushes to speak, spitting out the words like they’ll somehow save her life. They won’t.

Tilting your head to the side, you narrow your eyes and glare at the female. “Then I’d better be quick, hadn’t I?” Returning your focus to Kandomere you fight the urge to splay him open and pull out his insides. “Tell me where he is or I will make my way through everyone in this room, saving you for last. And when I say make my way through them, let me be absolutely clear, I do mean through them.”

The men whimper and the elf’s gaze flickers briefly towards them. He’s conflicted. Licking your lips, you ignore the alarm that sounds as the back up generators spring into life, bathing you all in the god awful fluorescent light again. Time was running out. If Alexo was close, they would get word to who ever was responsible for him. You had to get to him before they moved him out of your reach, before his magic ate you alive.

You can already sense it destroying your genetic make up, eating it’s way through your white blood cells, decimating your immune system. Once that’s gone you’re defenceless against his corruption, his poisonous blood would be your blood and although not certain, you’d bet it would
bind you to him. You would not let that happen.

But Kandomere doesn’t look to be persuaded by your threats so you change it up a gear.

“Okay pretty boy. Tell me where Alexo is and I swear I’ll refrain from killing anyone else until I’ve dealt with him.”

It’s an offer you know he won’t refuse. He wouldn’t put Alexo’s life above that of his agents, hell, given half the chance he’d kill Alexo himself if he weren’t bound by petty rules and ridiculous laws.

“Y/n please, do you have any idea what happens if you go untreated?” The doctor whines and although you are mildly interested in what she has to say, it pales in comparison to the revenge burning through you.

“Alexo!” You demand, narrowing your eyes and baring your teeth at the female. “Tell me what I want to know, agent, or she’s the first to suffer!” You grasp the paralysed doctor by the throat and roughly drag her closer.

“He’s at another facility,” Kandomere answers calmly. “Let her go and I will take you there.”

A hysterical laugh bursts out of your mouth causing your hostages to flinch. “Oh elf, you’re funny, I’ll give you that.” At once your laughter stops and you squeeze the tender neck in your hands tighter until Liona is a gasping, trembling, sobbing wreck. “Where. Is. Alexo?”

“I will take you—“

You huff out a growl, throwing the wretched female elf to the floor. “Fine, have it your way, just remember, you made me do this!”

Glaring at Kandomere you raise your foot over the doctors chest. Oh you would enjoy torturing this particular creature, your only regret would be the speed at which she would die. Time was not on your side and you couldn’t afford to play like you wanted, still, you’d be sure to make her suffer.

With a grin you stomp down, only to be stopped half way by a ragged, “Stop! I’ll tell you.”

Pursing your lips you turn away from the snivelling elf on the floor to glare at the one opposite you. “You have two seconds.”

“He’s in a secure building in Elf town.”

You arch a brow, tapping your foot on the body laid out before you. A smile graces your lips as each time your toes land, Liona lets out a fearful cry, adding to your menacing aura.

“I will take you straight there, walk you in and remove all the agents. You will not meet with any resistance, so long as you allow me to accompany you.”

You would need transportation and assuming he came good on his promises, it would make life that much more easier. And then there was the small issue of time. Despite her many, many flaws, Liona had been telling the truth about your demise.

Removing your foot you crouch down and yank the doctor back up. “Fine, you can drive but she’s coming as insurance. Now move.”
You release your magical hold on Kandomere and follow him out of the room, Liona gasping in your unforgiving grasp.

“So tell me doc, what’s the prognosis?” There’s lots to do and you need to prioritise tasks accordingly.

“I can’t say for sure,” Liona rasps, struggling to speak in your choke hold, “but given the rapid change thus far I’d estimate thirty-six to forty-eight hours.”

Hmm, that was better than you’d been expecting.

“Oh, and then what? Lay it on me.”

You stroll nonchalantly into the elevator, tipping your face to the camera to stare down the lens. Giving security a sweet smile you mouth the words, “night night” and flood the close-circuit system with enough magic to fuse the wires and knock out every camera in the building.

“It’s happened before, Inferni sharing blood with Brights, but the Brights were always elves. Their genes accepted the new DNA without question.” Liona coughs and you tighten your grip with a smirk.

“Oh, sorry sweetie, does that not help?” Sarcasm coats your faux concern as you loosen your hand enough to allow her to gasp in a lungful of air.

“You’re body is adapting, evolving, mutating to accommodate his dominant genes.” Kandomere states flatly, his back to you. “His blood is consuming your DNA and changing it, rewiring you to become stronger, faster, more elven. Simultaneously his magic is ending your humanity. Your soul is dying. You’re becoming a fully fledged Capasüül, a human-elf Inferni. Once the transformation is complete, what makes you, you will be dead. You’ll be a vessel used to carry out Inferni grunt work.”

Yeah, you’d figured as much when the doc had said you’d not got much time left. So surely some part of you should be the tiniest bit anxious about your approaching death? And yet, the only thing you can think of is slaughtering Alexo, your mind a cinematic reel of all the delightfully despicable ways you’re going to tear him to shreds.

The elevator opens up to the parking garage where a swat team have a wall of guns separating you from the exit. You roll your eyes at their stupidity. You’d taken out the electrics in the whole building, did they honestly think you were going to struggle against this?

“Don’t fire!” Kandomere instructs firmly.

“Y/n, let the hostages go and we can talk about your demands.” A faceless agent calls.

You shrug your shoulders, you hadn’t wanted them to come in the first place and now that you’re out of that damn hell hole you can physically sense the treacherous Alexo. The elves were superfluous to your plans.

“Okay, they’re all yours.”

Digging your nails into Liona’s skin you push her forward, maliciously using enough strength to force her to stumble and fall hard. Suppressing a snicker, your lips twitch at the sight of her crawling to safety on all fours.

Biting your lip, you step behind Kandomere shoving him too but to your annoyance, he doesn’t
move. Letting out a small growl you try again and this time he’s knocked slightly off balance and takes a half step forward.

“I’m staying with you,” he sighs quietly before addressing the team facing you down. “Lower your weapons and back away. I don’t know who ordered this but they don’t have the full story. For your own safety, stand down.”

“Aw but baby, I wanna play.” You stretch up on your toes and lick Kandomere’s ear, laughing as he shudders. “Watch!”

Grinning, you slide one hand around his waist as the other grasps his chin. Holding him still you wait but his men seemed to have heeded his warning and aren’t reacting the way you’d hoped.

“Hey blondie!” You call to the agent opposite you. “Shoot the elf.”

The agent scowls and then cries out in alarm as his body moves into position, raising his rifle towards Kandomere.

“Last chance, pretty boy. Run or die, your choice.”

“You said—“

“I lied,” you snap, “blondie, shoot.”

A crack fills the underground parking lot, quickly followed by the grunt of the elf you’re now holding up. Rolling your eyes you open your arms and allow Kandomere to crumple to the floor, a small lake of crimson forming near his stomach.

You eye your company aggressively. “Anyone else want to play?”

They don’t react, instead their eyes flit nervously from you to the injured agent. Smiling you crouch down and shove Kandomere on to his back. His face is creased, his lips pinched in a tight line and sweat beads on his forehead. He’s holding his stomach and panting as he struggles to look at you.

“Where’s the wand?”

Opening his mouth, he tries to answer but instead of words, blood pours out, over his chin and down his neck.

“Is it near? Just nod if it is.” You huff, annoyed with his theatrics.

He nods once, his confirmation soothing your scorched nerves. If it was close you’d be able to find it. And if you could find it soon you might stand a fighting chance of undoing what Alexo had inflicted. You’re about to walk away when an alien emotion grips you tight, rendering you speechless and motionless. Your heart freezes and for a moment it hurts to see the state of the elf at your feet. Gritting your teeth you shove the feeling aside and concentrate on the wand. He didn’t matter, the wand did.

Letting go of any distractions you allow your mind and magic to wander, directing both out into the city. The wand was out there somewhere and you were going to find it. Again you taste the varying flavours of magic as you weave in and out of the streets but nothing’s right, everything is too bitter, sour or salty. Nothing sweet, nothing to make your mouth water. Nothing like the taste of your wand.
“You liar!” You kick the elf but he’s already unconscious. “Blondie, where’s my wand?” You bellow, addressing the agent who you’d forced to shoot Kandomere. He opens his mouth but nothing comes out as his terrified gaze searches your face. He clearly doesn’t know.

“What is my wand?” You roar. “Tell me or you all die.”

“We don’t know, they kept the location classified.” A fearful, shaking voice answers.

You growl. “Well who the fuck will know?” Even as you ask you anticipate the answer, laughing at the irony as your suspicion is confirmed.

“Agent Kandomere knew,” says the same timid voice.

“Of course he did.” Sighing through your nose you bend your knees and grab Kandomere, dragging him across the dirty, concrete floor. “Move!” The men whose job it had been to stop you, part effortlessly, pushed aside by your magic. Without a second thought, you fling Kandomere’s body against the hood of the nearest car, pinning him in place by thought alone. Gritting your teeth you hover your hand over his abdomen, muttering in the old language, calling on the power of the dark lord himself to heal the wretched agent.

But he’s farther gone than you’d originally thought, skirting just the wrong side of death. Filling your lungs with air, you channel every ounce of power you have into removing the bullet fragments, knitting tissue back together, pulsing life through the recently dead veins and forcing his soul to remain tethered to his body. Your hands tremble and your vision wavers. Your body lurches from ice cold to molten hot and you’re only vaguely aware of your audible grunts of exertion. You give him everything you have, transferring your full magic into his broken body until finally he comes too, gasping and spluttering.

Leaning over him, planting your hands either side of his head to support your exhausted body you sneer and bite out, “You stay alive only if I get my wand within the next ten minutes!”

Silver eyes laced with confusion search yours fervently, as if he’s looking for something. He stares hard but eventually he sags back against the car, not finding whatever he’d hoped to.

“You should have let me die,” he breathes, his brows knitting together over his heavy gaze.

“Fine,” you push up and put your hands on your hips. You’re drained and exhausted but you’re not about to let it show. “Tell me where my wand is and I’ll kill you.” You’re swaying slightly so you toss your hair over your shoulders to disguise your weakened state.

His expression flickers and for a moment you think he’s seen through your act. Narrowing your eyes you growl. “Where. Is. My. Wa—“

He moves so fast you can’t follow him. He darts around you and is immediately swallowed by the crowd of swat agents. Unable to match him, you stagger back to the car and rest your backside against the bodywork.

This was not going at all to plan.

Well fine. Gone was the time for finesse, you’d just have to do this quick and dirty.

To keep the MTF at bay, you suck in the many threads of power holding them all still and use it to erect a wall to keep them at bay. Then with the last of your magic, you send a blast through the car and stagger around to the drivers door as the engine revs to life.
Getting to Alexo was going to be a little trickier now but you weren’t about to give up your last opportunity to kill him before you die.

The last thing you see in the rear view mirror is the reflection of the blue haired elf as he gestures wildly to your disappearing car.
Chapter Thirty

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Violence, blood, language, abuse

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The closer you get to elf town the stronger the compulsion to reach Alexo. Your whole body is thrumming and as you near the border point you’re practically vibrating with energy. It’s more than an urge now, it’s greater than anything you’ve ever felt and you can barely sit still enough to drive the damn car.

Of course the personnel at the check point already know you’re coming and as soon as they spot the car they raise their weapons and order the vehicles in front of you, aside. Obviously they think you’re easy prey and that your magic is depleted, they’re wrong though, so wrong. In the few minutes it’s taken you to drive here, you’ve collected enough power to take them down, a fact the MTF will soon find out when the comatose bodies of the magic wielders you’d passed along the way are called in.

Ignoring the men shouting at you, you pull up and courteously put down the window with a sweet smile.

“Officer?”

He looks over the top of his weapon, ordering you to slowly exit the vehicle and get down on the ground. He’s like a fish facing off against a bear, he just doesn’t know it yet.

Shaking your head slowly, you toss him a pitiful look. “No, instead I’m going to head into the elf district and you’re going to radio back to the MTF that you have me in custody. Got it?” There’s no way he can refuse, your magic has them all completely powerless to disobey. There’s confusion written in his eyes as he does exactly as you say.

You nod your approval when the barrier rises, leaning out of the window as you pass. “Very good, carry on as normal.”

The second you cross the border your accosted by a violent shiver and a euphoria that surges through your nervous system. Your skin erupts in goose bumps and a sigh escapes you as all at once everything comes together to lift you up.

Oh god, what is this ecstasy and please never let it end!

Closing your eyes to bask in the experience, you erect a shield around the car and allow the magic to guide you. Slowly you make your way through the traffic, the startled cries of the elves around you as their vehicles move of their own accord only adds to your rapture.

You are untouchable.

The closer you get to the building where they’re keeping Alexo the more relaxed you become. And instead of the intense revenge, tranquility soothes your wrath. Any stress or tension left in your muscles dissipates, and as you stop the car and step out, it’s like you’re floating. You don’t see the
people around you, can’t hear their yells and grunts as your field of power knocks them out. There is nothing but this feeling, this higher state of consciousness leading you to where you want to be, to where you have to be, to him.

And then you’re there, in a cell reminiscent of the one you’ve just left.

Alexo is asleep in a bed, hooked up to machinery and monitors that are doing god knows what to him. Prowling closer you lean over and deftly stroke his cheek. Groggily he opens his eyes and as he focusses on you, his expression erupts into a grin that splits his face. Adoration shines from him, bright and silvery, and a choked noise comes from the back of his throat.

“I’m here,” you croon, still stroking him.

He blinks and then you hear him inside your mind.

*Look at you, my Starlight, shining brighter than a supernova during its explosion. You are so beautiful.*

You practically glow with his praise, your own smile matching his.

*I knew you were the one, right from the start. Your iridescence was too great to ignore. You are the perfect light; strong, radiant and elegant. You are perfect.*

With each word your heart expands and it suddenly occurs to you that you were so wrong. You didn’t want to kill this mystical being before you, you want to become one with him. He’s your missing piece.

But you’d hurt him.

Your expression falls as you remember the way you’d tortured him and laughed as he’d screamed in agony. A gasp tears out of you as you double over in anguished pain. What kind of a monster where you to do that to the elf you loved? How could you ever contemplate such atrocities?

“My god, what have I done?” You sob, burying your face into the crook of Alexo’s neck. “I hurt you, how could I? I’m so sorry, please forgive me!” You’re smothered by the desperation, the desire for his forgiveness. It subdues your every other need; you don’t want to breathe, don’t want to live if he can’t grant you the pardon you so fiercely yearn for.

He lifts a hand and softly threads it into the hair at the nape of your neck.

*Starlight, settle. You hurt me, yes, but you can make it up to me. You’ll be a good girl from now on won’t you? You’ll follow my requests without question because you understand that I only want what’s best for you, you were always my favourite.*

“I’ll be good,” you sob, clinging to him. “I’ll do everything you ask. I’ll be good.”

He pets you for a little while, until the crushing weight of your emotion calms enough that you can breathe easily again.

*That’s better. How about you start by healing me and then I will take you far away from everyone who wants to hurt you?*

“Just us?”

Please let it just be us.
Just us. His confirmation eases the weight on your chest and you nod eagerly. Cupping his face softly with both your hands you concentrate on once again rebuilding an elf.

Sending your magic into Alexo is like coming home and you sense the bond between you strengthening. Like a key in a lock, you fit together, working in tandem to remake all that was broken and injured.

An ethereal brilliance surrounds you both, burning with the brightness of a spotlight, illuminating Alexo’s gorgeous face. He frowns as the pain increases but you’re quick to absorb his discomfort, it’s the least you can do seeing as you’re the reason he’s having to be healed.

“Starlight,” he breathes with a smile.

“Alexo.” Your reply is more of a grunt as you’re lanced with every internal laceration and ache.

“Ah ah ah, what do you call me?”

At his admonishment you cower. He’d always insisted you refer to him by his title but you’d been insolent and rude.

“Forgive me, my master, I should have known better.”

“Sweet Starlight of mine.” Alexo shoves you away and sits up, ripping back the covers to expose his naked form. “I am indeed your master.” He stands and snatches your hips in an unforgiving grip to pull you against him. “Do you feel that? Do you see how your body bows to mine, how you arch into me? How you crave me?”

Remembering your training you make sure to lower your gaze. Staring at his clavicle you whisper a soft, “yes, master.” He’s right, your flesh is positively singing where it touches his and you can feel your hearts being in unison.

“I’m the dark and you’re the light. Without one there cannot be the other. Do you understand?”

“I think so.” This is not a connection driven by carnal desires, this is more, this goes deeper. He’s in your very bones and you’re in his. You’re the opposite sides of the same coin and together you are whole.

A third voice joins your reunion, “If that were true, if she was completely yours, why fill her full off your blood magic?”

Whipping around, you see the blue haired elf through the glass window, noting with curious interest the way in which he too is almost glowing.

“Y/n,” Alexo barks, “what did you do?”

“She healed me, she used your magic, her magic to bring me back from death.” Kandomere replies, unblinking.

“You did what?” Alexo seethes, his voice dropping to a whisper.

Oh, this isn’t good, you know this tone means you’re about to be punished and all because of the loud mouthed agent. There’s no point lying though, Alexo would find out the truth one way or another and if you lied he’d punish you all the more.

“You witless imbecile! Do you have any idea what you’ve done? The absolute moronic level of
stupidity! The monumental fucking mess! You stupid, stupid—“ He backhands you across the face splitting open the skin and sending you spilling to the floor. “You’ve ruined everything!” His heel comes down hard on your chest and you scream as your ribs crack under the onslaught.

“Get the fuck away from her!”

Through watering eyes you watch as the agent crashes into the room and snatches Alexo by his throat, dragging him to the opposite side of the room and lifting him clean up into the air. He smacks him against the wall so hard you’re pretty sure your master will have some broken ribs of his own and that angers you.

Crawling forward, gasping and wheezing, you reach out your hand to use your magic to push the two elves apart but nothing happens. Through the tears and the wrenching agony you try again but it’s futile, you can’t get even a tingle to power to leave you. You resort to dragging yourself across the floor as the two elves fight viciously, though in all honesty it appears to be a one sided affair. Kandomere is tearing Alexo apart, literally. He’s ruthlessly destroying his opponent but taking his time and inflicting as much torture as possible.

You sob, uselessly dragging yourself along as your master is attacked in front of you, the torment of being powerless to help him ravaging your very soul. The agent is merciless in his assault, his face a picture of fury with his teeth bared and his eyes zeroed in on his enemy. There’s no stopping him now. There’s no way to prevent Alexo’s death.

Alexo is hanging on to the last threads of his life when he looks down at you. Meeting his blown pupils you hear his voice in your mind.

_This was yo—_

He never finishes. Kandomere ends him in a barbaric and sadistic show of bloodthirsty hatred, tearing out his throat with a roar that echoes through the building. He’s covered in crimson and sinew as he drops the other elf’s dead body to the floor and steps away, panting.

The second he moves, you lumber across to Alexo, desperate to fix him but you had to be quick. Bringing back Kandomere had been hard enough, if you left it too late there’d be no saving Alexo, no coming back. But you’d done it once, you could do it again. Grasping Alexo you fit your hands over the gaping neck wound only no magic bursts fort.

“Leave him!”

You ignore Kandomere, grappling with the rapidly cooling elf you’ve tried to pull into your lap. What’s left of his blood trickles out of his massacred body, soaking into your clinical clothing, and still you fight to save him. You can’t breathe properly and you’re wracked with pain, but the worst horror is the growing realisation that you can’t do this, you can’t save him, he’s not coming back. Your master is truly, irrevocably dead.

In a single blink of your eye, the world crashes down on top of you, the weight knocking you to your back and bludgeoning your senses. The pain, not like that of broken ribs or lacerated skin - oh hell no - is like someone slicing out your soul with fiery hot shards of glass. Every atom screams, even though you can’t, and you convulse so violently you almost knock yourself out on the side of the bed.

“Mi amor.” Kandomere kicks the corpse of his enemy aside and slips his arms around, lifting you as he stands.
You want to tell him to fuck off and leave you with Alexo, but at his touch a soothing coolness wraps itself around you, dowsing the fire consuming you and settling your desolate thoughts. The closer he holds you the more relieved you feel until you’re able to relax enough to take regular, shallow breaths.

“There might be time to save you.” He carries you from the room, not giving Alexo a second glance, whereas you, you can’t take your eyes from him. Your dead elf. Your teacher. Your master.

With each step farther from the body on the floor you become more aware of a strange war taking place inside your mind and body. On one side is the festering, turbulent violence of having Alexo forcibly taken from you, and with it the literal acidic burning for revenge rising up your throat. On the other, there’s the serenity of Kandomere’s touch; a cooling breeze in a hot, arid desert, an oasis of lush greenery in a vast expanse of scorching, gritty sand.

“Stay with me, mi alma.”

The agent is flying down the hallway, rushing you somewhere and muttering words of prayer. You can hear his heart thumping rapidly, and yet he seems unaffected by your weight in his arms. This unnatural dichotomy plays on your mind and you wonder why he’s even carrying you in the first place.

Your mind is fogging. You can’t recall why this elf is running through this building with you, or what the red coving your hands is.

Should you know? Does it matter?

Your eyes are heavy and fatigue weighs you down.

“No, no, no! Y/n, open your eyes!”

You’re floating now, somewhere just above, out of arms reach. Weightless. You’re not unconscious but you’re not entirely sure you’re in the physical world anymore. You can’t feel, see or smell anything except an endless whiteness, like a massive blank canvass.

There is emptiness all around and inside you but you’re beyond all thought or care. You are simply light existing in a field of white.

Anaesthetised.

Gone.

---

Chapter End Notes

The End

No, I'm joking, there's much more to come.
You’re aware of what they’re doing to you but you’re not on the same level of consciousness as the rest of them. Instead you’re looking down on all the commotion surrounding your body with disinterest, through eyes that aren’t really there.

When they’d first brought you into the operating room and laid you out on the table you’d been floating way above, somewhere in the atmosphere, not quite on this plane of existence, not quite on the next. Time had been irrelevant, everything that had happened before and everything to come, inconsequential. Sourcing in the updraft of pointlessness you’d simply existed, but with each passing hour they’d worked on you, you’d inched closer, closer back to your body.

Presently a lab coat is furiously removing the blood from your body, yet again. He’s darting around the table, dodging the various other lab coats and scrubs working on your body. He’s sweating and very, very nervous.

Your heart has stopped twice, the sensation of your soul being cut free and reattached to a body one you’d prefer not to experience again. Yet even when you’d been dead, something had kept you here, a tiny shred of magic preventing you from moving on. Since your last cardiac arrest they’ve been continuously running your blood through a number of machines before pumping back in to you, all the while checking the machine’s readings and avoiding the blue haired elf’s murderous glare.

He’s watching the lab coats intently. He scares them. It’s not hard to see why. He hasn’t moved more than two feet from your motionless form, his hand hovering over any part of you he can get to without restricting the lab coat’s work.

It was all rather tedious but try as you might, you can’t reach the heavens above so you choose to languish in the surreal experience as best you can until voices rise above the hum of machinery.

“Kandomere, she’s too far gone, there’s nothing more can be done to help her. The binding spell was too potent.”

“If that were true she’d have died when he did.”

“She has died, twice already.”

“No, you drained he blood too fast, there’s a difference. Just… Give her more time.”

“Time for what? She’s separated and we have no legal way to bring her back. It’s over.

“It’s over when I say its over, and that time is not now!”

The male elf is asserting his dominance over the female elf. He’s drawn himself up to his full height and is rigid, towering over the female. The rest of the minions have fled.

You note with piqued interest that he’s glowing. It entices you closer.

“Kandomer—“

“Enough Liona! If you’ve nothing more to add, I suggest you leave.”

“I know she meant—“
“You know nothing except your personal bias. Get out or I shall throw you out myself.”

The male hisses and his incandescent light flares stronger. It pulls you towards him until you find your awareness next to him.

“This has nothing to do with any of that, this is my professional experience talking. She was tethered to him more strongly than any binding I’ve ever seen before. His magic was vast and dark and she never stood a chance, a harmless human swallowed by his repugnant corruption, she was lucky to stay alive for the length of—”

“Get out!”

The male explodes with white hot rage, his soul lighting up like a thousand fireworks that yank your dislocated consciousness directly into his blast radius. You’re somewhere in front of him now, inches away from the heat of his essence and you can’t stop staring at his face, you’re stunned by the iridescence of his eyes as they grow wide.

He looks at you. He sees you.

“Yes?” Shock and disbelief register on his face. For a while he simply stares, his gaze not quite able to hold your own. Then after a few moments he cautiously reaches out a hand but it glides, unencumbered, through the air where you’re consciousness resides.

You have magic in you. Your silent thought is now audible much to your confusion. The elf closes his eyes as he listens to your voice and furrows his brow. He’s confused and angry, heartbroken and guilt ridden.

It’s a peculiar sensation. You have no form yet you can taste his emotions. They swirl through a whole menu of feelings until he settles on the bitter tang of fear coupled with the refreshing coolness of hope.

“She’s here, now, I can see and hear her.” He swallows and works to slow his breath, shutting his eyes to concentrate. “She wasn’t merely some human, she’s a bright, she has her own magic.”

A gasp fills the air and you remember the other elf in the room. Not that she matters.

Open your eyes. You want to peer into their shimmering depths again. You’re unconcerned by the elves conversation, the only thing that you pay any mind to, is the magnetism of the male. It’s unavoidable. It’s powerful. It’s seductive.

He grants you your wish, revealing eyes that reflect a galaxy of colour, and sighs when you move closer still, the air around you crackling with energy.

“She was a bright?”

“Is.”

“So when she revived you…”

“She must have used some of her own magic.”

“Without a wand? It’s unheard of… Still, you’re suggesting you can somehow see her… Spirit?”

Those mesmerising, beautiful eyes flit to the side, sliding away from you and leaving you cold. Reaching out, you cup your phantom hands around his head and guide him back, until he once
again bathes you in the fire of his gaze. He shivers at your touch.

“I don’t know,” he murmurs as if in a trance, “it’s her, but not.”

“Impossible.”

“She’s right here.”

“It can’t… There is no precedent, nothing to prove—“

“And so nothing to disprove.”

There is quiet for a long period and it allows you to search out and count the endless hues in his irises. You are captivated by this elf, the heat he emits, his enchanting eyes, him. And you somehow know that he is yours.

“Let me take some of your blood for analysis.”

Again his eyes move and this time you drift away without his anchor.

“What are you thinking?”

“It’s only a hunch, but if I can detect any of her residual magic, there may be a tiny possibility we can bring her back.”

He glances back and forwms, his eyes darting around the room as he tries and fails to spot you. Tearing off his jacket he all but rips at his shirt sleeve to offer his flesh to the female.

“Hurry, please Liona, I beg of you.”

The light is returning, closing around you, sucking you back into the white. Without a physical mainstay you are powerless to stop it and so you pass over to the nothing, letting go of the elf with the kaleidoscope eyes and the warmth that came with him.

You’re trapped, unable to move, weighted down. All around you a hideous cacophony of noise assaults your ears and a burning scent makes your closed eyes water. Its a terrifying attack on your senses that causes your heart to pick up its pace in response to your fear and panic.

“She’s waking up.” A voice too loud and too close announces.

“Move aside!”

“Sir—“

“I said move!”

Every word is like an explosion inside your head and you wince against the pain. You haven’t even opened your eyes yet but you know, without question, the lights above are those dreadful fluorescent monstrosities that make your teeth ache. There’s commotion all around you but you’re too scared to look so you don’t. You lay in terrified, pained silence trying to unravel what’s going on.
“Everybody out.” You flinch as the words are barked in an order.

“Kandomere, hush, remember.” The soft, whispered voice of Liona scolds.

More commotion that sets your nerves vibrating. This is agony. Every footprint, every flicker of the bulbs above, every exhale of the many people in there makes you want to claw your brain out. And then silence. Only, not quite. There are two individuals remaining, but neither are moving and both are breathing gently.

“The lights are out, the machines are off and everyone else has gone. You can open your eyes now, Y/n.” Liona instructs.

With heavy trepidation you pry your eyes open, sighing in relief to find that the lights are indeed switched off. But even without the god awful synthetic lighting, you’re able to see clearly, the dark unaflecting your vision in any way.

“Mi alma!” You physically jump as Kandomere clasps your hands in his and bows down to kiss them.

“I’m sure you have many questions,” Liona states softly from over his shoulder, “but first I must assess you. What is your name?”

“Liona, please, a moment.” Kandomere pleads, straightening his back to stand.

“I’m sorry Kandomere, you knew how this would go.”

He sighs, his gaze skimming down your body to your feet before he releases your hands and reluctantly steps away. You don’t want him to though, so you reach out only have your movement halted by the padded cuffs around your wrists.

They’ve restrained you.

“Your name?” Liona presses, stepping forward.

Closing your eyes you drop your hand back down and take a shaky breath. You remember it all. It hurt to think about it but despite the god awful headache, you remembered everything. Every second. Every emotion. Every sensation. The only thing you don’t know is how they brought you back. Liona was right, you’d been too tied to Alexo, your souls crudely stitched together with his blood magic. His essence had tried to drag you with him, it had detached you from your body and attempted to carry you off to the great beyond. You should be dead.

Except you aren’t.

You recalled the weirdness of being not quite alive or dead, the out of body experience as you had tried following Alexo, but you hadn’t, couldn’t…

Why not?

“Do you know your name?” Liona asks a little louder.

Your gut is telling you to stay quiet. The way Kandomere had stepped aside at her say so was uncharacteristic to say the least. The only plausible explanation was that he was no longer in charge. If that was the case, given the magic you’d used, the trouble you’d caused, you were in a whole heap of shit.
Deep, dangerous shit.

“This is your last chance. If you don’t answer I’ll have no choice but t—“

Kandomere steps towards Liona and wraps a hand around her elbow. “Let me try, please?”

She glances at him from the corner of her eye and meets his soft gaze. “Fine,” she huffs, “but don’t get your hopes up.”

He nods his understanding and approaches you again. “Mi amor,” he deftly brushes some stray hair back from your face, scanning your features for any sign of recognition as he does. “Tell me your name, please.”

As his eyes find yours, you see the glow surrounding him once more and swallow. Everything inside of you, every cell wants to get closer to him. You yearn and ache to feel him hold you, to have him touch you, to let you love him.

“Kandomere.” It’s not what he asked but you can’t stop yourself.

“Don’t assume,” Lion says firmly, joining your elf to look down at you. She turns her icy glare to you again. “Do you know where you are?”

Hell, your mind screams, as your eyes fill with tears and you look away.

“Fuck.” Kandomere whispers, once again clasping your hands.

Closing your eyes you grit your teeth, willing your emotions to calm down. You need clarity in order to think through your best chance of survival but your thoughts are too clouded by him.

Oh Blue if only I could know for certain speaking won’t be the end of me. If only I could take back the last few days, if only I’d been stronger.

Kandomere sucks in a breath and squeezing your hand tightly, leans a little closer.

“You were stronger than you had any right to be. If only I’d killed Alexo at the start non of this would have happened. I’m so sorry, mi amor, I let you down.”

“Give it up,” Liona sighs heavily and moves to the exit, “it hasn’t worked, I was wrong. I’m afraid your human has substantial brain damage. There’s nothing anyone can do for her now.”

Yeah, I’m a hopeless, lost cause.

“No, you’re not. She’s not. She’s talking, just not with her mouth.” Kandomere laughs.

Cupping your cheek he turns your face to his and waits for you to open your eyes. Eventually you give in, knowing he’ll only wait you out, you might as well get this over and done with. But what you see when you meet his gaze confuses the hell out of you. His smile lights up his gorgeous face and he’s glowing brighter.

“You’re not a lost cause and speaking won’t be the end of you. Liona is on our side, she’s the one who devised the treatment that brought you back.”

Liona bustles over. “Wait, are you saying—“

“She’s using telepathy.” Kandomere grins, his eyes not straying from yours.
You can hear me?

He dips down and brushes his lips over yours. “Every word,” he murmurs still kissing you.

“Well, you know what this means,” Liona chuckles.

“It means you did the impossible.”

“Yes. It does.” The doctor’s features curl into a sinister grin. “It also means, as per our arrangement, she’s mine for the next seven days—“

Kandomere’s smile is instantly replaced with a mask of fury. “You would dare—“

“You agreed!”

“I agreed to negotiate upon her recovery.“

Liona shakes her head and arches a brow, “Fine, have it your way, I’ll send my report to my superiors and let them deal with the anomaly. And then you.”

“Do not threaten me, Liona.”

“It’s not a threat. No, not at all, I’m just going to do what you were unable to do and follow procedure. Either way, I’ll have this one under my control for the next week if not longer.”

“No,” Kandomere squares up against the doctor, his face full of wrath. “I will not allow you to experiment on Y/n after everything she’s been through.”

“You have no choice.”

In a flash, Kandomere pins Liona against the wall and snarls down at her. “Do not underestimate the lengths I will go to, to protect her! You are not infallible, and you are now as involved in the clandestine operation to cover her origins as I, so do not test me.”

His voice is cold and full of hatred, and you see it has the desired effect. Liona shrinks away, balling her hands into fists impotently at her sides.

“There could be side effects,” she mutters.

“And that is why you will continue to monitor her, at my apartment, under my supervision. I gave you my word, you will get your answers, but they will be on my terms, not in a lab under Delavore’s control.”

As he speaks, he crosses the room and undoes the straps pinning you down.

“You’re making a mistake, Kandomere.”

He chuckles lightly as he scoops you up and cradles you against his chest. “It will hardly be my first, will it, Liona?”

She glares at his inference.

“Come by the apartment in the morning, until then, you know what to do.”

“You’re a fool,” Liona bites, moving aside to let you both pass. “I’ll be surprised if you even make it through the night, either of you.”
“You know what to do.” Kandomere reiterates before striding out of the door, leaving the doctor behind and you wondering just what the hell had gone down in your absence.
Kandomere is silent as he carries you through the deserted corridors. You’re itching to ask him what happened but there’s an atmosphere surrounding him that prevents you speaking up. You can sense his rolling anger and you’re pretty sure at least some of it is directed at you, and who could blame him? After all, you did effectively kill him during your psychotic episode.

Tucking your chin to your chest you attempt to curl yourself up. The more you think over the events that happened since Alexo poisoned you, the more you feel your shame build. Logically you know you’d been unable to fight off his magic but a small part of you can’t help wondering how much was down to his influence and how much you’d simply wanted to do yourself. The power had been very seductive.

You reach Kandomere’s car without seeing another soul and wordlessly he puts you’d down to open the door. You don’t wait for an invitation, instead you slip into the leather seat and draw your knees to your chest. Despite his protective show with Liona, it’s quite obvious that your elf is harbouring mistrust, if not something worse.

He hates me. And why the hell wouldn’t he? After everything I did, all the pain I put him through, the trouble I’ve caused.

“I don’t hate you.”

His voice startles you and you glance across to see him grip the wheel tightly as the car starts.

“You should have let Liona take me.” At least that way I’d be unable to do more damage.

The muscle in jaw pulses as he grits and relaxes his teeth rhythmically, and you wish you were as privy to his thoughts as he now seems to be with yours. On second thoughts, maybe this way was better. You’re already feeling like shit, you can only imagine how much worse it would be if you were able to hear the vitriol circulating in his head.

Resting your head on your knees you close your eyes. At lest, in all the shit storm blowing up around you, you’d not actually killed anyone, entirely. You’d injured some, you’d drained some of magic but apart from the incident with Kandomere, you’d not left anyone dead.

But still…

You’d used massive amounts of magic, enough to get you noticed by the Inferni again. There was no way you could stay in LA, not now. The MTF wouldn’t stand by and let Kandomere gloss over this, no matter how high his rank, and the Inferni were sure to be plotting, figuring out a way to ensnare or end you.

Fuck.

“Enough!” Kandomere snaps, planting his foot on the accelerator and aggressively pushing the car through the traffic. “Are you going to talk to me or are you content to sit and run through all the worst case possabilities?”

Oh yeah, he’s pissed.

He let’s out a humourless laugh. “You have no idea.”
Inhaling a shaky breath you start with an apology. “Kandomere I’m sorry. I should have fought harder against it, I should never have— I’m so very sorry for what I did to you, I’ll never forgive myself and I know you won’t—”

“You know I have been listening to all your thoughts.” It’s not a question. “I heard you contemplating how much was his influence and how much was down to your own motivation.”

Your heart plummets to your feet and you shrink even further into the seat.

“You’re so naive, you know so little about magic. And I suspect what little knowledge you do have came directly from him.”

You shrug noncommittally. He’s right, and he knows it.

“Blood magic is strong, not quite as strong as wand magic but certainly nastier. His magic twisted you, infused his own ideologies into your very bones and smothered your light with his darkness. He corrupted you, he violated you to your utter core. Your actions were driven by his evil, but they were your actions. You did what you wanted to do, but you did it his way.”

You’re listening intently, trying to marry his explanation to your experience.

Kandomere sighs. “You’re right, you didn’t leave anyone dead. The worst you did was concussion. That was you.”

“I killed you.”

He glances over, his eyes heavy with sadness. “You brought me back.”

Averting your gaze you whisper softly, “Because I wanted the wand.” The pain that confession brings hits you both hard.

You hear Kandomere swallow and he takes a few moments to compose himself before he speaks again. “At the time, I was Alexo’s greatest enemy. You were full of his blood. His magic was focussed mainly on the wand but also on revenge. He wanted to kill me.” He’s using short sentences to try and emphasise his meaning but you’re not buying it.

“Kandomere—“

“You were under his control.”

“If that’s true why did I try to kill him? Before you and your team shot me I was almost there.”

His brows pull down at the mention of what happened and he breathes out through his nose. “Sometimes blood magic can be volatile, especially when the recipient isn’t willing. You were still mostly you when that happened, his blood hadn’t bonded, hadn’t fully consumed yours just yet.”

You pull up into the underground garage and spot a familiar agent waiting by the elevator doors.

“Montehugh?”

Kandomere nods and smiles. “He’s much better now.” Pushing open his door he steps out and greets his friend but you stay hidden in the car, going through the information he’s just laid on you. It sounds plausible but you’re still pretty sure he’s trying to ease your guilt. Perhaps because he can feel it the way you’re sensing his anger. Maybe he’s sick of the gnawing remorse making you feel ill.
You don’t have time to consider this thought too deeply as your door is wrenched open.
Kandomere raises his brow and steps to the side. “Y/n?”

So you’re back to your given name again. At least that gives you some indication as to where you stand. Taking a deep breath you exit the car and head to the elevators with your eyes cast down. Your body language screams of your shame. You can’t hide it so why try?

Montehugh says nothing as you stand between the two of them waiting for the doors to slide open, neither does Kandomere, instead you share an uncomfortable silence. It continues on after the elevator arrives and all through the journey, allowing you to disappear into the memories of the past few days. If only you hadn’t gone to the MTF building with Kandomere in the first place. You suppress the shudder running down your spine as you recall the darkness and gunshots when Alexo had taken you and Ross.

Oh god, Ross, had he survived?

“Agent Ross is recovering well.” Kandomere says softly.

Of course, he’s listening in on you again.

He leans a little closer and whispers into your ear. “No, you’re projecting your thoughts, it’s very hard to ignore them.”

The elevator bounces lightly as it comes to a halt and the three of you step out into the empty hallway. You’d half expected to be greeted by a line of SWAT agents again but thankfully there’s just the view of his front door. Once inside the familiar apartment your escorts flank you until you reach the couch, where Kandomere gestures for you to sit.

“I’m sorry you got hurt.” You mumble, turning towards Montehugh but keeping your face down.

“Wasn’t your fault, kid, just one of the perks that comes with the job,” he chuckles with his usual good natured, easy laugh and you’re so thankful he hadn’t been caught in your crossfire.

“Montehugh is here as part of my agreement with Liona. She’s worried that her treatment may not have eradicated all of Alexo’s parasitic magic. To appease her, Montehugh will be documenting your vitals and running blood tests to monitor your progress.”

You’re still dangerous. You’re still connected to him. Those thoughts are like a punch to the gut and you double over as they sink in.

At your reaction Kandomere sinks down next to you and waves Montehugh away. “Ulysses, please.” A breath later and Kandomere has your hand snatched in his. “You have no ties to him now, he is completely out of your system.”

You’re about to voice your skepticism but he beats you to it.

“The reason you could hear him and he was able to communicate with you in your dreams is because back in Vegas he’d put some of his magic into you. He’d started a connection by drip feeding you, allowing your body to build a tolerance to his magic so it wouldn’t completely reject his blood. It wasn’t a strong bond though which is why you had to be close to him for it to open up. Once he’d sensed you outside his cell, the day Montehugh was interrogating him, he was able to get a fix on you and trace your magic, much the same way you were able to find him when you…”

He rubs his thumb over the back of your hand and moves a little closer.
"Your senses are not as heightened as an Elves, so you will have to trust me when I tell you, there is nothing left of him in your blood. There is only your magic, now."

"But—"

Kandomere turns, tucking your hair behind your ear and cupping your face.

"You put almost all your magic into me, virtually every last drop, when you healed me. The majority of the magic remnants left in you came from Alexo. That’s why you lost the urge for revenge when you got to him. You were full of his magic and like calls to like. It's also why I can hear your thoughts now. I hear you like you heard him, only he was able to shield his mind, projecting only the things he wanted you to see or hear, where as you, you’re giving me everything. I can hear and feel it all and it’s taking quite a lot of effort to tune it out."

You blink slowly before looking at the elf. He’s glowing again.

"I don’t know if it was a subconscious decision," he smiles gently, his full lips curling up at the sides, "but when you saved me, you kept all the darkness and gave me only your light, and it’s that light I see in you now. Before, when I…” He swallows. “When I killed Alexo, I walked in and saw you smothered beneath a cloud of his debased fog, but there’s non of that there now, only light.”

"You’re glowing."

He laughs. “As are you, mi alma.”

_Mi alma._

Your heart picks up speed and your eyes flicker to his.

“How did you save me?”

His intense silver blues close for a fraction of a second and he sighs. “Liona figured it out once she knew you were a bright. You should have died when Alexo did — I didn’t know that when I killed him,” he rushes to add.

“So why didn’t I?”

His hand leaves yours and comes to rest on your other cheek. Tipping your head slightly he rests his forehead against yours.

“We’re tied together magically, a piece of you is in me and it kept you from completely following him.”

You nod. “That’s why you saw me, when I was, I guess, dying?”

“Yes.”

“But that doesn’t explain how you brought me back. Shouldn’t I still be trapped in that state?”

He pulls away far enough to stretch up and brush his lips over your hairline. “A simple blood transfusion. We filtered your blood, running it through a dialysis machine. We took out as much of Alexo’s blood as we could and then added in mine.”

That made simple sense and you could see the logic behind it but, “how much of your blood did you donate?”
“Not as much as you’re thinking. Only a small amount was needed once we’d run yours through the machines a few times.”

“And I assume this has never been done before?” Thinking back to the snippets of conversation you remember you’re sure the answer is no.

Kandomere smiles. “It’s not exactly considered legal. Technically what we did was play around with blood magic, even if it was for a good cause, we broke the rules.”

“Is that why you’re so pissed?”

He tears himself away from you and stands, moving to the window. Turning his back you stare at his broad shoulders with dread.

“I am so very furious with myself, my team, Liona and the Inferni,” he grinds out in a low growl. “I was single minded in my demands to help you that I forget who I was dealing with. I should have expected her power play and thwarted it long before you woke. I’m disappointed that my team were bested by Alexo so easily, they are better than that and they let themselves down. But most of all I cannot forgive myself for placing you in that building, into his despicable grasp, and starting all of this in the first place. Listening to your thoughts, hearing you blame yourself for my mistakes… I am incensed and disgusted with myself.”

Your first instinct is to comfort him but he senses it and stops you before you’ve even uttered a word.

“I promised to keep you safe, tell me, mi amor, before you try to make me feel better about myself, how did that work out for you?”

You bite your lip hard and exhale. “I don’t know, I’m alive, Alexo is dead and I’m magically tied to the elf I love so…” You shrug as he turns to look at you through bewildered eyes. “I am worried though, the fall out from this—“

“Is manageable, I can keep the damage to a minimum, that is not a concern you should bother yourself with.”

A clearing of a throat behind you lets you to Montehugh’s uncomfortable presence. “Really sorry but, ah, it’s time for the first blood test.”

Kandomere nods stiffly and you let out a sigh.

“Alright, how’s this going to work?”

Kandomere folds his arms across his torso. “Montehugh will take a blood sample along with your vitals and take them to Liona’s home, she has her own lab there. She’ll monitor your blood for anomalies and check over your stats. She wanted to conduct brain scans however I feel that’s too risky given the precarious position we’re in.”

“Uh,” Montehugh holds up the needle, “I’m sorry kid but I ain’t done this before.”

Stretching out your arm you offer him a wry smile, “First time for everything.”

He’s obviously nervous and it’s making you sweat. “Here goes nothin’” Sitting next to you he taps the crease of your arm and breathes out a sigh as your veins show themselves. “So far so good.” The syringe trembles as he gets closer and just as he’s about to piece your flesh, Kandomere steps in and grabs the giant mans hands.
“I will draw the blood.”

“But boss—“

“No, tell her you did it, but I will not have Y/n suffering any more than she must.”

“Boss I—“

Kandomere turns to Montehugh, his eyes pleading and his voice low. “If you hurt her, I cannot guarantee your safety. I am doing this as much for her as I am you, Ulysses. The bond is affecting me in a most primal manner, so please, do not put me in the position where I may hurt you.”

Montehugh’s face drains of colour and he’s smart enough to back down. Handing over the syringe he takes a few steps back and watches as Kandomere gently takes your arm.

If he’s taken blood before he doesn’t say but it’s over and done with quickly and your discomfort is minimal. As the needle is withdrawn, he hands the vial of crimson liquid to his subordinate and mutters a quiet apology.

“Don’t sweat it, boss. We’re good.” Montehugh replies. “Just your blood pressure, temp and a quick cognitive assessment to do now.” He holds up a thermometer and points it at your mouth.

“I will leave you to it.” Kandomere states softly, his head bowed and his back turned.

Closing your eyes you reach out with your mind, feeling for the elf as he retreats to the bedrooms but you get nothing back.

“How can I fix this?” You search Montehugh’s face for an answer as he carefully puts the blood pressure monitor on your arm.

“Not your problem to fix, Y/n. He’s gotta figure this one out on his own.”

But it is your problem, this is all on you, and you’ll be damned if you’re going to sit by and watch Kandomere suffer because of your mistakes. You’d dragged your blue haired elf into this and you were going to made sure as hell that you got him out. One way or another, you’d fix it.
A day passes and there’s no sign of Liona, instead Montehugh comes and goes, watching attentively as Kandomere draws your blood. The elf is growing more tense with each passing hour, his muscles constantly bunched and ready to strike, but not you, never you, just anyone who gets close. Poor Montehugh daren’t even sit on the same couch as you anymore for fear of accidentally upsetting his boss.

Then there’s the hushed phone calls taken in other rooms, and on at least three separate occasions, Kandomere curses in Övüsi at his email. You’d tried feeling him out, reading his thoughts but each time he’d shaken his head at your attempts and taken himself off somewhere quieter.

“It’s not working out how he wanted, is it?”

Montehugh peers over the top of his phone and plasters on a fake smile. “Shit, these things just take some time.”

“Don’t lie, you’re terrible at it.”

Curling your feet underneath your backside you lean against the arm of the couch and stare, unseeing, out of the window. You can only imagine what’s happening at the offices. Surely, given the way you’d stormed out of one building, magically pushed your way through their best team, killed and then revived the agent in charge, drained a whole heap of magic users throughout the city and then bowed down at Alexo’s feet, they’d be expecting your head on a stick. There’s no way they wouldn’t connect you to the Inferni, so how in the hell was Kandomere keeping them at bay.

Whatever he was doing was causing him untold stress. It had only been a day and in that time he’d withdrawn from you to such an extent you’d slept alone in the room you’d first been given whilst he “ironed out the kinks”.

“What would happen if I gave myself up?”

The phone in Montehugh’s hand drops into his lap as he stares at you with wide eyes.

“I could tell them that I used magic on you all to hide who I was, that I’m still using it to force you both to protect me.”

“Please tell me you’re joking.”

“What would happen to you, to Kandomere if I wasn’t?”

The burly man shuffles forward, rests his arms on his thighs and begins wringing his hands
together. “Okay, let’s say you went ahead with this extra-fucking-stupid plan. Firstly, you’d be locked away, and I’m not talking our offices, after the drama that went down here, you’d be taken to outer Mongolia and locked in the most secure - we’re talking fucking Azkaban secure here - medical facility there is and experimented on until either, they kill you or you kill them.”

He’s painting you a pretty beak picture but you brush it aside with a wave of your hand. “I’m not asking about what will happen to me, I wanna know what’ll happen with you two.”

Montehugh blows out a breath and sits back. “Honestly?”

“It’s usually the best policy,” you deadpan, staring him straight in the eye.

“Best case scenario, they’d assess us, see if we were mentally and medically fit for duty. We’d be issued psychiatric and counselling sessions and we’d have to pass all manner of tests, but eventually, we’d be back at it.”

You’d thought as much. Chewing your bottom lip you turn back to watch the sky and ponder your thoughts a little more.

“But it wouldn’t go down like that. Not really. You’re tied to Kandomere magically and unless you can figure out a way to undo that—“ He throws his hands in the air and purses his lips behind his beard.

“What?”

A frown decorates his face and he laughs incredulously, “You’re kidding, right? The guy wouldn’t even let me take a blood sample from you, care to imagine what he’d be capable of when they tried to take you away? Knowing full well the kind of torture you’d be walking into you think anyone at the MTF would be able to stop him without lethal force?”

“I would tell him—“

“Fuck! You really don’t get it do you?” Montehugh scrubs his hand down his face and sits a little straighter. “Alright, kitten, look at what you’re willing to do to keep him safe. You’ve just been told that you’re gonna die a slow and painful death whilst being brutally tortured and you haven’t batted an eyelid. Now imagine what an elf of super human strength, with combat training and access to an arsenal of weaponry would do to keep you safe. He’d slay the fucking city if he had to. The only difference between him and that psycho Alexo is that he wants you alive and well, other than that he wouldn’t give a fuck who got in the way, me included.”

“That’s not true! He’s still Kandomere.”

“Yes, but he wouldn’t be if he sensed you were in danger. At least not the Kandomere we know.”

You’re sure he’s laying it on extra thick to keep you from doing something but you’re not willing to take that chance just yet.

“Oh, so how do we undo the bond?”

“You gotta be shittin’ me, Y/n.” He sighs deeply and shrugs his huge shoulders. “That’s magic, Inferni magic. Not only is it illegal but it’s mega fuckin’ dangerous. I wouldn’t tell you even if I did know.”

It’s hopeless, you’re damed if you do and you’re damned if you don’t, and either way you’re dragging Montehugh and Kandomere down with you.
“It’s perfectly fine, mi amor.” Kandomere says, bending down to kiss the top of your head. You hadn’t heard him approach and his sudden appearance makes you jump.

“You need a damn bell or something,” you grumble quietly.

He laughs, running his hand through your hair down to your shoulder. “Ulysses, thank you very much for your help in this matter but you’re no longer needed. Liona has determined that the situation is resolved. There are no markers in her blood or vitals that warrant more tests. She has concluded her investigation.”

Montehugh looks positively radiant with the news he doesn’t have to stay. “Alright, I’ll be goin’ then.” He smiles and suddenly he looks ten years younger.

“I’ll see you out.” Kandomere offers, giving your shoulder a small caress before he walks away.

As Montehugh passes you, he catches your hand and pulls you up into a sturdy hug. “Stay outa trouble kid, yeah?”

Over his shoulder you see Kandomere’s eyes narrow, his gaze zeroing in on all the places Montehugh is touching you as he assesses the situation. His face darkens and he steps forward to break up your embrace but Montehugh isn’t drawing it out. After a quick squeeze he releases you and Kandomere returns to his less murderous expression.

This situation was so fucked up. You really needed to know more about what you’d done and exactly how it was influencing Kandomere. Maybe then you’d stand a chance of undoing some of the damage.

Making your way out onto the balcony, you breathe deeply and delve through your memories of Alexo’s grim magic lessons. It wasn’t an easy thing to do given his preferred teaching methods but you had little choice. The magic had already changed Kandomere and he’d only been infected a few days, you daren’t contemplate what might happen after a few weeks or even months.

“There is no ‘undoing’ until one of us dies.”

Spinning around you glare at his intrusion of your thoughts.

“I’m sorry, I have very little choice. Imagine, if you will, a radio playing and the topic being discussed is of importance to you. You may not want to listen but you can’t help it. That’s what this is like for me. I’m trying to respect your privacy but…”

“You’re changing.”

His eyes skim over your body before he nods and drops his head. “I’m more protective of you, I know. I can’t help it, after what happened.”

“Don’t! I know the magic is intensifying this—” you wave your hand at him, lost for words.

His eyes close and he inhales deeply as he straightens up to his full height. “I cannot fight my nature. I am stronger, faster and better equipped to protect than you are. You have tied us by magic and as such my need to protect you has intensified, yes, however,” he opens his eyes and fixes you with a warning look, “do not think for one moment that I want out of this new arrangement, that I would be in any way better off should you attempt to fall on your dagger. Quite the opposite is true. Given time things will settle and I will have more control over my heightened emotions, but not if you continue to try and fix a problem that isn’t there.”
“A problem that isn’t—?” Your head shakes back and forth in amazement. “Montehugh hugs me and you’re planning which limb to remove from his torso first. That’s not a problem?”

He tilts his head and after a moment smiles to himself. “It was a knee jerk reaction. I would never intentionally hurt Ulysses.”

“Maybe not, but you also wouldn’t have behaved that way before I infected you.”

“Infected?” He looks genuinely puzzled at your word choice.

“Yes! You were a non magical being and now I’ve infected you with my magic and it’s making you all but feral.”

He laughs, “Mi amor, I’m an elf!” Chuckling to himself he steps back into the apartment and settles down on the couch. Crossing an ankle over his knee and spreading his arms over the back of the furniture he looks regal. For all intents and purposes he’s giving off an amused, relaxed aura but you know better.

“Elves are possessive, materialistic, selfish creatures. We take what we want and are unapologetic about that. We believe our race is superior, not only because of our physical dominance but because we are more shrewd, astute and manipulative. We are the top of the food chain for good reason. These teeth are not decorative, we’ve evolved from hunters, fierce warriors who would shred and devour those who dare oppose them. Your magic has not infected me in the slightest, it’s merely agitated my more inherent dispositions.”

Laying your hands on your hips you scoff, “Bullshit! You’ve changed—“

“Yes I have.” He stands quickly and balls his fists. “I saw the woman I love on the brink of a fate worse than death because I failed her so I’m falling back on my basic instincts to ensure that nothing touches her, you, again. This has nothing to do with your magic and everything to do with my own nature. Your magic is merely an added bonus, it allows me to hear you, connect with you on a deeper level, it has in no way affected my characteristics. In no way, infected me.”

Oh you so badly want to believe him but you’ve no way of knowing if what he says is true. Sure you know the nature of elves, everyone did, but this level of possessiveness, this deadly creature who couldn’t tolerate anyone or anything else near you… Was that really just him?

“You know it is.” Kandomere sighs. “I have spoken before of my similarities to Alexo. He wanted all of you for himself, as do I. He killed for you, as have I. He would have destroyed this city to get to you, as would I. You have not caused this shift, not directly, but with your help I will curb my aggressive tendencies.”

His voice is so sincere it draws you back into the apartment and onto the couch next to him. “How do I stop you hearing my thoughts?”

He stares at you in silence, his eyes locked to yours in a way that makes you believe he can see right into your very soul. “I don’t want you to hide your thoughts from me. It’s quite refreshing knowing that you’ve no choice but speak from the heart.”

“And what if you hear something you don’t like? Do you have any idea how exhausting it is to monitor your every thought?”

He snatches you around the waist and drags you closer, pressing his lips against the crook of your neck, “I can only imagine, but I’m selfish and having access to all of you is a gift so I’m far from unhappy at the situation.”
“Says the elf who’s been pushing me away since we got home.”

“Home?” He growls, running his teeth and tongue over your shoulder. “I like that you consider this your home now.”

He’s trying to distract you but you’re not letting him off the hook. “Kandomere!”

“You didn’t have to sleep in the spare room last night, I didn’t want you in there, I wanted you in our bed.” Latching onto your neck he sucks savagely with the sole purpose of marking you.

Swallowing hard you ignore the heat of desire flashing through you. “Your bed, whilst you did god knows what trying to clean up my mess.”

He nips gently with his teeth, his breaths deepening to match yours. “Our bed, whilst I finished up some work. Tied up loose ends. Did what I must in order to spend some quality time with you.”

You fight to keep your eyes open as his hands wander. “So you’re trying to tell me everything’s sorted? Like hell it is.”

“Mi alma,” he groans, long and deep, the sound making your stomach muscles tense and your breath stop, “I need you now!” He grasps you tightly, dragging you so you’re straddling his lap allowing him to rub his hardening erection against you.

“Kan—“

His mouth crashes into yours and he kisses you roughly, chasing any protests from your rapidly lust addled mind. His hands find you hips and he pushes and pulls you in a rocking motion, dragging your most sensitive parts over his. It feels too good to deny. You want him too. Another low, needy groan escapes him and you know in that instant he’s won, you’re gone, lost to your aching want.

“Mi—“

He’s unable to finish. Instead his mouth hangs open as you grind against him, the friction hitting all the right places and making your nerves sing.

“This isn’t over, Blue,” you huff, leaning forward to lick the tip of his ear, “you can’t distract me with sex forever.”

With hardly any exertion, he scoops you up and marches you to the bedroom. “Maybe not, but I can enjoy myself trying.”

He nudges open the door whilst nibbling at your exposed collar, quickly navigating the steps to his desired destination. Tenderly he lays you on the bed and then in stark opposition quickly yanks at his clothing. As more and more of his beautiful skin is revealed you’re fascinated to see his glow return and grow steadily brighter.

“Kandomere, you’re… You’re glowing again.”

His eyes search your frame and he slowly licks his lips. “As are you.” Pupils blown wide he advances, his taught muscles flexing as he crawls up the bed to hover over you.

“Why though? What does it mean?”

“It means,” he grabs your blouse and tears it open the buttons spraying in various directions, “that
the magic within us is calling out, searching for its own.” Deft fingers pluck at the button on your jeans, teasing them open. “It wants to be joined.” He peels down the denim, pulling it from you and tossing it to the other side of the room. “It means that we belong together.” Dipping down he bites through your silk panties near your hip, the material giving way without a fight. He repeats his action on the other side and hums with satisfaction as the shred of material is removed from your body.

“But—“

“Do you feel it, amor?” Tracing the pads of his fingers up your torso he reaches your bra and again, rips it open. “The extra tingle, that insatiable hunger, the need?” His tongue darts out and circles your nipple. “The magic that binds us will heighten this if you let it, if you give into it.”

Without warning he bites your breast gently, but with enough pressure to make you squirm. Your head bounces back against the mattress and you gasp as he lavishes your chest with attention, using both his mouth and hands. His nips become a little more intense, not enough break the skin but enough to let you know he means business and it’s not long before you’re breathlessly trying to find friction to ease the ache between your legs.

That is until he reaches down and slides a hand between you to rub lazy circles over your sensitive clit. Your body responds immediately, your hips rise off the bed and your breath hitches in your throat.

“Yes,” Kandomere breathes, dipping a finger inside you. Moving his mouth, he focuses his attention on your neck, seeking out your pulse point whist still playing you expertly with his hand. He alternates brushing his thumb against your clit with delving into you and it’s maddeningly sweet torture.

“More,” you gasp, losing the ability to concentrate on anything but the absolute bliss he’s giving you.

Kandoere chuckles a low, sexy laugh and places his lips next to your ear. “Will you surrender, mi alma?”

His fingers move quicker, pumping into you and with a devious smile he presses his thumb against your bundle of nerves. It’s the last push you needed. You crest over the wave of intense pleasure with a shocked cry, your body bowing off the bed and your mouth open. But this is unlike any orgasm you’ve ever had before, the tingle he’d spoken of spreads out from his hand, flowing first into your core and then simultaneously down your legs and up through your torso. Your toes curl and your fingers grasp at the bed sheets as a new rapture explodes deep within your belly.

“Yes!” Kandomere cries. “Let go, surrender.”

He moves quickly, positioning himself over you as he manages to entwine your hands together and lift them to the level of your eye and hold them there. Less than a breath later he slides home with a groan so obscene if you hadn’t already been experiencing nirvana, it would have made you come on the spot.

You’re strung out. The natural orgasm has waned but you’re not coming down, you’re trapped in a state of physical bliss as your magic combines and thrums through your veins. This is heaven, this is ecstasy. With each stroke, Kandomere stokes your magical flames and you submit to the continuous pleasure of your supernatural state. You’ve never felt anything like this, it’s better than any drugs, sex or alcohol you’d had before. This was pure, perfect bliss.
“I feel you.” Kandomere breathes, his eyes lit from within searching your face in wonder. “I—“ He moans lewdly as he finds his completion, his hands gripping tightly as he touches his forehead to yours and screws his eyes tight. But he doesn’t stop, he continues to thrust into you, his voice cracking as he joins you in your extraordinary high.

Moments pass but he’s all there is, like you’re feeding off each others pleasure in an endless, orgasmic loop. The pulsing bliss circulates through you both, carrying renewed gratification with every roll of his sinfully delicious hips. Closing your eyes you can feel your heart hammering wildly inside your ribcage. Your breath is coming in short, sharp gasps but you don’t pay them any mind, you can’t, not when he’s riding you both to the stars and beyond. And despite the mild discomfort in your chest where your lungs are burning and your heart is racing you realise you could happily die in this moment.

“Y/n.” Kandomere breathes.

You don’t answer, you’re too swept up in the bliss to acknowledge him.

“Y/n!” He calls, his tone insistent but again you ignore him.

“Y/n!” With a grunt Kandomere tilts your head to one side and sinks his teeth deep into your shoulder, biting painfully hard. The shock and discomfort pull you out of your body trembling pleasure and back into reality with a sudden jerk and you choke down lungfuls of air as you shiver violently.

It takes you longer than it should to gain your bearings and control but when you finally do you watch as he manoeuvres his mouth away. Blood drips from your gaping wound and you wince at the gory sight.

What the hell? He’d literally torn through your skin without a care.

You’re scowling at him as he grabs the bed sheet and hold it over the mess, pressing hard and pushing you down into the mattress to stem the bleeding.

“Mi amor, are you alright?”

You’re in shock, unable to comprehend his behaviour. “Wha… Why?”

Gently removing the makeshift gauze, Kandomere grimly inspects the damage. “Your heart, it could not take much more. I had to break the connection. I’m sorry, I wan’t able to think clearly so I did the only thing I could.”

Breathing heavily you look into his eyes. “I, wait, what?”

He rolls onto his side, his face a grave mask of concern as he checks you over. You’re still panting and your heart continues to race.

“Y/n, you weren’t breathing! And your heart, it was working far too hard. You were close to passing out. I’d heard that magic users were able to prolong their intimate pleasure but I never expected—”

“So you bit me?” It still doesn’t make sense to you. It hadn’t been a playful nip, it had been an honest to god, savage, ‘I want to hurt you’ thing.

Silver eyes dart to yours. “To help you, yes.”

You glance at your wrecked flesh. “You couldn’t have just, I dunno, stopped?”

Running a hand through his hair Kandomere shakes his head. “No, I couldn’t. I’m so sorry but I
was too high chasing my own bliss and I was intoxicated by the thoughts, the emotions running through you. I’m surprised I had the ability to do what I did, I’m not sure how I…” His gaze locks with yours and he slowly, sensually licks his lips. It’s a gesture that’s loaded with promise.

Leaning away from him you scrunch up your face in absolute bewilderment. He’s literally just pulled his teeth out of you and yet the way he’s staring makes you feel like he’s only just started.

“Blue?”

He blinks and his expression changes. Quickly pulling away from you he stands and heads to the closet. Ignoring your smarting shoulder and his strange behaviour you lay back and stare at the ceiling, the memory of your orgasm lifting one corner of your mouth. “That was beyond intense though, I’ve never felt anything like it.”

“No, I was not expecting it to be so… consuming.” His voice is muffled by the distance and walls between you.

“Will it,” you clear your throat. “is it going to be like that every time we, y’know?”

“I’m sorry, Y/n.” Kandomere emerges from his closet wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt stretched tightly over his strong chest. “I have to leave.”

His words have you bolting upright with a deep frown and a sense of dread in the pit of your stomach. “What’s going on?”

“Please,” he holds up his hands in surrender, “stay where you are, don’t come any closer.”

“Kandomere?”

He takes a long stride backwards and grips the doorway tightly, looking up at you through predatory eyes. “Y/n—“ His voice is low and hoarse and sends a shiver of want down your spine. “I can’t. You must stay away, if you come any closer I’m going to hurt you.”

What the hell is going on? Where was all this coming from?

He swallows hard, his throat bobbing with the effort. “I need to leave, I’m going to Liona, she — I —“

You make to get off the bed and he sucks in a deep breath, his lips curling into a snarl. “I want you, mi amor, so badly.” He groans. “I feel you, the softness of your skin! Dios mía, the sweetness of your taste, I need it, all of it.” His chest heaves with the air he gulps down and it’s as arousing as it is terrifying. He looks wild.

“You can have me,” you say softly but he shakes his head.

“If I take you now, I won’t stop.” He growls, his mussed hair falling into his face. “Your body is not built the same as mine, you could not endure—“ he curls his lip back and flashes his teeth with an animalistic rumble through his chest. “This draw, it’s too strong. Joder! Te necisito.”

Your heart plummets. “It’s the magic,” you state needlessly. Of course it’s the damn magic!

“Go! Go now! I can’t…”

The colour of his eyes has been swallowed by hungry black pupils and he’s breathing deeper still, scenting you from across the room. His fingers bite into the doorframe and his muscles roll
beneath the thin material of his top, threatening movement at any second. Clutching the sheet you wrap it around you and take slow, measures steps towards the balcony. Somewhere in the back of your mind you laugh at the absurdity of the situation; you’re running from a gorgeous elf to stop him fucking you to death! How the fuck was this whole circus even real. But one look at him sobers you up. You definitely need to go.

Only you’ve no idea where to go. You’re naked except for the sheet and your shoulder is bleeding again. There’s no way out except through the main door and then down to the parking garage. Just what were you meant to do when yo get there? Wait it out? Hope that some other elf comes along and takes pity on you? That was hardly likely.

Reaching the glass door you turn, slide it open and take a single step out into the fresh air. But that’s as far as you get before strong arms wrap around your waist, pick you up and drag you back in. Whirling you both around Kandomere marched back to the bed, tossing you down with ease.

“Tu estas mia.”

Chapter End Notes

Joder! Te necesito - Fuck! I need you.

Tu estas mia - You are mine.
Chapter Thirty Four

Chapter Notes

Language & Poss non-con if you squint

Kandomere’s gaze follows you as you scramble away from him. As soon as you’ve gone too far he pounces. He’s quick to climb on top of you, using his weight and his hands to hold you down. There’s a disturbing focus in his movements, a determination to have you exactly where he wants you, so much so that your protests fall on deaf ears.

“Kandomere what are you doing? Kandomere please. Ka—”

“You’re mine,” he states in a dangerously chilling tone before crashing his mouth to yours and kissing you brutally hard. It doesn’t even matter to him that you’re not responding, that you’re scared and shaking, he just takes what he wants as if he doesn’t notice. His large hands seize your wrists, and as his fingers dig into your skin he pulls his head back, trapping your bottom lip between his teething and biting. You gasp at the sting as he grazes your delicate flesh and it draws a moan from him.

“I’ve been gentle with you so far but not this time. This time I won’t hold back.” His eyes, all black and full of dark promise, rake up and down your body as he whips away the sheet covering you. “This time it will be perfect. Are you ready my love?”

It’s Kandomere, but it isn’t. There’s something missing, something not quite right. There’s no warmth, no kindness, no love in his touch, it’s all desire and animalistic want. Sucking your sore lip into your mouth to ease the discomfort, words escape you. It’s apparent that you’re in real danger, he’s lost to the magic, too far under for you to reach, too far gone to be pulled back. This is not good. Your adrenaline is begging you to move but he’s too strong, too fast, too deadly to escape. When you don’t answer his question he grips your wrists tighter gathering both in one of his hands and fastening them above your head.

“I asked you a question, mi amor.”

He’s whole demeanour is menacing and you break out into a cold sweat, your stomach flipping as you’re swiftly reminded of who he’s behaving like.

Alexo.

With an earsplitting roar, Kandomere rips away from you and places himself at the foot of the bed, his hands clenched, muscles tense and veins bulging. Like a caged lion he glares at you and snarls, his serrated, deadly teeth glinting in his ferocious display of power.

“My phone is on the nightstand, take it and lock yourself in the bathroom.” His voice is tight and the way he’s sucking in breath shows you just how delicate his hold on his composure really is. It’s petrifying how closely he resembles Alexo and it takes every ounce of strength you have to move.

Creeping slowly you inch up the bed and blindly grope around for his cell. You’d never thought him capable of hurting you until now but the way his narrowed eyes are following your every
movement has nausea rolling through you.

“Call Montehugh and Liona. Tell them… Hurry!”

Something warns you not to run, despite every nerve in your body pleading for you to do so. Instead you calmly climb off the bed, forgoing anything to cover you, and step carefully towards the bathroom, keeping Kandomere in your sights at all times.

He growls again but instead of coming at you he twists away and begins destroying the room. The bedcovers are shredded first before he stalks over to the chairs by the window and effortlessly breaks one apart. You don’t hang around to see what he attacks next, your feet are moving and you hurtle at break neck speed into the en-suite, slamming the door closed and locking it.

Not that it would hold him.

Cowering away from the door you hastily cover your naked body with a towel and hit the call button. Thankfully Montehugh is the last number dialled.

“Pick up,” you beg as the call connects.

“Hey boss—“

“I need help! He’s flipped. It’s the magic, it’s made him, I dunno! He, he can’t control himself.”

Scurrying into the shower you pull your knees to your chest and sink to the floor.

“Has he hurt you?” You can hear him moving and it settles your nerves a little, knowing help is on the way.

“No, nothing like that, it’s, god it’s…”

The sound of an engine starting coincides with a crash from beyond the closed door and you let out at startled gasp.

“What’s goin’ on, Y/n?”

“Get Liona, he said, he said to call you both. He’s… It’s like he’s possessed. He—“ The door shakes on it’s hinges and this time you yelp and decide that now is not the time for decorum. “I’m fucking scared Montehugh, this isn’t Kandomere, he’s been warped by the magic. He’s obsessed. There’s no stopping him, he was looking at me like I’m his next meal.”

The line is silent and for a minute you think you’ve lost him until he mutters a low, “Fuck.”

“Y/n!” Kandomere screams your name like a wounded animal as yet again the door shudders.

Cupping your hand around the speaker you lower your voice to a hushed whisper. “I’m locked in the en-suite but the door isn’t gonna hold much longer.”

“Fuck! Let me call Liona, I’m gonna need her help. Stay as far away from him as you can but if he gets to you, stall. I’m on my way, Y/n!”

A crack echoes through the room and you screw your eyes up. “He’s not himself. I don’t know what he’s capable of. Be careful when you get here, don’t try to get between us if it comes to it, I, I don’t know what he’ll do.”

Montehugh sighs heavily. “Hold on kid, we’re on our way.”
You disconnect the call without another word, dropping the phone in fear as the door gives and bursts open. Kandomere strides into the room, blood dripping from his bicep where his t-shirt has been torn. A large piece of wood is embedded into the muscle and sticks out at a jaunty angle. You recognise it as once being part of the night stand.

As his eyes land on you huddled in the far corner of the shower, a slow salacious smile draws his lips into an upward curve. “Mi alma! I found you.”

Not knowing how to respond, you decide against having him pry you off the floor and instead opt to appear cooperative. Standing on weak legs and ignoring the pounding of your heart, you cautiously move towards the elf.

“You’re hurt, Kandomere.”

He glances to his arm, shaking his head. “It’s nothing.”

Well, at least he’s talking. It would seem that the burst of activity has cleared his head somewhat. Reaching tentatively for his arm you hope to guide his mind somewhere safer than the bedroom. “It’s not nothing. Please, let me help you, come into the kitchen and let me clean it up.”

“Mi querida,” he chuckles and yanks the chunk of wood out of his arm, “there is no help necessary, at least, not with this.” His tongue swipes across his bottom lip and he undresses you with his eyes. “And yet.” You point to his bicep where blood wells in the deep gash, trickling steadily out to track down and drip on the tiled floor. “Please,” you inhale and decide to take a risk by using one of his pet names, “mi amor.”

His eyes shine brighter and his smile grows. Snatching your waist he pulls you close, turning you both so he can box you in against the vanity unit.

“Say that again.”

He’s not himself but at least he does seem somewhat calmer now and you’re able to break through the cloud of lust. “I’ll say what ever you want me to if you’ll let me take care of your arm, mi alma.”

He inhales deep through his nose, his hips pressing into yours as he bows his back to look deep into your eyes. “But are they merely words or do you actually mean them?”

For a second you’re taken aback. Why would he question you? Had you given him reason to doubt your feelings? Well, other than the obvious attempted murder but you’d thought he’d understood, hell, hadn’t he been the one to explain it all to you not more than a day or so ago?

Lips press against your cheek, and his hand weaves into your tangled hair. “I can hear your confusion.”

“I, Kandomere, I love you, you know that, right?”

He chuckles, his breath blowing your hair and tickling your ear before he takes your lobe between his teeth.

“I know you think you love me but you are so very naive, so very uneducated when it comes to the full scope of what real, absolute love entails.”
His words are so reminiscent of the way Alexo used to speak, you find yourself leaning away and pushing against his chest, something which does not go over well with the irate elf. His bloody arm snakes around you and holds you flush against his chest as his words take on a hard edge.

“If you loved me as you claim to, you wouldn’t keep comparing me to that cabrón!”

“If you loved me like you say you do, you wouldn’t be treating me like this!” The words are out before you can stop them and his reaction is instantaneous. He scoops you up and tosses you over his shoulder, marching from the en-suite with a growled, “Oh, I’ll show you how much I love you.”

He strides purposefully allowing you only a glimpse of what is left of his room. Gripping onto his waist for support, you stare wide eyed at the physical manifestation of his unstable emotions. The bed is no longer identifiable, the mattress and sheets torn to shreds, the bed frame cracked and splintered. The matching nightstands have also been smashed to smithereens, as have his chairs and the table. It looks like a tornado has ravaged its way through the room, destroying every last item to cross its path. And all that in the matter of minutes.

“Kandomere you’re scaring me.” He takes no notice of your whispered confession. “Please, Kandomere.”

He marches into the spare room, heading straight for the bed.

“Kandomere! Please!”

Bending over, he deposits you on your feet at the end of the bed and grabs your face in both his hands. Meeting your fearful gaze he offers you a sympathetic smile and a head tilt.

“Mi amor, don’t look so anxious. I would never hurt you. I only want to love you, to worship you the way you deserve. You are everything to me, can’t you see? Don’t you understand?”

“I understand you’re not acting like yourself.”

A peel of laughter shakes his body and he moves his hands to your hips. “I’m more myself now than I’ve ever been. Too much time associating with humans has dulled my edges but you awoke my true nature. This is me, but you don’t ever have to fear me. I will die before I hurt you.”

His earnest words are spoken so gently and lovingly that for a moment you start to lean towards him. But just as you’re about to submit, he tenses and whips his head towards the door.

“Ah, yes, our guests.” His warning tone sets you back on edge and you don’t know whether to laugh or cry at the intrusion. Gripping onto him you mutter quietly, “You told me to call them for help.”

“I did.”

“I was scared.”

“You were.”

Fisting his t-shirt you glance at the door. “Let’s go out—”

“No! She’s to be no where near you!”

You startle at his loud bark. “Okay, alright, so send her away and Montehugh can stay.”

Suspicious silver eyes peer down at you. “Why? What is it with him and you? Why have you never
feared him as you have me? Right from the start you’ve gravitated towards him… Is it because he’s human too? What draws you to him, Y/n?”

Fuck! You’d inadvertantly put Montehugh in his cross hairs. “I trust him because you trust him, that’s all.”

A call from the main living area sees Kandomere step in front of you to shield you from view. His hands clench into fists and he squares his shoulders, readying to attack. It would be endearing if the situation wasn’t so tense and the elf acting so strange.

“Stay right where you are,” he growls, elevating your anxiety to painful levels.

Something needs to be done to calm him down, he’s wound so tight it’s inevitable he’s going to snap and he’d never forgive himself if he injured Montehugh. With your hands trembling, you softly touch his bleeding arm.

“Kandomere, they’re only here because you asked me to call them. They are not here to hurt us.”

“Boss?” They’re approaching the bedrooms, you can hear their foot steps echoing through the apartment now.

Ignoring your semi-nakedness you step a little closer to the unhinged elf and try again.

“Kandomere, it’s okay. You’re calm now, we can just talk to them.”

From down the short hall you hear a gasp and a low, shocked, “What the fuck?” Clearly they’d discovered the war zone that is Kandomere’s room.

“I’m almost naked and you’re bleeding. Is that how you want them to find us?” You’re desperately trying to appeal to any part of him to get him to see sense. “Please, Kandomere, let’s just go talk to them.”

For the briefest of moments you think you’ve succeeded when he turns to look at you and you spot a flicker of the elf you know behind the crazy. And then he speaks.

“Go to the closet, get dressed but do not come out of this room.” His voice brooks no argument so you nod and shuffle over to get some clothes.

He relaxes a little at your acquiescence before making his way to the doorway and blocking the exit. He stands at his full height and puts his hands on his hips, effectively barricading you in.

“We’re in here, we’re both fine so you can leave.”

Hastily throwing on a strappy summer dress, you dash across to the bed to be able to peer over Kandomere’s shoulder.

“Boss…?” Montehugh appears in the hallway, his hands up in surrender.

Kandomere doesn’t move. “As you can see, Y/n is fine. I overreacted, I didn’t trust myself but it’s all fine now.”

“Mind if I check in with Y/n myself? I mean, from a distance obviously, just to clarify she’s okay with us leaving.”

The elf’s shoulders tense but he allows Montehugh a quick glance of you as he momentarily steps aside.
“You alright, kid? Got a nasty wound on your shoulder there, that need looking at?”

You’d almost forgotten about the bite. At his reminder you look down at the weeping mess on your shoulder and screw up your face in disgust.

“I will tend to her injury.” Kandomere growls, keeping his eyes on Montehugh.

“That such a great idea, boss? Looks lie you could do with medical attention too.” The red headed man flicks a finger towards Kandomere’s arm. “Why don’t you both come into the kitchen and—”

“Where is Liona?” Kandomere roars suddenly.

Montehugh twists around and stares back through into Kandomere’s bedroom, drawing yours and Kandomere’s gazes with him. With you both distracted Liona rushes past you in a blur of movement and stabs Kandomere in the neck with a syringe. Blinking and confused you check over your shoulder. Sure enough the glass door is open just enough to allow the female elf entry, but how she’d done it so silently is beyond you.

“I warned you!” The doctor hisses as Kandomere spins and latches his hand around her throat.

“Stay away from her,” he snarls, yanking Liona around and shoving her out of the door, “you go anywhere near Y/n and I will tear you to pieces! Both of you!” He’s panting as he drops into a fighting position. “I will kill you!”

Liona smiles and her icy glare slips past the elf blocking her way, to land on you. “You’re so wrong, Kandomere, and when we’ve got you medicated you’re going to curse the day she ever barged into your life. She’s been drip feeding you her magic since the beginning, you just didn’t realise it.”

“Filthy lies!” His words are starting to slur.

“Is that so? You met and fell in love with a human just weeks after dedicating yourself to me? I don’t think so. She’s been poisoning you and I can prove it.”

“No!” Frowning you look from Kandomere to Montehugh. “I wouldn’t—”

“Oh stop,” Liona snaps, “of course you’re so inept you didn’t even know you were doing it, I suspected as much. Stupid human. You’ve infected him, all these weeks in close quarters, you’ve done to him exactly what Alexo did to you, and now he’s paying the price. I hope you’re happy, he’s about to lose his job, his status and unless I act fast, his life.”

Glassy, unfocussed eyes turn to you. “Lies, mi amor, all lies.” Kandomere blinks rapidly, holding his arms out wide to steady his swaying body. “Run, Y/n, I will find—” He drops to the floor heavily, unconscious and finally quiet.

“Now you!” Liona points her manicured finger at you and curls her lip. “I am arresting you—”

“Liona, please. Let me deal with Y/n.” Montehugh pleads quietly.

“Fine, but know this,” her hateful glare never leaves you, “I have informed my superiors and there’s a SWAT team waiting out in the hall, and this time they are instructed to use lethal force should you fight back.”

Montehugh approaches you, his shoulders slumped and a pair of cuffs hanging from his hand. “Y/n, I’m sorry, I didn’t know until we got here.”
Biting your lip you, stare at Kandomere and offer Montehugh your wrists. The world is falling down around you but for the moment you’re only concern is the unconscious elf and the possibility that what the doctor had said was true. Had you infected him, was it possible that everything he’d thought he’d felt for you was as a result of your magic.

Numb and wrapped in your own thoughts you allow Montehugh to gently lead you away, and as you pass Kandomere you commit his relaxed, slumbering features to memory because you’re fairly certain you’ll never get to see him again. At least, not in this lifetime.
Shivering, exhausted and hurting all over you draw your knees to your chest and huddle into the corner. Naked except for a crop top and panties you pull your legs closer and wrap your hands around your shins. It had been yet another long, painful day of tests and animosity in what was becoming an all too regular routine.

Your cell was a plastic, white, mind numbing box designed to inflict as much psychological damage as possible. The lights, set into the ceiling and covered by more indestructible plastic, shone too bright and never went out. The full mirrored wall at the end of your ‘bed’ allowed for no privacy as your guards watched and recorded your every move. The toilet was a small drain like hole set into the floor by the head of the bed, although calling it a bed was a stretch. A plastic bench, devoid of bedding or comfort was what greeted you at the end of each day. At least that’s what you assumed it was when they marched you back to the cell, having not seen daylight since you were brought here you couldn’t be sure.

Each night you laid your aching, abused body down on the hard, unforgiving plastic, and you prayed that the Inferni would find you and kill you. At least then your miserable suffering would be over. You’d thought Alexo to be the worst elf you’d ever come across but how wrong you’d been. Sleep deprivation, food deprivation, sense deprivation all took on new meaning when it came to your new doctors. They’d done their very best to break you as fast and as viciously as they could and to your shame, they’d succeeded. At your best guess, using the time you’d been left to sleep as a gauge, three weeks was all it had taken. Montehugh had not been exaggerating when you’d asked what would happen if you handed yourself in, if anything he’d been sugar coating it.

Montehugh.

Thinking of him made your throat constrict and your eyes burn. What you wouldn’t give to see his friendly face about now. It had been just over a month since he’d been forced to bring you in but even so, you could still remember the expression on his face as he’d handed you over. If only that had been the most painful part of that night though, how much easier you’d sleep. But no, nothing came close to knowing that you’d accidentally infected Kandomere, knowing that everything you two had shared was as a direct result from the unintentional magic poisoning.

“Is it true?” You’d asked in a terrified whisper, cowering away from the angry eyes of the SWAT team members escorting you both down to the parking garage. Montehugh had refused to look at you. “Which part?”

“All of it?”

He’d exhaled hard and you’d known then. Every word out of Liona’s hostile mouth had been true. “Will he... Is he going to be okay?” You’d been so scared of his reply but you’d needed to know, had you tainted the elf forever?
“She can fix him.”

As if that hadn’t been enough to kill you, you’d dug deeper, plunging the knife even further into your breaking heart. “What did she mean about him dedicating himself to her?”

He’d closed his eyes at that one, a deep line creasing his brow between his eyebrows. “It’s what high society elves do when they intend to marry. Before an engagement they pledge themselves to one another in front of their family and friends, usually at a lavish party.”

You’d almost collapsed at that. You’d never heard of the process before but it made sense. Elves were not like humans, they hardly ever divorced so marriage was a big thing for them. To get engaged as an elf was to enter a contract, one that both parties families were expected to agree on. Pre-nuptual agreements were necessary for every union and everything from assets to the number of nights per month they were expected to be intimate were pre-agreed. That Kandomere had dedicated himself proved how serious he’d been about his relationship with Liona, for him to so callously walk away, and for a human no less, would have taken nothing short of a miracle.

Except magic. Your magic to be precise.

Not another word had passed your lips after that conversation. Not when Montehugh had driven you to the MTF building, nor when he’d been forced to hand you over to a Dr. Delavore and he’d shouted his apologies as you’d been shoved into chains and thrown into the back of an unmarked van. Not even when you’d been beaten by the agent accompanying you in said van. No, it had taken Liona and Delavore well over a week to get you to utter a single syllable because you’d been utterly consumed by shame, guilt and heartache.

You’d infiltrated the MTF and taken down one of their leading agents, exactly as the Inferni would have wanted. Ignorance and stupidity were no excuse for what you’d done. Destroying the status, career and love of the one elf you’d hoped never to hurt, how ironic, but also how typical. Going on your past experiences you should have known it had all been too good to be true, that you were tainting him just by being close. If only you’d run the night you’d met Liona.

You were desperate for any news on Kandomere but knew better than to ask and there was no idle gossip between the guards so you had to make do with torturing yourself with made up scenarios. As Liona’s moods morphed towards something resembling vindication your sporadic dreams showed you blissful scenes of her home life with Kandomere. You watched through closed eyes as he made love to her in a new bed in his apartment, as they planned their future together, as she pieced the life you obliterated back together for him. Every night you saw her fixing him.

Oh, how it burned knowing she was actually better for him than you, how you longed to rip out your sickening heart and crush it in your treacherous hands. Toxic hands that defiled the elf you love, that ruined his life, that infected him with your disease. Instead you allowed them to hurt you, to take chunks of you and experiment with the husk Alexo’s magic had left behind. You didn’t speak, there was no point, no one listened. And you didn’t cry, you didn’t deserve the tears. No, you stayed as silent as you could, as pliant as they wanted, and counted down the days till it was all over.

Sitting in the foetal position, you close your eyes and rest your head on your knees. You are dog tired and for once, hopeful that sleep will come quick. However, just as you feel the lull of unconsciousness and begin to let go, your door is wrenched open and replaced with a guard in full riot gear. It was standard for them to dress like this here and it always made you wonder exactly who else was in this place with you.

“Get up inmate, hands on the mirror, legs apart.”
You recognised his gruff voice. This guard did not have any semblance of mercy or patience and would leave you bruised and bloody rather than repeat his order. You’d been waiting for his return for four days, hoping he’d show sooner rather than later, praying that your plan works.

Gritting your teeth you ignore him and hold yourself tightly to stop your fearful limbs from betraying you. They’re shaking now and you’re not entirely sure if it’s from terror or anticipation. Maybe both.

The guard chuckles. “I was hoping you’d do this!”

His hands are so large that he’s able to grab both of your ankles in one and haul you to the floor where he promptly begins to kick. As his booted foot connects over and over again you manoeuvre yourself into the right position and wait. The pain is excruciating, pulling grunts and stifled cries every time he connects, but then you see it coming. Spotting the perfect opportunity you uncurl, slamming your head back to collide with the heel of his boot hard enough to make you black out.

You’re not down for long though. Coming too in a world of pain, you can’t even breathe without a burning sensation severe enough to bring tears to your eyes. Prying open your swollen eyes you’re pleasantly surprised to find a new scene surrounding you. Your cuffed to a bed, an actual bed with a mattress and sheets in a long hospital room. Privacy curtains are pulled across either side of your designated space, distorted films of material that allow the armed guards lining one wall to check the whereabouts of the patient whilst still offering the legally required confidentiality.

You’re in the hospital wing.

“Patient 473, awake.”

The yell of the guard watching you is startling and elevates your heart rate, something made obvious to the room by the quickening beep of the monitor your fastened to. He smirks then slides his eyes to the end of the room to look at something you can’t see.

You can hear though. The approaching footsteps are like a march of doom and you brace yourself for either Liona or Delavore. Or maybe both as a second pair of feet join the first.

Wait! There’s more. A cacophony of noise causes and a crescendo of shoes to rattle your brain. There are too many steps to count, the sound of the feet continuously striking the floor too loud. You close your eyes and wince, digging your nails in your palms as a way to dilute the pain.

The silence that follows as the group come to stand by the end of your bed is almost as bad but at least it doesn’t hurt to open upper eyes now. At least not physically. Almost magnetically, you’re drawn to his pale silvers, your lips parting as you take in his cold, distant glare. The flash of red behind him pulls your attention and you spot the bulky frame of his partner. Not that you concentrate on Montehugh for long, not when Liona wraps her hand around Kandomere’s forearm and directs his attention to the next bay along.

From behind the group, Delavore approaches, syringe in hand, a smile on his Elven face.

“Miss Y/L/N, so nice of you to wake up. Here, let me ease your pain.” The needle is stabbed into your arm without care and the plunger shoved down with force. But how can you care when he’s there, only feet away looking every bit the elegant, composed MTF agent you’d met that night on the outskirts of Elf Town. There’s no love in his eyes, no flicker of kindness, no gleam of friendship. He stares down at you with contempt as his shiny gorget hangs proudly around his neck.
The monitor announces the stutter of your heart as your throat closes. Seeing him like this is confirmation of everything you’d feared. Kandomere had never loved you of his own free will, it had all been magically induced. Everything you’d shared had been a lie. You’d accidently fabricated it all. For the first time in weeks you cry, the tears blurring your vision and slipping out as you blink to try and clear them.

He might no longer care about you but you’re still madly, hopelessly, irrevocably in love with him and looking at him with her, by choice, is more damaging to your state of mind than anything Delavore had dreamt up.

He watches you, his icy focus becoming more bored by the second until finally he’s had his fill. With a snort and whispering something into Liona’s tapered ear he moves on to the next bay.

Only Montehugh remains, fixed in place with a horrified mask in place of his usual unimpressed expression. He opens his mouth but is silences by a curt, “Ulysses.” It’s a warning that he doesn’t heed.

“I’m sorry kid.” His voice is thick with emotion and does little to make you feel better. “I tried—“

“Agent!” This time the snapped command leaves no room for disobedience and Montehugh lowers his gaze as he shuffles on by. You follow him with your teary gaze until he’s a blur of colour and shapes through the hanging curtain, at which point you close your eyes and pray for death.

Of course, in it’s twisted way, the universe answers and your demise comes at the hands of Kandomere’s rich, accented voice as he begins his interrogation of the patient in the next bed. Although a good ten feet away, his voice carries and every syllable splinters another shard from your racing heart.

He never loved you. Not really. Not truly. You’d duped him. You’d manipulated him. You’d abused him. A fresh wave of grief and guilt sweeps you into a new torrent of agony and you lay, silently sobbing. There was no way out, no way back. This was your life now and as far as you were concerned, it was exactly what you deserved.
Chapter Thirty Six

Possible trigger for self harm/suicide
mentions of abuse

Time and reality blur. You can’t be sure what’s real and what you’re hallucinating because absolutely nothing makes sense. You’re still in the hospital wing, only you’re not in pain anymore. It could be the drugs they’re pumping you full of though, the ones that drip constantly through the tubes hanging from the IV bag and threading through the electric pump. All day the liquid trickles into your blood stream, what it’s doing is anyones guess but since they introduced it into your system, you didn’t hurt. It was apathy in a bag.

The red headed agent and his elven boss have been back, crossing the end of your station to interrogate the guy next door. Montehugh had hesitated as he’d passed but Kandomere hadn’t even broken stride. And you’d not cared one iota. The wonder drug wiping out your emotions had spared you the humiliation of another emotional breakdown. You’d be happy about that if you could give a damn.

Delavore and Liona have kept up their experiments. They’ve taken gallons of blood, stabbed all sorts of potions into you and removed yet more chunks of skin. You’ve no idea what they are doing, but they seem happy with the results. Docile they called you. You supposed they were right. What did it even matter anyway?

The lights are on and the high, frosted glass windows show you it’s dark outside when Montehugh reappears at the end of your bed. He’s sweating and nervous. You blink slowly wondering why you’re looking at the giant man but then decide to just go with it.

“Hey Ulysses, how’s it hanging?” The words are slurred and mumbled, your dry throat making your voice hoarse.

He steps closer and checks over his shoulder before speaking quietly. “You’re being transferred, I’ve managed to get you moved to a facility in the MTF building but only if you keep doing as you’re told.”

With a careless shrug you close your eyes. “Whatever you say.” When you open your eyes again he’s gone but the echoing click on the floor suggests he’d not simply been a figment of your imagination, unless, of course, you were dreaming that too.

Turns out he’d been real when, the next day, you’re wheeled out of the room and loaded, bed and all, into prisoner transport. For a millisecond you’re intrigued, a tiny flicker of interest as to what’s happening illuminates the back of your mind before the wonder drug extinguishes it and you’re back to not caring.

The jerky journey is over sooner than you’d thought it would be and before you know it and you’re within the sterile, fluororescent corridors of the underground holding cells, being wheeled to your final destination. As you’re wheeled through the maze your mind starts to clear. Slowly you become aware of the radiating pain starting at your head and flowing down, through each of your
limbs and torso. It hurts to breathe so you find yourself taking small, shallow, quick gulps of air, which in turn makes your head spin. Your arms and legs grow heavy and you’re unable to raise your head off the pillow. It’s only as they lock the door to your cell and you’re left alone you realise you’re no longer on the drip.

With each passing hour the pain intensifies and it’s not too much longer until you’re a sweaty, writhing mess. Your arms are a mottled combination of blue, purple and black in between the various gouged out, missing valleys of flesh. There’s little wonder why you’re in agony from what little you can see of yourself.

Some time later you’re visited by a human doctor. You don’t recognise him but he appears to know all about you. He reads from a chart in a folder, asking you to confirm all the relevant details. Once he’s done he cocks an eyebrow and squints at you.

“So you agreed to all the tests conducted on you?” There’s scepticism in his tone.

You’re still in an MTF facility, still being monitored so you answer carefully. “I didn’t *not* agree.”

“I see.” He looks you up and down. “I’m going to start you on a course of painkillers, I imagine with all the internal injuries you’ve sustain during your *many falls*, you’re in quite a lot of discomfort.”

He doesn’t believe the reports in your file, that much is obvious, but it’s not enough to make you warm to him. He works here so, by default, you can’t trust him. You make to shrug only to hiss as your shoulder twinges and a stabbing sensation hurtles down your back.

“Try not to move, Miss Y/L/N, you’ve a lot of injuries, God only knows how you’ve been managing without help.”

You watch him leave, internally rolling your eyes. The evil docs across town must have omitted to record the drug cocktail they’d been dripping into you otherwise he wouldn’t have to wonder how you’d been getting through the days.

Again the door opens and this time the doctor is accompanied by an agent, closely followed by two more. Montehugh, Ross and Ford all hover by the doorway as your meds are administered.

“How ya doin’ kid?” Montehugh asks, stuffing his hands into his pockets and rounding his shoulders.

“How ya doin’ kid?” Montehugh asks, stuffing his hands into his pockets and rounding his shoulders.

“I’ve been better,” a quick hollow laugh escapes you before you conclude with a truthful, “and I’ve been worse.” You refuse to look at them, you can’t, if you do you know you’ll get sucked back in despite everything you’ve endured. So you watch the doctor, concentrating on the needle as it slips effortlessly into your discoloured skin.

“You’ve been brought across to help on a case.” Montehugh clears his throat and moves out of the way as the doctor retreats. “Ah, Kandomere,” another throat clearing, “he’s been moved, and the new SAIC thinks you can help with a case we got.”

Typical, they want something. Thinking through your interactions with the MTF you snort quietly as a thought runs through your head.

*When don’t they?*
“I,” again he coughs and it grates on your nerves. “I’m working on your pardon. You were an asset under K— Under the previous agent in charge, and through no fault of your own you got abducted and magically corrupted. Your actions weren’t your own, you were being manipulated. You shouldn’t be punished when you’re the innocent party.”

Narrowing your eyes you meet his nervous gaze. He’s sweating again, wearing an expression of shame. No, you don’t trust any of this. Better to just do what they want and get back to Doctors Death and Demise.

“What do you need from me?”

Ford moves closer whilst maintaining enough distance as would be considered proper. “We have photos we need you to look at.” You dip your head in a curt acknowledgement and the younger agent visibly relaxes. “Great, we’ll bring them first thing.”

It’s still night then.

“Y/n?” Montehugh pauses by the door as Ross and Ford stride out. “I’m sorry you got caught up in all this shit. I didn’t know… I should have done something sooner.”

He leaves quietly, the click of the door coinciding with the dimming of the lights. The gloom is strange after so long and as the shadows merge and deepen your heart kicks up a notch. In the corner of your eye you notice movement. Whipping your head around, ignoring the throbbing discomfort, you turn just in time to see serrated teeth loom at you. Bringing your hands up instinctually, you jump as the cuffs clang against the metal rail of the bed.

“Turn up the lights!” You scream, thrashing in the bed despite the agony it causes.

A second later the lights return to their full glare and you breathlessly search the room. After a minute of compulsive investigation you resolve that you are, in fact alone. What you had seen had been a trick of the mind. Closing your eyes you settle back against your skewed pillows and try to calm your speeding pulse.

“Leave the lights on,” you beg, ignoring the tears leaking out of the corners of your eyes.

Whoever is behind the glass listens and you spend the next few hours fitfully sleeping. However, when you do find a sleep deep enough to dream, you’re disturbed by nightmares, each of them hosted by the one elf you can’t forget, no matter how hard you try. Kandomere haunts you, terrorising you in various scenarios that always end up with him in Liona’s arms, happy, and you forced to watch from inside a glass box. Eventually you give up trying to sleep and by the time the three agents return, you’re trembling, covered in a sheen of sweat and jittery.

“What the hell did they have her on back there?” Ross comments, flipping through your file.

“Nothing good,” Montehugh replies, resting a hand on your head. “Call the doc, she’s burning up.”

“He’s doing rounds, he’ll be here when he’s here.” The speakers answer.

“She’s probably gonna be dead by then!” Montehugh barks.

Dead. Yeah, that sounded like the best option all around to you.

Theres a sigh followed by, “Sorry, nothing I can do.”

“C’mon man! This ain’t protocol, she needs help.”
Even as Montehugh argues your case you know it’s a pointless exercise. You’re drifting off, your heart rate suddenly dropping, taking with it any lingering anxiety. You’re dying. You’re escaping. It’ll all be over soon...

Yeah, when has it ever been that easy for you?

You’re in a morgue when you wake, five people surrounding you, each wearing a matching frown. Gulping down a huge lungful of air you bolt upright and bring your hand to your heart.

“Fuck!” Montehugh exhales.

“Great work, Doctor Mitchell, see to it that the death certificate gets to where it needs to be.” A woman you don’t recognise states grimly.

“You’re gonna be the only person ever to have two death certificates whilst not actually having died once.” Ross chuckles.

Ford smiles warmly. “How you really doing, Y/n?”

Whatever the fuck they’re trying isn’t going to work. Whatever ruse they’ve compiled won’t fool you so you keep quiet.

“Agents, clear the way. Double check the details, I want stage three to go smoothly.” The woman instructs sternly.

Ross and Ford offer quick, ‘yes ma’am’s’ before hurrying out of the room.

“Miss Y/L/N, my name is Agent Taylor and I’ve taken over from Agent Kandomere as special agent in charge. We’ve been collating evidence against an inferni coven that has appeared here in LA and we need your help.” She pulls her mouth into a tight lipped smile that doesn’t meet her chocolate brown eyes. “I am risking everything on you, Miss Y/L/N, please don’t make me regret this.”

Rubbing your eyes you look around the cold, clean environment. “I gotta say, I don’t get it. I already agreed to help.”

Agent Taylor offers you a folder, her eyes fixed on Montehugh. “You’d better be right Ulysses.”

“I am.” His voice rings out confidently as you tentatively take the proffered documents.

“Alright then, she’s all yours. Thank you for your assistance, Miss Y/L/N. I’m hopeful our next meeting wont have to be under such clandestine circumstances.” She doesn’t wait for you to say anything — not that you had any clue what to say — as she turns on her heel and marches out of the morgue.

“You aren’t gonna believe the shit that’s going down.” Montehugh runs a hand through his hair and sighs. “I’m just countin’ on you being the person I think you are.”

You’re itching to ask him to explain but you’re still too wary to speak. One wrong word and the pain will start all over again, one false turn, one misinterpreted sentence and you’re right back at square one. And that’s assuming all this is even real. Given what’s happened recently you’re not entirely convinced that this isn’t all an elaborate hallucination you’ve dreamt up.

“Right, it’s time.” He gestures at the trolley you woke up on with a grimace. “I need ya to lie down and let me zip you into the body bag. I’m bustin’ you out, kitten.”
Your eyes widen and your mouth runs dry. He wants to put you in a body bag! A fucking body bag. You stare, horrified, at the black material waiting to swallow you whole and shake your head. What the actual fuck was this madness.

“Look I ain’t got time to explain right now but I’m taking you out of here, away from the MTF, and then you’re hopefully going to work with us to take down the mother fuckers who have down this to you, to us.” Montehugh glances at his watch and scowls. “Time’s up, kid, we gotta do this now.”

It’s an incomprehensible situation. It’s ludicrous. It’s fucking ridiculous. You can’t trust any of them, not after what they’ve put you through and yet…

“Fuck it,” you huff, struggling to get into position, slotting your feet into the bottom of the bag and meeting Montehugh’s relieved gaze.

What’s the worst that could happen? At the very worst you end up back at the mercy of the Diabolical Duo, at best, Taylor is telling the truth and you’ve got a possible way out.

The zip slides over your battered body easily, reaching your neck he pauses momentarily before completing the journey and sealing you inside the dark bag.

“Play dead kid and hold tight. We’re gonna get through this together.”
Chapter Thirty Seven

The house you’ve been bundled into is small and in a less than desirable neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. It’s the kind of house that no one pays attention to and exactly the right kind of place to hide out. Dawn had just been about to break when you and Montehugh had hurried up the path and let yourselves in. Ford had driven off leaving no trace of your whereabouts. You were officially off the map, again.

You’re pleasantly shocked to find the two bed home is surprisingly clean and homely inside and it makes a very welcome change from the stark white, plastic rooms you’ve become accustomed to. The walls are covered with faded wallpaper, the obviously once vibrant colours now muted enough to add to the welcoming ambiance; the generic non threatening familiarity of it all setting your mind at ease.

You’re quickly shown around. Off the main hall, a living room leads to a dining area where a well loved table waits to host its next family dinner. To the left a doorway takes you through into a kitchen that hasn’t been remodelled since the seventies. It’s about as far removed from Kandomere’s sleek minimalistic apartment as you can get and somehow that helps you relax a little. Upstairs, the bedrooms are large, but there’s no ensuite, instead the family bathroom houses all the necessities, including a large, inviting bathtub you can’t wait to sink into.

“Y/n.” Monehugh runs a hand through his hair and sighs heavily, he’d been doing that a lot. “Fuck, man, I—“ Another deep sigh wracks his bulky frame. “The state of you when I saw ya in that hospital wing. I never thought, I mean I figured they’d test you and shit, but fuck! I’ll never forgive myself for letting them do that to you.”

Raising your brow you settle into the worn couch in the living room where you’d ended your tour. “Not sure what you could’ve done, seems like things have been getting pretty messed up outside of hell, as well as in it!”

He’d alluded to the fact that the MTF had gone dark side on a few occasions now but you’d yet to hear specifics.

“Like you wouldn’t believe,” he agrees wryly.

“So, you gonna fill me in or what?” You’re colder towards him than he’s used to but if Montehugh’s at all surprised, he hides it well.

“Special Agent Taylor was brought in after I filed a complaint about your treatment in X-Cre.” He falls heavily into the adjacent armchair and rubs his face. To give him his dues, he looks like shit. There are bags under his eyes and his face is pale. “I tried bringing it up with Kandomere but he brushed it aside, like,” he shakes his head and throws you an apologetic look, “like you were nothing. Told me I was overstepping my boundaries. So I went over him, several people over him. See, I think you’re right, I think we’ve been infiltrated at high levels, and as much as I hate to say it —“ You watch with interest as he sits forward, resting his elbows on his knees and places his face in his hands. This is hard on him. “I’m worried, Y/n. Worried enough that I sent the Mrs. away on vacation with her mother for the next few weeks. Shit’s about to go down and I don’t know if we’ve got the manpower to fight it.”

Well, this is intriguing to say the least. You narrow your eyes and raise your chin. “Wanna start at the beginning and fill me in?”
“I got take out, we just need to reheat it. How’s about you eat and I’ll talk, you look like you haven’t had a proper meal since, well, you know.”

He’s obviously very uncomfortable mentioning your recent incarceration and a small piece of you feels somewhat vindicated at this.

“Fine, I’ll eat, you talk.”

There’s a feast set out on the table and you pick at the various open containers with unabashed joy. The cheap, processed food tastes better than anything you’ve eaten before and the coke washing it down is far nicer than any of Kandomere’s stupid fine wines.

“His behaviour was off from the moment he woke up. He wasn’t himself.” Montehigh waves a slice of pizza at you and tilts his head. “Before Vegas, before you, he’d been becoming a bit more standoffish than usual, but you know, he’s an elf, they do strange shit. Then you came along and I swear to god he changed. I’ve been working with him for years. Took a long time for that icy exterior to melt. He’d never been a typical elf, he tried to consider humans as equals, didn’t always manage it but shit if he wasn’t at least trying. Till you. Then it was like, like we were equals. He opened up more, listened to me more, appreciated me more. I was allowed to take the lead without him looking over my shoulder every two seconds. He finally trusted me completely.”

He’s spent the last twenty minutes talking about the elf and it was grating on your nerves not to mention crushing your soul. The way Kandomere had so effortlessly forgotten you and moved on is something you know you’ll never be over.

“Great, he was a changed elf and then he wasn’t. What’s this got to do with what’s going down?”

You can’t help the bite to your words as your pain slips through the cracks.

“I’m saying that since the whole magic thing, he woke up changed. He’s reverted to type, no it’s more than that it’s like he’s enjoying being a dick.” Taking a large mouthful of his drink he swallows and frowns thoughtfully. “I swear he knew what was happening at X-Cre. He knew things were fucked up there. I ain’t never been in that place and seen anything as fucked up as I did that day. When I saw you lookin’ like that, fuck! But he didn’t give a shit. Told me to keep my nose out of matters that were above my pay grade or he’d see to it I’d never see the outside of my office again. He didn’t give a fuck about you, about the mess you were in, and that's when I knew.”

“So what, you’re trying to say that my magic was making him act more humanely? Great. How does that help me— No! If you’re thinking what I think you are, then no. I’m not about to get close enough to him to try to use magic again—“

Montehugh puts a hand up to silence you. “No, nothing like that. What I said is true, we want you to go through the files, I just couldn’t leave you in that place knowing what was happening and we didn’t want you doing it under the cameras at HQ. Hence the death.”

“That reminds me,” you lean forward scowling, “what the fuck did you do to me?”

A red blush colours his cheek, ruddying his face and returning his appearance to one that is more
familiar. “Yeah sorry about that. The doc injected you with a concoction to slow your heart. You basically died until he gave you another shot to wake you up. But it’s okay, he’d done tests, knew you’d be okay because of your magic. “

“Oh, well that’s okay then,” you sing, sarcastically. He at least has the good grace to look ashamed.

“You had to die. Kandomere came and checked you himself, along with a second doctor. It had to be real.”

Your heart stutters at that bit of information. “He saw me dead? He really thinks I’m gone?” You can’t stop yourself from poking at your open wound. “Did he react at all?”

Montehugh’s head drops. “Like I said, he’s changed.”

Ignoring the lump in your throat you attempt to brush the hurt aside. “So what’s my cause of death then, officially?”

“Heart failure. Wasn’t contested given that you were strung out on whatever shit they’d been forcing into you.”

You think back to the apathy drug with fondness.

“So now what?” You’re eager to move the conversation along, dwelling on the past isn’t helping your mood or broken heart any.

“Now we try and figure out who’s on our side. I don’t know how deep this goes but over the past few months, shit has been going sideways. I can’t be sure how high it goes either. I went to Kandomere’s boss’ boss ‘cos he’s family. He married my cousin and I’ve known the guy years. I trust him.”

“But not Kandomere.”

His sad gaze meets yours and you feel a twinge of compassion for the large man. “No, Not after what happened with you.

Perhaps you’d been a little quick to judge Montehugh. You decide to rescind that judgement and see how the next few days played out before you wrote him completely.

“He was ‘promoted’ to get him out of the way. Officially they said they wanted him closer to Liona so she could monitor him for complications after the infection but it was so Taylor could be brought in. She’s straight up, you can trust her. First thing she did was start the transfer papers for you. She doesn’t think you’re a criminal, she’s read my files, knows you were used as a puppet for the inferni, that non of it came for you.”

You’re unsure you’d agree with that statement but you let it go. “Ford and Ross, and the Doctor, Dr. Mitchel, they’re all on our side?”

He smiles at that and nods. “Yeah, and Director Palmer. As for the rest of ‘em, it’s anyones guess.” Lacing his fingers together on the table top he leans back, the old chair creaking as he moves. “I’m pretty sure it’s all linked. The Vegas attack, the coven and this. I dunno how, yet, but I’ll figure it out.”

Wadding up your used napkin you push the paper plate away and mirror his position. Your body protests at the movement and you groan quietly as you try to get comfortable.
“There’s meds in the fridge. Dr. Mitchell has been writing scripts for days to cover his tracks. He’s left a list of what to take and when on the fridge, looks like a list of chores incase anyone gets too nosey. Garden chores relate to the white pills. Depending on how many times a week it says to do the chore is how often you can take them. The capsules are the household chores. You’ll figure it out.”

“Where will you be?”

“Me? I’ll be at the office. Can’t risk being seen here. I have today to supposedly see Sarah and her mom off on vacation but back in again tomorrow. You’re gonna be pretty much alone most of the time. We’ve made copies of all the files we want you to look at and they’re coming through the post. Keep an eye out. The fridge and cupboards are stocked and there’s clothes and shit upstairs. Stay away from the windows and don’t answer the door to anyone. Other than that, make yourself at home.” He stands and starts collecting up the trash, a simple action that curls your lips into a smile.

“Sarah? Your wife?”

A dopey grin takes over his face and he nods bashfully. “Yeah, been together since high school.”

You watch as he cleans up your combined mess and process everything he’s said. The horror on his face when he’d come across you in the hospital wing would certainly back up his story about not knowing what had been happening inside X-Cre.

“What does X-Cre stand for?” You blurt out.

He side eyes you and shrugs, “Creatures that have been marked X in the danger ratings. A is for your annoying but mostly harmless types, the fairies and shit like that. B is for, well you get thy idea. You come to the attention of the MTF and you get a rating, to give you some indication of how severe X’s are, Alexo was rated F.”

“F for fucking psycho.”

Montehugh chuckles. “Yeah, somethin’ like that.”

Chewing your lip, you inhale. “DO you think Kandomere… Is he… Has he been turned?” You can’t quite believe you’re asking the question, except he isn’t the elf you knew anymore.

Montehugh stops on his trek into the kitchen and drops his head. “Honestly I don’t know. All’s I know for sure is that I can’t trust him now.”
Chapter Thirty Eight

The solitude of the house is far removed from the solitary confinement at X-cre. Here you’re free to roam the rooms, free to select what to wear, when to sleep, what to eat. There are no eyes watching and you relax into the unexpected emancipation easily. There’s a bookshelf lined with reading material, TV’s with numerous cable channels as well as a whole host of movies to watch.

However, you spend your days pouring over the files that are delivered daily, interspersed with trying out various recipes from one of the cookbooks you’d found in the kitchen. No one notices or cares that you’ve moved into the area, despite the fact that a courier knocks on your door every day. You’re left alone and after such a rough few months, it’s heaven.

The nights are a different story though. It’s been a week since you came here and you’ve yet to sleep soundly without being woken by the same, horrific nightmare. In it Kandomere discovers you’re alive and hunts you down, finding you at the house. Crashing through the door he looks at you with disgust, spewing out vitriol like his life depends on it. He tells you you’re an abhorrent disgrace on his otherwise perfect record and that its time to put things right. That’s when he strikes. But that’s not the worst part, no, the bit that never fails to wake you with a choked sob is the part where you’re laid on the floor dying and he tenderly pulls you into his lap, his gentle fingers carding through your hair. As he stares down his expression morphs to horror and words of love spill from his mouth between cries of pain. It’s at the point he tells you he didn’t mean it, that non of it was intended and that he still loves you, you finally wake to tears cascading down your face.

As you splash water on your tear stained face, for the eighth night in a row, you stuff down the raging hurt and anger the nightmare has stirred. Logically you knew there was no point lamenting the love you’d lost but you’re subconscious was yet to catch up to that fact. Going back to bed was not an option. You’d tried that in previous nights only to wind up reliving the nightmare yet again.

Rubbing your eyes you stumble down into the kitchen and busy yourself by making coffee. The files you’d been marking up the previous day lay scattered on the dining room table so you opt to take your mug into the family room, snagging a folder on the way past. Flipping on the TV for background noise, you curl into the corner of the couch and balance the open file on your lap. Something about this particular document was niggling you. The woman in it wasn’t known to you, you’re sure of that much, but there are phrases that ring alarm bells, you’re just unaware as to why.

Grabbing a pen from the coffee table you circle the black text in red ink. Possible member of LA Phoenix Clan, trained under a “Siennsa”, known Inferni. You read on, your eyes tracing the sentences you’d read before bed, your brows knitting together in frustration. What was it about this that was making your brain itch?

You stayed nestled into the couch way after the sun rose and the rest of the neighbourhood woke. Alternating between flipping open the file and slamming it down in annoyance you were still no further on when the courier arrived. He knocks on the door and greets you with a friendly smile as he hands over your latest package.

“I gotta ask,” he cocks his head playfully, “are you a spy? I mean you’ve been on my route everyday for the last week and it’s driving me nuts. I’ve been wracking my brain and I think either you’re a spy or,” he flashes his teeth as his grin widens and a blush blooms across his cheeks, “you’re ordering stuff just so you get to see me. I mean, not that I don’t think you’re capable of spying but with a face as beautiful as yours I don’t see how you could ever go undercover and not be noticed so I’m thinking — hoping it’s the latter, and if that is the case then you could just ask
me out on a date.”

For a moment your heart had stopped but as he rambled on and reached his point you find yourself chuckling lightly. Glancing at his name tag you take the proffered package and shake your head.

“Sorry Sam, hate to burst your bubble but it’s neither. I’m a proofreader for as yet unpublished books” You hold up the files inside the box and give them a shake. “My agency have started sending me hard copies of future best sellers to check before they go to print.”

Sam’s head falls forward, his long hair covering his eyes but not his wide, perfect smile. “Damn, so you don’t have a crush on the mail man then? Shame.” He nibbles his full, kissable bottom lip and shrugs, meeting your amused gaze with a twinkle in his brown eyes and a dimple in his very attractive cheek. “Still, a man can dream.”

You laugh loudly, unable to resist his boyish charm. “Not so much a dream in my case, more a nightmare. Trust me, you’re better off staying this side of the door.”

He looks past you into the house before raising his brows quickly. “I very much doubt that.” Straightening up he turns to leave. “Hopefully see you tomorrow, who knows, you might have changed your mind by then.” Reaching up, he tips an imaginary hat to you and backs away. Chuckling, you wave your goodbye and close the door. It was the first interaction with someone outside of the MTF since you’d been involved with them and it was a good reminder why you were doing what you’re doing — to protect people like Sam.

With your mind fixed on the courier, you snag your mug and wander, unseeing, into the kitchen. Pouring yourself another drink you allow yourself a smile. Maybe one day you’d be free to take him up on his offer and ask him out for a date. You certainly wouldn’t mind, he was friendly, cute and best of all, human. There’d be no cultural misunderstandings, no strange awkwardness, just a regular date doing regular things. Like going to the movies or a bar or—

A bar!

That thought sent your coffee mug crashing to the worktop and your legs scurrying to the open file you’d been manhandling for the past twenty-four hours. The MTF had assumed that Siennsa was an elf only they were wrong. This time when you went through the files you weren’t looking at the words, you were studying the surveillance photos. You’d mostly brushed them aside after ascertaining you didn’t recognise the suspect when what you should have done was look at their locations.

“There!” You yell aloud, jabbing at the photo where you could clearly see what you’d been looking for. Yes, it was out of focus but you’d know that neon sign anywhere. Navigating your way around the sofa you grabbed the rest of the previously discarded files and quickly scanned through, your suspicions being confirmed time and time again. Siennsa wasn’t a living thing, it was a place, a bar to be precise. It had been one of the signs you’d been forced to look out at when Alexo had tried to condition you in Vegas.

With fingers trembling from the adrenaline rush of finally being able to report something back, you dial the number Montehugh had given you and wait for the beep. Taking a deep breath you listen to the outgoing message asking the caller to leave their gardening work queries after the tone before reading off the address and asking for urgent assistance with an unruly tree. Now all you had to do was wait for Montehugh, Ford or Ross to get in touch.
By the time Ross reaches out you’d amassed quite a stack of linked files, your hurried red scrawl decorating the pages inside each one. He listened to your carefully worded explanation and hummed.

“Okay, Ford will stop by tonight, he’ll come dressed as a gardener so don’t panic if a truck pulls up outside. We want to avoid curtain twitches as much as possible so be ready to let him in, the less people see the better.”

“Got it.”

“Good work, Y/n, we knew there was a connection, we just couldn’t find it.”

Gripping the phone tightly you close your eyes and lean your head back against the wall. “Just as long as it leads somewhere. I’m starting to think that maybe I could have a life after all this, it would be nice to explore that idea a little more.”

Ross chuckles. “Yeah, I expect it will. Okay, be ready, gotta go, ears are coming.” Without waiting for your response he ends the call and you sit the old phone back in its cradle. Suddenly the energy you’d been bursting full of when you’d made the discovery has seeped out and you’re barely able to drag your body back to the couch. Closing your eyes you lay back, allowing yourself a brief moment of relaxation before you get back to it…

The heavy knocking on the front door rouses you. Clouded by confusion and sleep you move on autopilot, throwing the door open wide, expecting Sam but seeing Agent Ford. He bustles in and quietly closes the door, frowning at your obvious disorientation.

“You okay?”

“I was sleeping.” Your muttered reply is obscured by the hand wiping down your face as you try and chase the sleep from your system.

“Well time to wake up, Sleeping Beauty, we got work to do.” He strides into the living room heading for the patchwork of files you’d laid out. “Fuck! Y/n you’ve been busy.”

“Yeah, let me grab a coffee and I’ll explain what I’ve found.”

As you walk into the kitchen, Ford crouches down, getting a closer look at your notes. You don’t bother offering him a drink, instead you pour out two drinks and simply drop one down next to him.

“If I’m reading this right,” he absently picks up the mug and takes a slurp, wincing at the taste of the cheap, bitter drink, “you’ve connected these six confirmed Inferni members—“

“She,” you point to the file that had started it all, “is outside a bar in Vegas called Sienna, it’s an upmarket place that only accepts members. I’ve never been but I know of it. It’s the type of place that ou have to be invited to join, very exclusive from the talk around town. It’s not just for elves though, they allowed anyone with enough money to join, regardless of race.”

“Yeah that’s not uncommon, makes for a good cover. Elf only joints get scrutinised much more heavily by the MTF.”
“Okay, so each of the elves I’ve marked up have connections with the place. It wouldn’t have shown in the files because it goes under many pseudo names. Never did find out why. But here, this transcription of a call between him and her,” you gesture between two files, “mentions the Vegas Money Pit, that was a term the Orcs like to throw around when talking about Sienna, plus they go on to reference Hackers Lane, that was a colloquial name for the street opposite that was wall to wall with high end computer stuff.”

“Okay, what else?”

For the rest of the evening you lay out all the connections, trying the threads together, and laying out a very tangible map of the network you’d stumbled across. “Thing is, non of these seem to be the leader, they do mention a Sopitas though. Two different elves in separate conversations reply to a question with the phrase, ‘only sopitas knows.’ I dunno about you, but that’s not something I’ve come across before.”

Ford nods thoughtfully. “You make a fair point, Y/n.”

“Goo—“ You’re interrupted by a knock at the door. You’re not expecting anyone, especially not at this time of night.

With an ashen face, Ford holds out his hand, signalling for you to stay put as he creeps towards the window.

“Wait!” You whisper, grabbing his arm and tugging it back. “Let me open the door. Could be someone ensuring about the van, let’s not arouse suspicion if we can help it.”

But Ford doesn’t listen, shaking you off he checks through the thick, dusty net covered curtain and sighs with relief. “It’s Montehugh.”

Flopping down into the chair, you let out the breath you’d been holding and wait. Seconds later Montehugh appears and takes in the state of the room with files laying seemingly haphazardly all around.

“We need to move you. Our message was intercepted. They’re assuming it’s nothing but intel points to them coming around tomorrow to check the place out. We’ve got a decoy homeowner in place but you need to long gone, just incase.”

Your heart drops. “They intercepted?”

“Yeah… Go upstairs, grab what you need and be back down in ten minutes. Ford will take me through this,” he gestures to the room, “wist your sorting your shit out.” He swallows and pulls a hand down his face. “I’m sorry kid, I’ve done everything in my power to avoid this.”

“Hey, it’s not your fault.” You’re disappointed that you have to leave but you’re also aware of everything Montehugh has on his plate right now. Rushing up the stairs you grab an overnight bag from the bottom of the closet and stuff it full of the things you’d ben using. By the time you’re back downstairs Find has caught Montehugh up.

“Fuck me Y/n, you’ve been almost as busy as me!” The giant man exclaims.

“Yeah? What’ve you got then?”

He takes your bag from your hands and smiles wearily, “I’ll tell you on the way, come on, we gotta move.”
Hurrying after him, you wave to Ford who is busy collecting the files, before jogging down the garden path and diving inside the very noticeable sleek back SUV.

“Yeah, not so surreptitious this time.” Montehugh apologised sheepishly. “We didn’t have time to put anything elaborate together.”

“I don’t understand how they found out though, I thought only you, Ford and Ross had access to that phone, who else could’ve heard the message.”

Montehugh shifts uneasily as he pulls away from the curb. “I have my suspicions.”

“Really? That’s all you’ll tell me?”

He side eyes you, not flinching one iota as you glare at him indignantly. “You know who you can trust, that’s all you need to concern yourself with.”

Backing down from the fight you can’t fin, you sit straight in the chair and pick apart what you know. The number had been untraceable to you or the MTF staff and only the people you’d been told were trustworthy had any knowledge of it.

“Ulysses, how bad is it?” You jam your thumb into your mouth and nubble at the nail nervously. “I mean, we thought that line was secure, you told me only those you trusted knew anything about it.”

He sighs and shrinks down in the seat, suddenly looking very tired and beaten. “It’s pretty fuckin’ bad, Y/n.”

“Is there any hope?” The slight glimmer you’d experienced earlier as you’d imagined life after all this mess is dying fast as your companion grips the wheel tighter and refuses to look at you.

“It was Kandomere. He intercepted the call. He was the only person anywhere near when Ross picked up the message. He’d thought he was alone but— He’s coming for whoever was at the end of the line, at this point we don’t know if he has any idea who it was calling, we have to assume though,” guiltily he glances across, “he’s definitely not playing on our side anymore, he’s different, he’s cruel, and I’m pretty sure he’s magically inclined at the moment so we have to assume he knows who he’s after.”

You’d had a while to imagine Kandomere in bed with the Inferni but even so, it didn’t sit easily. He’d dedicated his whole career to destroying them, why would he suddenly turn? Unless…

“Is it at all possible that he’s undercover as a dual agent? I mean—“

You’re thrown forward as Montehugh anchors on the brakes, your seatbelt locking into place and keeping you safe from the sudden emergency stop.

“Fuck me!” The curse slips out but Montehugh pays you no attention. His eyes are glued to something ahead. No, not something, someone.

In the middle of the otherwise empty street stands the object of your conversation. His car is flanked by three others, non of them police cruises, all of them containing elves. Inferni elves to be precise.

“Hold on tight.” Montehugh grits out, slamming the car into reverse. Only nothing happens. The car stays perfectly still, the wheels screeching as the rubber burns against the tarmac.
“The fuck?” The red haired man eases off the gas and checks behind to see what is stopping you only to be confronted by his worst nightmare. “Mother fucker!”

You move, spotting the wand wielding inferni the second you can see through the back window. It was over. They finally had you.

“Ulysses, I need you to do exactly as I say.” Keeping your voice low and measured you reach for your belt. “You can’t do anything if they capture you or worse, kill you, so let me draw their attention away. The second I’m out of the car, do what you can. Run, drive, fucking fly if you have to—”

“Have you lost your fucking mind?”

“No! You can’t help me now but I can help you, so do whatever the hell you can.”

There’s no time to prepare him more than that. Shoving open the door you run, zigzagging your way to the buildings at the side of the road, praying that there wasn’t anyone around to get caught in the crossfire.

You make it as far as the first house before you’re struck down by magic. The heat binds your legs together and fastens your arms behind your back, sending you careering to the floor, face first. Pain explodes behind your eyelids as your nose takes the full force of the impact, blood spurting all over your face and the concrete floor.

Struggling is useless and yet you do it anyway. There’s no way you’re going down without a fight. Not this time. A high heeled foot steps into your line of sight, the expensive shoes wrapping elegantly around a small slim foot.

You know those shoes.

“Ah, finally, my prodigal daughter has returned.”

You know that voice!

“You fucking bit—” Your slammed into the ground by a booted foot from behind, a joyous laugh accompanying your breathless impact.

“You should have stayed in X-cre, Y/n, at least there we had to abide by some rules. As it is you’re coming back to Vegas. Crienne has work or you.” Liona’s feet move to the side as she’s joined by another pair of expensive shoes you recognise.

With one last Hail Mary you attempt to reason with your ex lover. “Kandom—”

The boot on your back digs deeper robbing you of what little breath you have.

“Save your breath,” Kandomere scoffed, “you’re going to need it!”
Chapter Thirty Nine

You’re being drained. Slowly and painfully. You’d hoped that after the first round of torture they’d simply give up and kill you but apparently luck wasn’t on your side. The grimy dungeon you’re being held in is full of instruments designed to inflict pain, many of which have already been used, thankfully though, not on you. At least, not yet. There are others in here with you, all of you strung up against the wall, half dead and broken.

You don’t bother speaking to them anymore, not after the first night where they’d tortured the poor bastard who’d dared answered your shouts of pain with a gentle reassurance. They made sure he paid for it and forced you to watch. The brutality of how they’d cut out his tongue and the sound of his agonised screams will haunt you till the day you die. Besides, you’re not sure you even have the energy to speak, everything is becoming so much harder than it should be. Even breathing.

You’ve no idea of time. It passes at its leisure. Without windows to look through or a clock to watch you can’t decide if it’s morning or night, and for some reason this irks you more than the physical torture.

As you watch your blood trickle out of your arm, through a tube into a bag you wonder how much more they can take before your heart gives up. Surely it’s got to be soon, they’ve harvested three full bags already.

“You!”

With drowsy unfocused eyes you watch an elf approach. This one is tall and blonde with crystal blue eyes and a sneer.

“It’s your lucky night.” He tugs the tube away from your arm and carefully seals the bag. “Seems you’re the chosen one. Blood bags just won’t cut it anymore.”

His words jumble in your mind and, unable to unravel their meaning, you close your eyes in surrender. You’re all out of fight. There’s nothing else for you to give. Uncaring hands grasp your wrists tightly as the shackles are removed, and then you’re falling. Hitting the stone floor with a thud and crack you barely flinch. You don’t have it in you to react, not that you can actually feel anything with your numb, cold body.

The elf seizes an ankle and drags you over the dirty stone muttering constantly in Övüsi. For a moment a sliver of fear and panic grips you, speeding your heart and pumping a shot of adrenaline through your nervous system but then it fades, smothered beneath exhaustion, pain and acquiescence.

You wake in bed. The scent of freshly laundered sheets filling your nose and the gentle notes of a cello pulling you to consciousness. Blinking open your eyes you frown in confusion at the scene surrounding you. The bed is large, comfortable and clean; the room you’re in is modern and bright. There are windows to your right, the floor to ceiling drapes all but keeping out the sun save for a small crack which allows a shaft of light through.
“Good Morning.”

Whipping your head to the opposite side of the room, you search for the elf who had spoken. He’s there, sat straight backed in a reading chair, twirling a knife in his hand. It’s the same elf you’d encountered before passing out.

“I’m simply dying to know what the fuss is about.” He licks his lips and sets the blade down on the table between you. “All this commotion over a little human blood. I don’t get it.”

On impulse you’re about to ask him what the hell he’s talking about but you catch yourself in time. Loose lips are not looked favourably upon by the Inferni, especially when it comes to their victims. No, it was far better to remain quiet and confused.

“Maybe…” He stands, towering above you, at least six four. He’s lithe and deadly, you can tell that much in the way he moves gracefully towards you, but it’s the confidence in his eyes that scares you the most. This elf doesn’t fear anyone, and that makes him terrifying.

As he nears the bed he trails a hand over your arm. “I’d have done it whilst I bathed you but sadly we had company.”

In shock you glance at your bare arms and note they are indeed free of the grime you’d accumulated in the dungeon. Your eyes move to your chest and you’re surprised to see a fresh white vest top.

“Still,” the elf continues, unbothered by your stupor, “we’re alone now.”

He’s by your side in a flash, sitting on the bed and gathering you into his arms before you even comprehend what he’s doing. It’s only as his teeth slice carefully through your arm that you register his proximity.

A flash of rage burns through you but you’re unable to move, his grip is too solid. Gritting your teeth you suck down air, waiting for him to finish, knowing that this would probably be the way you die. But he doesn’t suck you dry, far from it. After a minute at most he pulls back, pushing a handkerchief firmly against the wound he’s made. With sparkling eyes he drags his gaze to yours and smiles, showing crimson stained teeth.

“My my, you are a tasty treat.”

You want to spit in his face, lunge for the knife and cut out his vile heart, if only you stood any chance of moving a single muscle before he restrained you.

“Yes,” he hums softly, his eyes darting about your face in contemplation, “I think I understand now.”

Letting out a vicious snarl he latches his mouth back to your arm, sucking with gusto. Feebly you try to tug your arm back as he continues to drink, but you’re far too weak. Noises of content fill the room as this time he goes to town. After only a few moments more your vision blurs and your body sags. You can’t fight the sleep claiming you.

“It’s okay little one, get some more rest, build your strength, you’re going to need it.”

The echoing words send you off to a disturbed sleep as you pass out.
You wake in the same bed with the same music paying softly in the background. Your heavy eyes are reluctant to open and your body protests as you move.

“It would be better to remain still. You suffered a slight accident whilst unconscious and we didn’t see the need to taint you with painkillers whilst you were out cold.”

Your heart literally freezes, pumping ice cold venom through your blood stream as Kandomere talks. Forcing your eyes to open you glare up at the elf who has caused so much of your pain. He stares back, his eyes flat and void of all emotion.

“Kill me,” you rasp. Your soul has been ravaged, your body is in agony and your heart, what’s left of it, has crumbled to dust. You can’t carry on. His dispassionate stare continues as if you’d simply asked him the time. There is nothing behind his mask, no glimpse of the elf you knew, no hint of anger or hatred, just pure apathy and it’s terrifying.

From across the way the blonde haired elf reappears and smiles. “The High priest has use for you, little one, there’ll be no death for you today.”

Kandomere steps aside, allowing the other elf to perch on the side of your bed and run his hand through your hair. You flinch at the contact, instantly regretting it as your muscles scream.

“I’m so sorry my dear, your injuries are my fault. I should have known.”

You want to look at yourself, assess the damage you can only imagine is there but you can’t move. It’s not that you’re tied down it’s just that your body can’t manage even the smallest of tasks.

“I was called away and that’s when she struck. Seems you’ve really rattled Liona.” He side eyes Kandomere and raises a brow. “Perhaps she’s not getting exactly what she wanted after all.”

You’ve no idea what the hell is going on and frankly you don’t care. You’re all out of fucks to give.

“What’s he even doing here?” You sneer in Kandomere’s direction much to the blonde elf’s delight.

“He’s your protection. As punishment for his attack he has to watch over you and should any further mishaps occur, he’ll pay with his life.”

His attack? Kandomere had attacked you whilst you were out cold? What the hell?

Blonde elf offers a wide, condescending smile at Kandomere before it turns genuine and you find yourself back under the scrutiny of his blue eyes. “The high priest wanted to wait, didn’t want to sully your precious blood with toxins, but fear not, your pain will soon be dealt with.”

The sound of a door opening is shortly followed by a barking, unpleasant voice. “Illexia, he is ready.”

The blonde elf, Illexia, gingerly takes your hand and presses a chaste kiss to the back of it.

“When I return, do not panic. No harm will befall you if you co-operate.” With that ominous warning lingering in the air he strides away, his steps full of intent and confidence.

Suddenly alone with Kandomere, you’re assaulted with conflicting emotions. Glaring at him out of
the corner of your eye, you’re filled with hatred and betrayal. “You’re scum. You deserve a very slow and painful death.” The seething anger pours out in a steady stream of words. “You are filth and I pray to every God ever listed that you what you deserve.”

He blinks, the ghost of a frown pulling at his brows. “You asked me to kill you. When you learn that I’ve already tried you become angry.” His voice and inflection are as robotic as his features and it knocks the wind out of your sails.

With a frown of your own you breathe deeply. “You betrayed me, and now you’re shocked that I’m angry, that I hate you?”

He sits in the reading chair, looking beyond you to the drawn curtains, your words seeming to drift over his head.

“Kandomere!”

He slides his gaze back to look at you but when you lock eyes you can see he’s not really there. There’s something amiss. Swallowing dryly you search his features to find nothing, no twitch, no annoyance, not even a sign of him breathing. It’s eerie and so, so wrong.

“Why did you betray me?”

He stares blankly into your eyes and you’re pretty sure he hasn’t heard you.

“Kandomere! Why did you try to kill me?”

He blinks once then answers calmly. “I was ordered to.”

You’ve never seen anyone so dispassionate and unanimated.

“What happened?” You ask hoarsely. “Back at the Magic Task Force HQ, after I was cured, what did Liona do to you?”

Quick as lightning he narrows his eyes and pulls back his lips to snarl at you. “I will bite you, Y/n, and it will hurt.”

Instinctively you lean away, the fear coursing through you allowing you to ignore the pain.

“Then you’ll be killed,” you whisper timidly.

“I only answer to one elf. Illexia would not be able to stop me. When the time comes, no elf will.”

Before you can ask any further questions a whole herd of robed elves sweep into the room, creating a long corridor down which Illexia strolls. As he reaches the bed he moves aside and bows slightly, waiting for his companion.

The elf that follows is older than the others. There’s something about him that sets your nerves on edge. He’s smartly dressed with high cheek bones and long black hair that hangs effortlessly down his back. He walks with his head held high above a gleaming gorget. As he reaches the bed, he flicks his wrist and states in a calm, smooth voice, an Övüsi command. The wand he’s holding glows bright and discharges a bolt of energy directly into your chest.

You can’t breathe as the power attaches to every cell in you and yanks them back together. A second later it stops and you’re floating, literally, suspended above the bed with the sheet draped over you like the cheap magic trick’s you’d seen back in Vegas. Again the man with the wand
speaks and in the blink of an eye you’re stood in front of him, clothed in white and entirely free of pain.

With the smallest of smiles he tucks the wand into the inside pocket of his suit jacket and looks you up and down.

“Now, Y/n, tell me, how do you feel?”
They’re trying to indoctrinate you, disguising their actions with elaborate acts of kindness and extravagant gifts. They’ve made a big show of condemning what Alexo did and shunning the Vegas coven but you’re not fooled. Not when you know that somewhere nearby there’s a dungeon full of people being tortured.

Illexia makes sure you want for nothing. Every whim, every taste is catered for and you’re living in the height luxury but you’re not stupid enough to believe you have any say in what happens to you. Every time you approach the external door you’re stopped, either by a stoic Kandomere or an apologetic Illexia. There’s no leaving.

You’ve been tucked away in the hotel suite for at least a week, possibly more and every day Illexia brings you the finest food or drink, clothes or jewellery. It’s almost like he’s attempting to woo you, even his attitude towards you has changed. In the beginning there was always a hard edge to his words and an unsettling glint in his eyes. You knew from day one that he wasn’t to be messed with, only now he’s different, softer. When he touches you his hands are gentle and when you speak, he tilts his head, listening intently to your words. If you were inclined to trust elves you may have fallen for his charm and charisma but you’ve learned your lesson the hard way. You’ve seen what he is capable of and you know he’d turn on you in a heartbeat if he had to, you know all too well that no elf can be trusted. Not that you’d admit any of this out loud. Oh no, you’re doing all you can to prolong this uneasy truce, knowing that as soon as they understand you won’t join them willingly, they’ll use magic, overwrite your free will and force you to do their work. You probably wouldn’t even know what you were doing and you most definitely wouldn’t survive it.

“Belgium chocolate.” Illexia announces, crossing the room to present a tray of elaborately crafted chocolate.

Shaking your head you move away and resume your previous stance of staring out of the window. You’re in elf town, on the boarder, looking down over the busy shopping district.

“Well, if you won’t indulge, then surely it’s my turn.”

His smooth voice is close, warning you of his proximity and intentions. Wordlessly he settles behind you and wraps a strong arm around your middle, pinning you against his chest. His free hand snakes to your left and threads his fingers through yours. With a resigned sigh of acceptance you allow him to stretch your arm up, bracing yourself for the sting that always follows. An obscene groan accompanies the painful bite as he sinks his teeth into the underside of your forearm.

Each day it’s the same. After lunch he seeks you out, sending Kandomere away in order to take what he wants from you. It’s a frightening experience and a painful one as you wait, wondering if this will be the day he finally sucks you dry.

“Illexia?” Your voice is breathy from the ordeal and you become dizzy as he pulls at your arm. Unable to stand you slump against him, your head tipping back against his shoulder.

Carefully he dislodges his teeth and clamps his hand over the wound. “What’s on your mind my inquisitive pet?”

Lightheaded and woozy, you take steadying breaths as the elf walks you over to a comfortable couch.
“Why do you drink…?” You’re slurring, he must have taken more than usual.

“Why?” His echoing question is dripping with mirth. “For all his faults, Alexo created something unique with you. It’s addictive.” As he talks, he positions you on the couch so that your head rests in his seated lap. Carding his fingers through your hair he exhales deeply and hums, he’s never answered your question before but he seems more than at ease answering now. “Your magic is different. It’s latent but powerful, it takes some work to draw it out but, when you do… Oh!” His own head falls against the back of the couch and he laughs quietly. “I will never—"

The suite door opens and a snarling Kandomere stomps heavily into the room. “The High Priest commands your attention, Illexia.”

“Then I shall attend.” He answers lightly and slips out from beneath you. Bending down to cradle your cheek in his large hand he offers you a smile. “Sleep pet, I’ll return as soon as I’ve done my duty.”

You hate how he touches you but daren’t shirk him off so you simply nod and close your eyes. Moments later the door closes and the room is silent.

You’re used to having Kandomere around and not acknowledging him, neither of you speak to each other anymore, but there’s a fissure of tension in the air that staves off any notion of sleep. Cracking open one eye you’re startled when you see him looming over you, his lips curled in anger. In a breath he’s on you, his mouth fastened to your throat at your pulse point, but he doesn’t bite. Shakily, you inhale, too afraid to move incase it sets him off. He smiles against your skin and you know he can smell your fear.

“I will bite you, Y/n,” he mutters darkly.

Your heart is racing as you whisper, “Then do it for fuck’s sake.” You’re so tired of this game, of living in fear. Maybe, just maybe the expectation of what he’ll do is worse than the actual act.

Kandomere takes a deep inhale, smelling the juncture of your neck before he moves. Grasping your arm he locks into place, directly over the spot Illexia had used. Biting ferociously his whole body trembles as the first drops of your blood cross his tongue. A low sound of approval rumbles through his chest and with it you feel yourself slipping into oblivion. He sucks hard and your arm aches, not that you have the energy to do anything about it. You sink further under the cloak of numbness allowing your slowing heart to dominate your thoughts. It’s beating too sporadically now and the lack of oxygen sends you into a dreamless, unconscious state.

Deja vu is awaiting when you wake. Like something out of groundhog day you come too in your bed, the same music as before playing in the background. Kandomere is by the door and Illexia is perched in the chair. The only difference is the saline bag hanging from a pole next to you, trickling the liquid into your veins.

“It seems we must be a little more cautious, pet.” Illexia smiles over the top of the book he’s reading.

Your eyes track down, ignoring the tube that’s connected to the back of your hand, instead you search for the teeth marks on your arm.

“The High Priest was kind enough to fix your broken parts again.” Illexia explains in a tight voice. “Seems you tried to stand in your weakened state and caused yourself injury.” There’s a look behind his eyes that catches your attention.
“I’m just a battery to him, aren’t I?”

You’re met with a sympathetic smile that answers your question.

“So why all this?” Sweeping your arms out as far as you can, you gesture to the room. “Why not just keep me in the dungeon?”

Illexia frowns and leans forward to place his hand on your arm. “Taking you there was a mistake. You don’t belong with the filth, you belong up here, with me.” His tone is low and gravelly, and causes your heart to speed up. You don’t like the way he’s staking a claim over you or the possessive glint in his eye.

“You’re hungry,” he announces suddenly, “Kandomere, bring Y/n some lunch.” Standing, Illexia carefully disconnects the saline drip. “I’ll draw you a bath, no doubt you’ll feel better after a hot soak.”

Keeping your lips sealed you nod meekly, watching as both elves leave you. Dragging a hand down your face you contemplate the new turn of events. Illexia has gone from manhandling you to treating you with the certain level of reverence. Although he won’t allow you contact with the outside world, he’s doing his best to keep you entertained and happy. Could it be that your blood is affecting him the same way Liona claimed it had, Kandomere? And if so, how much longer before you could use him to help you escape?

“It’s ready.” Illexia strolls over, smile on his face, arm stretched out to help you up. Biting your lip you grasp his forearm and make your way to the bathroom.

“Illexia?” You watch from the corner of your eye as he turns to you with a smile. “What injury did the high priest remove?”

His eyes narrow slightly. “You’d cut your arm, Kandomere informed us it happened as you lost your footing and caught yourself on the corner of the table.” He pauses by the bathtub and slowly tucks a lock of hair behind your ear. “I assumed you’d done it intentionally to cover my bite.”

He’d always been careful when he bit you, ensuring it was somewhere that couldn’t be seen, and you’d wondered more than once if that was a self preservation thing. Making a split decision you turn your body to his and nod.

“I thought you might get in trouble if the High Priest found out that you’d bit me so I—“

The lie rolls off your tongue and his reaction is perfect. Cupping your cheek, he closes his eyes and exhales. “Indeed I would. You’re not to be untouched but after that first taste I couldn’t stop.” His eyes open and you gasp in surprise. His pupils are huge, obliterating any hint of the iridescent blue of his iris.

“Y/n,” Illexia checks over his shoulder before lowering his voice, “do not fear me, I will do everything in my power to protect you. I cannot shield you from the High Priest but no other will come near you. You have shown your loyalty to me and I will repay it. What ever I can do to please you, however you wish to command me, you have earned it.”

Well, this was an interesting development.

Schooling your features to hide your glee, you purse your lips and drop your head. “Thank you, Illexia.” There’s more you want to say but you need to bide your time. You want to ask for a phone, for access to the internet, for Liona’s head on a plate but it’s too soon. Assuming he’s not playing any sort of game, you could use him to escape but you need more time to up the level of
trust and fill him with more of your blood.

Stripping out of your clothes, you don’t even attempt to conserve your modesty. You’ve grown accustomed to him seeing every inch of your body so what’s the point. Sinking below the hot, scented water you try and slow your thoughts and calm your racing heart.

How much longer could you survive both Illexia and the High Priest taking your blood? And what of Kandomere, he’d had a stomach full so was he going to turn back into the elf he’d been before? There were so many unanswered questions but one in particular burned brighter than the rest. Was now the right time to ask?

Chewing on your bottom lip you contemplated the possible outcomes. You needed to know if Montehugh had escaped. You suspected not and it terrified you to think of the state he may be in, assuming he was still alive.

“What vexes you?” A tilted head and narrowed eyes meet your blank stare as you turn your head.

“How— no, never mind, its nothing.”

“Please, pet, speak. I promised you no harm and I meant it.”

Like you’d trust the word on an elf. Still, the temptation was great.

“The federal agent I was with—“

“Ah, Kandomere’s partner? What of him?”

Dropping your gaze you blurt out, “Is he alive?”

Every muscle bunches in tense anticipation and you grip the top of the bath tightly.

“He’s fine. He’s back at work, all be it pointlessly. The High Priest felt it would draw too much attention if he disappeared so he returned him to the MTF building under Kandomere’s watchful eye.”

What? This didn’t make sense. If Montehugh knew—

“He used the wand to alter his memory.” You voice your suspicions and Illexia chuckles.

“Come, let’s get you bathed and then you can eat, the High Priest will want to see you soon, he has something special planned for today.”
Chapter Forty One

Chapter Notes

Warnings for violence

The something special Illexia had promised was anything but. The High Priest was a sick, twisted elf who controlled a very powerful, bloodthirsty coven and each member you’d happened across was as vile as their master. They were blackhearted monsters, corrupted by an evil so dark it filled the air with thick, oppressive tension.

You’d been dragged through the throng of perverted magic users and forced to your knees in front of the shrouded figure of the High Priest. After a lot of Öväsi he’d cut your wrist with a small, crystal blade and dribbled your hot blood into a ceremonious goblet, much to salivating crowds pleasure. You’d watched in absolute terror as they’d drawn back their lips to scent the air and run their greedy tongues over deadly teeth.

Illexia had positively growled at the scene as he’d held you close whilst the High Priest had blessed your ‘offering’.

Offering! Like you’d willingly allow this.

“Don’t watch.” Illexia had whispered into your ear, pressing you against him and encouraging your face away. Of course you’d ignored him, turning your gaze to the small crowd.

Your eyes had tracked the High Priest as he’d moved closer to the gathered elves, a grimace on his face, the cup containing your blood held aloft. As he’d neared the group a hushed awe had descended over the coven until the only sounds audible to your ears were the heavy, laboured breathes of the murderous elves and your own heartbeat.

With revulsion you held back the urge to vomit as the dozen elves had all been allowed a small drop of your blood. The overwhelming repulsion had quickly morphed to fear as one by one their pupils shrank to pinpricks and their gazes landed on you. It was at that point you’d held onto Illexia tightly and buried your face in his chest, too fearful of the other to care about your hatred of the blonde elf.

He’d shushed you, his lips ghosting over the shell of your ear as his silky hair covered you, acting as a barrier. But then he’d been given the honour of cleaning up your wound and what fresh hell that had brought. Made to sit on a throne before the clan wanting to drain you, Illexia had licked your wrist clean, demanding you make eye contact the entire time. The nausea had almost become too much when he’d stood, bringing his crotch level to your eyes and showing just how much he’d enjoyed his part in this debauchery.

You’d all but collapsed with relief when it had finally ended and you’d been escorted back to you room. Now tucked away in your suite, your knees drawn up to your chest, your pulse still racing at the memory, you shiver despite the ambient temperature.

“You’re cold.” Kandomere says softly, his voice lacking the usual disgust.
You raise your eyes, flinching as your gazes connect. He looks different, friendlier, more like the elf you love and it cuts deep. Screwing your face up you tuck it into your knees to avoid his concern. Cold and distant Kandomere was easy to hate but the way he’s looking at you now is stirring up a cesspit of buried emotions you simply can’t deal with.

Gentle hands run over the tops of your arms causing you to startle out of your position. Bolting up you’re taken aback as Kandomere wraps a blanket around you before backing away.

“I’m not cold,” you snap, despite the urge to draw the soft fleecy material tighter.

“You are. You’re loosing blood on a daily basis and looking at you you’re showing all the signs of being in shock. I’m uncertain how much longer you’re mental health will withstand this onslaught.”

You can’t help the bark of angry laughter that leaves you. “And why the fuck would you even care.”

His eyes narrow in thoughtful contemplation before he answers. “I believe I’m being manipulated by magic.”

You stare, open mouthed at the elf who sits himself down in the chair beside you. “What happened?” Your quiet whisper is laced with pain. “When did you become a supporter of the Inferni?”

He frowns a little, his focus drifting to the middle distance as he contemplates your question. “I wouldn’t say I support them, just her.”

“Li—?”

The dangerous flash in his eye makes you snap your mouth shut before you finish her name. Instantly Kandomere’s features soften again.

“Things have been hazy and my memories blocked by darkness. I was unaware of anything but my orders until I scented your fresh blood yesterday.”

You gape at him with wide eyes, dumbfounded as to why he’s suddenly talking to you in this manner.

“Why?” His bright eyes move to yours. “Why would your blood affect me so?”

There’s a strange innocence behind his eyes that leaves you feeling you sick. Of everyone who had ever let you down or betrayed you, he was the worst. Yet you’re still compelled to try and help him, to ease his pain and confusion even though the biggest part of you is seething with him.

“Do you remember me?” You ask timidly. “From before?”

His eyes bore into yours as the crease between his brows deepens. “Before what?”

“I only know what she told me. I was unaware we’d met previously.” There’s hesitation in his voice. “Tell me! Why do I crave your blood so intensely? Why did it affect me so yesterday? Why do I feel like I’m waking from a deep sleep?”

Is this a trick? Is he toying with you to try and hurt you all over again? What if he is and you’re
falling for it?

What if he isn’t? A small voice whispers in the back of your troubled mind.

“We were together.” It’s a good job he has enhanced hearing as your voice is so small you doubt he’d have caught it otherwise. “I was running from the Inferni and you were the Special Agent In Charge at the MTF.”

He closes his eyes, almost as if he’s in pain.

“I was hunted down because I’m a Bright but you… You kept me safe, until Alexo anyway, well,” you shrug and look away unable to tell him the full story. “I came to you for help. You told me your parents had been killed by the Inferni but I don’t know… I don’t know if anything you said was the truth, given my current situation I’m going to guess not.”

Silence descends as you both disappear into your heads to sort through what’s been said. After a while he inhales through his nose and stands up. Crossing his arms over his chest he looks down at you and your heart literally skips a beat. This Kandomere you know, this was the Kandomere you’d fallen in love with. Biting your lip you look away, as angry at yourself for allowing him to hurt you again as you are heartbroken.

“When you say we were together, what exactly do you mean?”

You’re grateful for the blanket now. Pulling it tight you sigh. “Together together.” You can’t hide the crack in your voice.

“I bit you.” It’s a statement. “I bit you multiple times.”

Without looking at him you nod.

“I want to bite you again,” he mutters darkly, “I want to do more than just bite you.”

A jolt of fear and adrenaline has you scrambling up the bed and away from his predatory stare.

“I want you, Y/n. You are mine, I know it, I just—“ Stiffly he moves away putting distance between you, much to your relief. Glancing around the room he scowls deeply. “Who can I trust?”

Again his question knocks you off kilter. “You? What?”

In the blink of an eye he’s next to you, clasping your hand between both of his. “I don’t know who I am but since biting you yesterday I’m beginning to realise I don’t belong here. I don’t fit. It’s like I have an itch in my brain and I can’t quite reach it but you, being around you soothes it slightly. Who are you? Who are you to me?”

Your head is spinning and you are trying your damnedest to push the rising hope down. You won’t let him do this to you again. It’s a cruel trick Liona has devised, you’re certain, there’s no way…

“I loved you.” You choke on the words, gritting your teeth to help force them out. “I loved you and you betrayed me so you can go to hell if you think this little performance is going to work.”

He’s looking at you like you haven’t spoken, his greedy eyes roaming your face before settling on your trembling lips. Biting harshly on your lower lip you curse your uncontrollable emotions.

“I know you,” he breathes, searching your eyes.

To stem the flood of overpowering feelings you bite harder until inevitably you taste blood. You
realise your mistake a moment too late as Kandomere slides his hand into your hair and crashes his mouth against yours. But instead of drinking the crimson leaking from your lip, he kisses you softly, sighing long and low through his nose as he holds you against himself.

“Mi alma.” His mouth is still on yours as he reverently whispers the words.

Another blink and he’s gone, rushing from the room in a blur of colour leaving you to fall backwards into the plush, extravagant pillows.

Unable to breathe and rapidly blinking to keep the tears at bay you stare, unseeing at the ceiling. What the fuck just happened? What the hell was going on? Could it be real? Could you believe that he’d somehow been under some fucked up spell this whole time? Was it possible?

Alexo.

With the name came the realisation that yes, when it came to the Inferni, anything was possible. But why wait? Liona had been with Kandomere long before you’d shown up, why wait until now to use him?

Your dizziness is intensifying and you can’t keep up with your train of thoughts. What if you’d broken the spell? What if by drinking the amount of your blood he had, you’d infected him again? How the fuck were you supposed to know what was real and what wasn’t? How were you supposed to know?

Confusion, desperation and helplessness swirl in an intensifying cyclone in your mind. Your breathing has sped to an uncomfortable speed and your vision is pulsing in time with your skyrocketing heart beat. What did it all mean if Kandomere had been manipulated? Was there a way out of this? Was there a future? Could you move on? The stronger the doubts and questions the higher your pulse raced. You were trapped between indecision and hope, the conflicting emotions dragging you back and forth until your whole body was physically rocking in time to your unsteady breathing.

“Y/n?”

Through the vortex of emotion, Illexia springs onto the bed, wrapping his arms firmly around you to drag you into his embrace.

“It’s okay, I’m here, be still pet, I’ll take care of you.”

Turning in his arms you climb into his lap, straddling him to wrap your legs around his waist and arms around his neck like a small child would. You don’t care in this moment who he is or what he’s done, you just need grounding. Pain, comfort or shock would do.

“I have you, Y/n, I won’t let you go. I’ll take care of you. Tell me what you need.”

Breathlessly you hold him tight, crying out, “I need to know the truth!”

There’s a howling of wind and you close your eyes against the sudden onslaught that ravages your back and sides. All around you the room seems to shake and rattle as the feelings finally take over your body and mind. Your loose hair is whipping all around you and a deafening roar fills your ears, accompanied by the ceaseless trembling in your entire body.

“Y/n!” Illexia shouts your name but you can’t hear him above the tumultuous emotions running through you.
Letting out a scream, you release all the energy that is trying to rip you apart from the inside, pushing it out through your fingers, your voice, your tense muscles. You shriek loud and long until your last muscle lets go and you flop forward against the heaving chest of the elf supporting you.

You’re spent again but this time it feels good, this time it leaves you with an afterglow that bathes you from head to toe in a blissful relaxed state. Clinging to Illexia you breathe slowly and blink open your eyes, not caring that your hair is covering your face and blocking your view.

“Y/n!” Illexia gasps. “What have you done?” The fear in his voice makes you sit up and pay attention. Pushing the hair out of your eyes you look around in disbelief. The suite you’re in is decimated, blown to smithereens. The whole side of the building has been ripped out, including the furniture, the only thing left standing in the entire disaster zone is the bed you’re on.

“Y/n?”

Blinking rapidly you meet his light blue eyes with confusion. What the hell had just happened?

“Ilexia? Y/n?”

Shouts from within the building can just be discerned over the sudden blaring sirens but neither of you move.

“You are so much more than I was led to believe.” Illexia murmurs, tucking your hair behind your ears and cupping your face. “You will make a fine Priestess—“

“Release her!” Kandomere shouts, enraged as he rushes through the broken doorway and storms through the remains of the room towards you.

Illexia laughs arrogantly, but stops abruptly when Kandomere leans over his shoulder and grabs him by the throat with one hand, with his other he gently pushes you off the elf. Landing with a slight bounce you back away as the two elves square up to one another, both of them snarling in Övüsi.

Above the growing crescendo of noise a third voice joins the melee, yet again speaking words you don’t understand but you know the tone. Whoever is talking is panicked and whatever is said makes Illexia look over at you. That’s when Kandomere strikes.

A stream of crimson spurts out in an arc, covering the room and Kandomere, but he doesn’t stop. He tears at the other elf, growling and animalistic until Illexia hits the floor, gripping at his neck with slick hands.

Once he’s sure he’s bested his rival Kandomere holds out his bloodied hand toward you. “Come!”

Without knowing what to do you move off the bed slowly, your eyes darting between the two elves.

“No!” Illexia gurgles, somehow managing to stop the life-force from draining out of himself completely. “Don’t.”

“Yes! Come with me, Y/n.” Kandomere urges, waiting with his arm outstretched.

Time is of the essence, you know that, but you’re unable to choose. If you were ever going to escape it would be now only who did you trust the most? Illexia was Inferni, he’d tortured you and drank your blood, but Kandomere, wasn’t he just as bad?
“Come with me now and I’ll keep you safe.” Kandomere states, his gaze imploring you to believe him.

Taking a breath you close your eyes and step forward. You’ve no idea if what you’re doing is right but at this point could things get any worse? Gritting your teeth you push forward, willing your legs to run and with a shove you pass the elves, skirting out of the door and around the corner before either have reacted. However your attempt at freedom is short lived as an arm wraps around your waist and hoists you up.

“I know who I am now.” Kandomere says quietly, picking you up and striding towards the elevator at the end of the hall. Covering your mouth with his hand he inhales, “Do as I say and I’ll keep you safe.”

As the elevator doors open, a large group of people spill out. Kandomere is quick to manoeuvre you both aside and out of view until the coast is clear, then with stealth, he slips into the elevator and hits the button for the basement. You’re reeling from everything and far too weak to fight him so you hang limply in his hold close your eyes.

Breaking away from the hand over your mouth you glare at the elf over your shoulder. “I will never trust you again, Kandomere.” You shake your head violently. “I couldn’t even if I wanted to because I hate you. I hate you!”
Kandomere grips you tight all the way to the basement. As the doors open he crosses to the nearest car and bundles you inside, his narrowed eyes and pursed lips warning you not to try and run again. You won’t, there’s little point, he’s far too fast. Instead you sit and contemplate what had happened upstairs. Clearly it was your doing, you’d felt the magic leaving you, felt it carry away your anger, hurt and fear, but you hadn’t meant for it to rip apart a building. You hadn’t even been aware you could do that without a wand. It seemed you had a lot to learn.

“How did you do that? Do you have a wand?”

Pulling out of the garage Kandomere weaves through the plethora of emergency vehicles easily, heading out of the city.

“I don’t know.” There’s no point hiding your ignorance. “It just… Happened. And no, I don’t have a wand, if I did I’d have gotten out of there weeks ago. Alone!” You glare at him pointedly.

God, you hate him. His stupid hair, his perfect lips, his beautiful breathtaking eyes. Everything about him makes you angry and it takes all your will power not to reach across and punch him in his ridiculously defined jaw.

He side eyes you warily. “Your magic is unstable.”

“No fucking shit.” Gritting your teeth you turn away and ball your hands into fists.

After a momentary pause he inhales and asks softly. “Tell me what happened.”

You’re hit by how monumentally stupid his question is. Unable to contain your disdain you turn back and sneer, “Didn’t I just fucking say? I. Don’t. Know!” If looks could kill he’d be twelve feet under because six just wasn’t far enough.

“Not that.” He tuts. “I mean with you. What happened?”

He’s making no sense and it’s intensifying your rage.

“There’s been a whole shit tonne of fuckery since the fucking day I was unfortunate enough to meet you, so ya wanna narrow it down a bit?” You’re so furious you’re vibrating and only the death grip you have on the seat stops your hands from trembling.

He glances over at you before he clarifies. “I keep having day dreams, many of which include you, but I don’t recognise anything else.” He exhales and shakes his head. “I see a building, high security and an office. There’s a human there. A man.”
“Red hair and beard? Looks like a stunted giant?” You raise a brow.

He nods enthusiastically. “Yes.”

“That’s your partner — was your partner,” you correct quickly.

“I’m a special agent for the MTF.” His eyes narrow. “I know that but it doesn’t seem… right.”

Running a hand through your hair you blow out an angry breath. “I don’t get you, what the fuck are you doing? Where are you taking me?”

He frowns and with hesitation answers slowly. “We’re going to Liona.”

There was a time that statement would have made your blood run cold but now it just incites you. Let him take you to that bitch and then he can watch as you tear her apart, atom by atom. You’d managed to destroy a hotel room, you’re sure as shit you can kill her.

Nodding slightly he continues. “She’s the only one who can answer my questions.”

You’re thrown by that little add on. “What questions?”

Again he looks across at you and this time he offers you a small, friendly smile. “She lied about you. She told me you were trying to destroy the city. That you’d magically ensnared me to do your bidding, forced me to kill my family, that you’d almost killed her.”

Your jaw drops at the ludicrousness of his words.

“I want to know the truth.” He states simply, like it’s the most obvious thing in the world. “I want to know why she lied, who you are, who you are to me.”

A startled laugh falls from your lips. “I’m the idiot who came to you for help and fell in love with a fucking elf. I’m the Bright who stole an Inferni wand and hid it only to be kidnapped by the psycho I’d been running from after you and your MTF men couldn’t protect me.” With each passing second your volume increases until you are shouting in his face. “I’m the fucking moron that allowed you to bite me and fuck me, and deceive me into thinking you loved me too until you didn’t, until she filtered my magic from your blood.” Clamping your mouth closed you sink into the seat, all the fight seeping out in the realisation that maybe you weren’t as innocent in all this as you’d like to believe.

“So it’s true then? What she said?”

Your shoulders drop. In a way, it was true. At least some of it. “I was running from the Inferni. I didn’t want to hurt anyone. The magic thing is… Complicated but no, you told me the Inferni had killed your parents. I had nothing to do with that one.”

“I don’t remember—“ Kandomere grips the wheel tightly. “I see things I don’t understand, dream of scenarios based around you. And then I bit you— I felt a connection, our connection.”

“Yeah, that’d be the magic.”

Lapsing into silence you watch as the landscape changes and the roads become emptier.

“The Inferni will be looking for you,” he suddenly announces.

“Yeah.”
“They’ll kill me for betraying them.”

“Well, in all honesty, given your past record, they really should have seen it coming.” The barb brings a smile to your face that you don’t try to hide.

“Do you—” He purses his lips. “I fear Liona has been magically manipulating me. You said you’d done something similar. How?”

Shrugging you shake your head. “Dunno. That’s just what she said.”

“And you believed her?”

Running both hands through your hair this time you weigh up his question before shrugging again. Yes, you had and maybe that was yet another mistake to add to your very long, ever growing list.

“Okay…” He sounds cautious as he looks at you from the corner of his eye. “May I propose a mutually beneficial arrangement, for the time being?”

Oh great, this should be interesting.

“Would you consider staying with me at a neutral venue and telling me your story. I’m… Trying to distinguish what’s real and I feel you can help. In return I’ll protect you from the Inferni and anyone who may come looking until you decide otherwise.”

Yeah, you’d been right. Very fucking interesting. Your first instinct is to tell him to go fuck himself but you bite your tongue. Realistically you know he has you at his mercy. Besides, weighing up your options you can’t deny he’d taken you from the Inferni and was supposedly heading to Liona so there was no logical reason for him to lie to you at this point. After all, they were your two biggest enemies.

Tilting your head you consider his proposal. “Where do you suggest we go?”

“There’s a motel a few miles away—“

“And you know this how?”

He smiles and nods out of the window. “There was a sign a mile back.”

It could be a trap. It feels like a trap but some part of you is still nagging quietly at you to acquiesce.

“Two rooms?” You grind out in a huff.

“One room, twin beds,” he counters.

“I don’t trust you.” You glare at him, flinching as he quickly turns to you and bares his teeth.

“You shouldn’t, at least not yet, not until I can straighten out my mind and memories.”

Holding your ground stubbornly you stare at him with disbelief, “You’re really not selling this to me, Blue.”

And just like that his expression changes and he’s morphed into the elf you once knew.

“I always liked when you called me that, mi alma.”
At his sudden personality change you gasp audibly and he frowns, both of you obviously shook by his sudden personality change. Could he really have been manipulated by the Inferni all this time? Was your Kandomere still inside somewhere? Was it at all possible.

As the car tyres eat up the tarmac you fall back into the uncomfortable silence. You don’t know what the fuck is happening so you opt to alleviate your annoying thoughts by hatching a plan of escape for when you arrive at the motel. You aren’t one hundred percent sure you’re going to need it given the way the elf is dancing with his dual personality but it eased your turbulent mind knowing you’re at least considering getting away.

Pulling into the parking lot, he throws the car into park and turns his whole body to face you.

“As a show of trust I’m going to leave you here with the doors unlocked whilst I sort a room. I know you have no reason to stay, no reason to want to help me at this juncture however, I hope you do because I,” his silvery gaze sweeps your face before his eyes close, “I am quite sure my feelings for you were true, and I hope to fill in the blanks in order to prove this to be so.” In the next breath he exits the car and crosses the lot without once glancing back.

It’s a test. You know it is. He’ll be able to hear if you run and as has already been proven, he can outrun you with ease. At least, that’s what you tell yourself as you remain seated, toying with your seat belt and biting your lip.

Minutes pass and still you wait. It’s stupid, after everything he’d put you through you’re still willing to let him stab you in the back and it kills you that you’re so weak, but here you are. Letting out a breath in a pained growl you slam your head back against the headrest and grit your teeth. If he came back with her you’d bathe the car lot in their blood. He doesn’t though. Instead he strides back with a key dangling from his hand and a questioning tilt of the head.

“Shall we?” He asks, opening your door for you.

Glaring, you get out and cross your arms. “I’ll kill you if I have to.”

He reaches out, a soft closed lipped smile pulling at his mouth as his hand traces the air by your face. “I think it was your fire that drew me to you.” Looking away to the middle distance he chuckles, “I think you started out hating me and I won you over.” His eyes snap back to yours and the smile drops, “I need to know what happened, Y/n. Please.”

You stare at him, drinking it all in before pushing out a body wracking sigh. You didn’t trust him and he’d betrayed you but given everything you’d done under the Inferni’s influence you were willing to let him have one night, and then tomorrow, you’d be gone.
Chapter Forty Three

The room is basic and Kandomere’s obvious displeasure at his surroundings, amuses you. You had to give him his dues though. It was a good idea to stay here, after all, who would think to look for an elf in a motel? Not that they didn’t use them, but usually it was for by-the-hour purposes rather than actual accommodation. You’d heard the stories often enough. Elves seducing human women, taking them to cheap motels in order to have their way before disappearing back into the night. It was sadly, all too common and the women all too willing. But looking at Kadomere now you knew he’d never do such a thing, the level of disgust he’s showing as he glares around the room proves he’d never frequented such a lowly establishment before.

“This is one of the nicer ones.” You comment, enjoying his horrified expression as you drop down onto the bed.

“I am rather regretting my decision to stop here,” he sighs.

“Really? I’m not.” He squirms uneasily, making you chuckle at his discomfort. “Okay, so let’s get down to it shall we? Do you remember anything about your work with the MTF? Can you remember the photographs I sent to you of the Vegas incident?”

His eyes narrow as he focusses internally and searches through his memories. Slowly he nods. “Yes… Humans and elves burnt alive in a back street in Vegas.”

“Yeah, the humans were killed by the Inferni, the elves, all part of the Vegas Coven, were killed by me.” Biting your bottom lip you push away the memories. “I hadn’t realised it at the time but it had been a test for me. The Inferni wiped my memory and wanted to see where my loyalties were at. I sent the images to you, went off and hid the wand then came to your help.

Kandomere tilts his head upwards and squints. “I don’t recall meeting you.”

Sighing you cross your legs and try to get comfortable on the cheap comforter. “Alright, so what do you remember?”

He rubs his chin slowly. “I remember the MTF building. I was working with Liona and some humans. I vividly recall bringing you in, the hunt and the carnage in the street. I remember you killing several of my men with your wand.” He glares at you, his eyes conveying his rising fury. “I know I came to see you in X-cre where Liona and Delavore informed me of the full extent of your magical crimes. I watched you in your cell as she told me how you were the Bright who’d murdered my family.”

You swallow nervously as his temperament changes. His hands curl into fists, he clenches his teeth and his muscles bunch. He’s getting ready to strike. Quietly and as non threatening as possible you hold ip your hands in surrender.

“Those memories are lies.”

“You tried to kill me!” He roars, lunging towards you and seizing your neck in one, large hand, pinning you down to the bed.

“I loved you.” Your protest is weak as he squeezes your airway. “She lied to y—“

“No! I remember it all now.” He looms over you, full of rage and revenge. “I remember pledging myself to Liona and then suddenly my parents were murdered and—”
Your nerves tingle and you know that any minute now you’re going to be consumed by the panic that’s clawing at you to fight. But you can’t, fighting this will only make it worse, make him worse. You have to stay calm and submissive.

“Not true!” You wheeze. “Remember!” Gripping hold of his wrist you implore him to remember the truth, moving your lips to mouth the word over and over.

Scowling he glares down at your hands that are now fastened to his arm and glowing.

“Remember.” Your voice is a hoarse whisper but what ever you’re doing is working. His hands slacken just enough to allow you to fill your lungs. “Please, remember the truth!”

Your desperate plea causes your hands to glow brighter and you watch in trepidation as his eyes take on the same light. His brows pull down and his pupils illuminate with what look like tiny fireworks being let off inside his skull. As his features soften he meets your worried gaze, the beautiful constellation of stars in his eyes seemingly unaffecting his vision. Although his hand is still at your throat he is no longer gripping. It’s now laid against your flesh trembling.

His breathing speeds until he’s panting and you can see his angry mask slipping. In a low and gentle voice, heavy with remorse he admits, “I remember. I remember it all.”

At his words your tensed muscles relax and you gulp down a breath of air. Releasing your hands from his arm you let them flop down on the mattress next to you, allowing him to back away. Staring up at the cracked ceiling you slow your breathing, trying to steady your racing heart. You’d been inches from serious harm but you weren’t out of the woods yet. Kandomere was far from stable and you were very aware of how easily he could snap in this fragile state.

“What have I done?” He mutters.

Remorse pours out of the elf and he falls to his knees mumbling apologies over and over. Glancing at him out of the corner of your eye you see him weave his hands into his hair and push it back, out of his face before he tilts his chin to look at you. His eyes are glassy with unshed tears but his mouth is set in a determined line.

“I will make her pay for what she has done!”

His gravelly threat sends a shard of ice running down your spine and the murderous glint in his eye terrifies you enough to kick start your heart back into racing mode. You’d been on the wrong end of that expression before, you knew it was time to run.

Although run was exactly the wrong thing to do. You needed to play it safe, use your brain instead of your instinct. Sitting up slowly you edge away from the danger. Of course he notices straight away.

Impulsively he reaches out to grab you but as his fingers make contact he snatches back his arm. “I—” Down cast eyes convey his regret. “Your magic is strong, Y/n. Stronger than Liona’s. You’ve broken her spell. She’s been using magic on me for the better part of a year, I understand, I see it all now.” His voice is so quiet you have to strain to hear him.

“It—“ Your voice is barely more than a husky whisper, and it shakes with fear. Inhaling you bite your bottom lip and carefully manoeuvre off the bed, putting distance between you and Kandomere. “There was a store. We need food and water. I’ll just—“ You creep towards the door at an agonisingly torturous speed. Your whole body protests and your hindbrain screams at you to just fucking run! But logic overpowers the desperation and somehow you’re able to stay on your
“Mi amor.” Pain flashes across his face. “My love was true, it was she who infected me with magic, not you. You freed me, your magic sought me out and severed the hold hers had over me. Everything she told you was a lie. Please, at least understand before you leave me…” As the first tear slips down his cheek he moves his gaze to yours. “I never loved her. She bound me to her magically, until you came along she had me partially under her enthralment. But you broke it. You freed me. You are a light in the darkness where magic is concerned. The Inferni know this now, they know they cannot turn you so they will use you, drain you, distract you. They’re afraid of what you’re capable of.”

He looks so sincere that for the briefest of moments you consider believing him. For a split second you falter in your resolve and pause to consider his words. He sees your hesitation and jumps on it, talking quickly.

“Your magic, when you brought me back from death’s door, it burned hers away but it also altered my natural balance so when she filtered it out to save you I was left unprotected, meaning she was able to introduce her own blood magic without any barriers. After just two treatments she had me and I didn’t even know it.”

Reflexively you shake your head. “How can I believe you?”

Closing his eyes he allows the tears to fall freely. “I don’t know.”

Ripping open your heart your throat closes again but this time its from the thickness of the emotion trying to smother you. “I really did love you.”

He bows lower under the weight of your admission.

“But I can’t stay. The trust is gone and I’ve no more left to give. I’m so sorry.”

Slipping out through the door without a backward glance, you lean hard against the outside wall. You know what you’re doing is hypocritical, after all you killed him and he forgave you, but you just can’t stay. You can’t keep questioning his every move, analysing his every word trying to decipher if its genuine or not. And you can’t go back, not to X-Cre, the MTF of the Inferni. There was no safety for you, not anymore, no place to hide so you’d have to keep running, like you should have done in the first place.

Dashing at the tears tracking down your cheeks, you straighten your back and tug at the bottom of your shirt. With no where to go and no place to call home you did the only thing you could think of, and put one foot in front of the other.

On autopilot and with your heart arguing with your every step, you move, silently reiterating every reason you had to leave.

Yes, you still loved him but you’d meant what you’d say about the trust. There was simply too much water under the bridge. Sometimes love wasn’t enough. Before you realised it you’d left the motel behind in the distance.

“See,” you whispered to yourself, “you can do this.”

Ignoring the heaviness in your heart that seemed to double with every step, you pushed forward. You’d avoid area’s with elves, you could do that. There were towns without elves, granted they were broken, dilapidated and overrun with vermin, but you could live with that. You could live with anything after what you’d survived.
Even a broken heart? A taunting voice sneered in the back of your mind. Gritting your teeth you shoved the thought away and doubled your speed, trying to convince yourself that you were doing the right thing.

“It’s for the best,” you chanted, before sticking out your thumb and praying that you’d get lucky with a ride.
Chapter Forty Four

The temperature drops fast leaving you feeling exposed and cold. The clothes you’re wearing aren’t exactly suitable for hiking down the road in the middle of the night and you can’t stop the sporadic shivers making your muscles dance. Despite all the bravado you’d exhibited back at the motel, you’re regretting your decision with every laborious step. Not that you can turn back, you’re in too deep, you’ve come too far and you meant what you’d said. There was no trust between you and Kandomere, no way for you to work together without constant checking over your shoulder. You just wished you’d had more of a plan than simply ‘walk away’.

Cursing your lack of everything you pull your arms tighter around your torso and trudge on. This was not going to be pretty or fun but needs must. Staying off the grid was going to prove tricky without any money, you were going to have to beg, steal and borrow, all of which meant possible exposure, but what choice did you have?

Shaking out your tense arms you try to piece together a plan. You need clothes, that was the first port of call. The Inferni would have spies everywhere so you’d need to disguise yourself as best you could. Next was transportation. Hitching a ride would be too risky and you’d no idea how to hotwire a vehicle. You’ve no money for a bus but the train might work if you were careful. You’d done it once or twice in the past, dodging the guard when you’d not had enough money to buy a ticket, so maybe you could pull it off again.

Hours roll past and your resolve shakes more times than you’d care to admit. The trepidation of what’s ahead almost enough to scare you into turning around. As dawn threatens to break you’re just crossing a quiet intersection, heading towards the nearest train station when a sleek black car rolls to a stop in front of you, blocking your path. Tucking your chin to your chest you attempt a surreptitious side step only to be halted by the call of your name.

“Y/n, it’s me, Ross. Get in!”

For a brief second your heart freezes. How the fuck had he found you? Biting your tongue you drop your head lower and turn around quickly scurrying away. It’s not that you don’t want to go with Ross, quite the opposite in fact, it’s that you can’t. You won’t because you’re a danger to him. To them all.

During the hours spent walking you’d unpicked everything and arrived at a depressing conclusion. Everyone you knew had been hurt or killed because of you. The Vegas slaughter had been to test you, all those people dead because you weren’t a decent enough liar. And Kandomere he’d been holding his own against Liona’s magic until you came along and fucked it all up. Then there was Montehugh, Ross and Ford who had all been living normal MTF lives until you showed up and inadvertently screwed them over. Every time something had gone wrong it was a direct result of the Inferni’s desire to hurt or have you. You were the catalyst that caused every single explosion, so it was your responsibility to make sure it didn’t happen again. Which meant no more contact with the MTF.

Picking up your pace, you hurry away trying to figure out how in the hell he’d managed to find you. There was no way this was a coincidence, Kandomere had to be involved somehow.

“Y/n! C’mon, don’t do this.” Agent Ross pleaded, his hushed tone carrying down the deserted street.

Ignoring him you retrace your steps. There was an alley a little way up the road that would offer
you a shortcut through the buildings that he wouldn’t be able to follow down in a vehicle. With any luck he’d get the message and leave you the hell alone without the need to literally run.

Straining, you listen over the sound of your heart pounding in your ears for any signs of the agent following you. There are no footsteps but you detect the soft purr of the cars engine. Not wanting to risk it you break into a gentle jog, closing the distance between you and your destination. Reaching the entrance you dart into the gloom, hugging the wall to try and blend into the shadows.

*How had Ross found you?*

The question buzzes noisily through your mind and as you run you begin patting down your clothing. Kandomere had planted a tracking device on you once before, it wasn’t beyond reason to think he could have done it again.

You’re about halfway down the alley when you notice it branching off at a right angle, the entrance having been concealed by a large stack of trash. Without giving it much thought you change direction and sprint into the smaller space, rushing towards the light at the far end.

This passageway is much smaller and as you progress it grows darker until you’re struggling to see where you’re putting your feet. Rubbish litters the floor, tripping you and causing you to stumble and mutter under your breath. Taking a moment you flatten your back against the wall and cock your head, listening for any sounds that might indicate Ross is following. Blissful silence is all you can hear and for a moment you breathe deeply and relax. Maybe your luck had finally turned. Closing your eyes you tilt your head back and lean heavily against the dirty wall. You were going to have to get much better at running and hiding if you wanted to survive!

Still, *how had Ross found you?*

Again you drag your hands over your clothes, checking the seams and pockets carefully. When you come up empty handed you grab a shoe and examine that in the dim light. When that offers no answers you tug at the other only to be interrupted by a soft, accented voice you know well.

“I’ve been following you.”

Whipping around you try and pinpoint the location the voice came from without success. A sigh floats through the air, filled with tension.

“I had hoped you would trust Agent Ross and let him help you but you remain stubborn to the end.”

“Leave me alone!”

Finally he reveals himself, stepping into the light at the end of the alley and strolling forward. He looks polished and at ease with his hands in his trouser pockets. “You have nothing and are being hunted by the Inferni. Tell me, mi amor, how am I supposed to allow you to simply walk away knowing you are walking to your death?”

“So you, what? Pull this stunt just to prove a point? I was right not to trust you, you’re—“ Words fail you as your mind tries in vain to wrap itself around what Kandomere has done. “This is—“

“We need to regroup. Fast. I allowed you space to think but the Inferni are moving and they will stop at nothing to get to you.” He checks over his shoulder, a contemplative expression rendering is face peaceful. After a sigh he moves to stand in front of you. “Y/n, they’ve seen what you’re capable of and that strength of magic is exactly what they’ve spent centuries looking for.”
“I know, that’s why I was running—”

“You do not understand the ferocity of their hunger for your power. Now they have witnessed it they will stop at nothing.” His brows furrow and he tentatively reaches towards you only to point towards the end of the small alley. “Please, go with Ross. Time is of the essence.”

Gripping hold of your hips you straighten your back and stand tall. “No! I am more than capable of hiding from the Inferni.”

“No you aren’t, not now! You don’t understand—”

“Look, if you’re that concerned give me money. That I’ll take! Anything else you offer though is a no. I don’t trust you,” glancing over his shoulder you see Ross pull up to the kerb, “any of you.”

“The high priest, he is one of many. As we speak they are gathering a handful of high priest and priestesses and Brights to cast a very powerful locator spell. They will know where you are by the end of the day. The only thing that will stop this,” he swallows nervously, his discomfort putting you even more on edge, “is magic.”

You snort in disbelief. “You’re the MTF—“

“Yes! So we know all the magic users strong enough to protect you.” Crossing his arms he inhales deeply, his chest pushing out and making him appear even more large and threatening. “It’s non negotiable. Hate me all you like, I care not if it keeps you alive.”

“Oh, how noble of you.” The acrid retort does nothing to alleviate the thick tension in the small, squalid passageway.

Lowering his hands to his sides, Kandomere sighs heavily. “I love you, Y/n. I don’t expect you to believe or trust me, not after everything, but I do, and because of that love I am selfish. I will not let you go. I have put things in place to keep you safe and with or without your blessing, they will happen.”

He sounds so sure of himself despite his glum expression and it stirs your irrational anger. You’ve been controlled for too long, despite his intentions you won’t allow it to happen again. You have to take charge of your own life.

“I’m not coming in with you Kandomere. I have a plan and I’m going to stick to it. I understand your concern and thank you for the heads up but I’m going to take care of myself now.”

“Y/n, please—”

Shaking your head you move towards the elf. “No. Every time I’ve involved you one of us gets hurts, and that’s in the best case scenarios. I can’t—” pressing your lips into a thin line you search the top of the buildings and early morning sky for the right words to convince him to let you go. “Do what you need to do now that you’re back to being you, and I’ll disappear, make sure they never find me.”

“And how do you propose to keep yourself from their most skilled Brights?” He takes a step closer, closing the gap between you. “The only way is magic—“

“Then I’ll use my magic.”

A soft poignant smile graces his full lips as he reaches out and lays his hand on your cheek, tipping your face to his. “Mi alma, that is exactly what they are looking for, the second you use any magic
they will have you. The very thing you hope will protect you will hand you directly to them.”

*How ironic that this warning should come from you,* you think, lowering your gaze but not your face.

“Work with me. I already have so much in place, help me finish the job. I’m not naive enough to think I can end the Inferni, I am however hopeful that we can damage them significantly.”

“Kand—“

“Y/n, please! I’m begging you. I know how you feel about me, that is why I asked Ross to approach you. You need never see me again if that is your wish, you can speak directly to Montehugh or Ross, just don’t turn down our help, please!” He inches closer until you can feel the warmth seeping out from his body. His scent attacks you as you take a deep breath and for a moment you close your eyes and reminisce. Memories shift through your head carrying moments of happiness and heartache alike. How unfair that yet again, you had to accept his help when being this close to him was causing you untold anguish and confusion.

“Kandomere—“

With your broken whisper he slips his free hand around your waist and draws you against his muscular body. He’s worn you down again and he knows it. Opening your eyes, you somehow manage to remain tense in his embrace, refusing to succumb entirely. Steeling yourself to meet his beautiful eyes you take a second to compose yourself. When you finally speak your voice is full of determination.

“I will go with Ross and I’ll talk to Montehugh but this—“ Reluctantly you push against his hold, backing away until his hands fall from your back. “I can’t see you anymore. This has to be it and when it’s all over you can’t— please let me go.”

The crease you know so well forms between his brows and he lowers his head. Carefully you watch his reaction and as his lashes brush against his cheeks and his eyes close you hear his strained response.

“Then this is our final goodbye, mi amor. Go with grace and know this,” dewy eyes heavy with sorrow glance up to capture your gaze, “you carry my heart with you, it belongs to you. I will live with the eternal hope that one day you might find it in you to forgive me, even though I know I do not deserve it. Te amo mi alma.”

He doesn’t wait around for a reply. Marching swiftly past, he hurries to the end of the alleyway, his footsteps echoing between the tall buildings until they eventually disappear. In the deafening silence you grit your teeth and bite back the sob trying to break free.

This was beyond unfair, this was worse that last night, worse even than the events at X-cre. The looming danger of the Inferni and the unknown you’d tripped into last night had masked the extent of the impact of walking away but in the cold light of day, the goodbye you’d just experience was likely going to be the very thing that ended you.

Torn, once again, by your desire to both run to and away from the elf you ball your fists. The churning in your gut is consuming you and you can feel the approaching tsunami gathering momentum. Oh how you wanted to call out to him, bring him back and fall into his arms but how would that help? You still didn’t trust him.

“C’mon Y/n, we’ve a long drive ahead. Best we get moving.” Ross beckons you to the street and
points to his car. “Get in the back, there’s a blanket and a pillow waiting, you can get some rest on the drive.”

Dragging a hand over our face you walk towards your ride, pushing your emotions further down with each stride forward. A few minutes later you’re laid across the back seat of Ross’s vehicle facing the rear of the car with a warm blanket covering your body. Ignoring everything except the purr of the engine, you lay quietly and wait for sleep.
Chapter Forty Five

The journey took some time but no matter how hard you tried or how exhausted you were you just couldn’t sleep. So you lay quietly, your back turned to the agent driving and mulled over your thoughts. By the time you arrive at your destination, hours later, you’ve managed to accumulate a million more questions but as you turn around to look out of the window you find them all knocked aside apart from one.

“Where the hell are we?”

Ross grins as he opens his door. “Friend’s house. You’ll be safe here.”

Pulling yourself up to a seated position you take in your surroundings. You’re in a small clearing circled by huge trees. A wooden house stands proud in the middle of the clearing and on its porch a young woman with impossibly long hair waves to the agent. It’s a picturesque setting nestled in what looks to be a deep woods that stretch up the side of an imposing mountain range. Above you a curl of smoke drifts up from the chimney to meet with the clouds that hang heavy with a promise of rain.

“C’mon.” Ross knocks on your window before striding up to the stranger and throwing his arms around her. You watch through the windshield as she holds him close and buries her head into the crook of his neck, these two are obviously more than just friends.

Pulling your gaze away you slowly exit the vehicle and continue your appreciation of the vista. It’s gorgeous and a far cry from the cityscape of LA.

“Hey, Y/n, come meet Annabel!” Ross is beckoning you with a relaxed smile and an arm slung around the woman’s waist.

Hesitant and full of caution you approach the porch and climb the steps. You’re enthralled by the scenery having only ever seen anything like it in films but that doesn’t mean you’re relaxed. You don’t know where you are, who this woman is or if you can really trust the agent, after all only a day and a half ago Kandomere was working for the Inferni.

“Magic.” A soft voice declares.

Blinking a few times you turn to greet Annabel, extending your hand formally.

“There are only friends here, no need for that nonsense,” she laughs, batting away your hand and enveloping you in a hug that proves she is far stronger than she looks.

“Annabel, this is Y/n, Y/n, Annabel.” Agent Ross states as he shirks off his jacket and loosens his tie. “Annabel lives here with her mom, a Category C magic user. You’ll be safe here as long as you don’t do any magic yourself.”

“Lovely to make your acquaintance Y/n, now how’s about we get inside and eat? You’ve not eaten I take it?”

Ross chuckles and snatches her hand in his. “No way, not when I knew I was coming here.”

Her answering smile lights up her impish face. “Wonderful, come on now, before the rain comes.”

She leads you both around the side of the house and in through an old rickety door that’s barely
still clinging to it’s hinges. Inside the decor is typical for a holiday home log cabin, it’s comfortable and welcoming with a roaring fire and couches covered with fleecy throws.

Annabel waves at the seating as she bustles away through a door next to the staircase. “Make yourselves at home and I’ll make us all a drink. Mom won’t be long, she’s just dealing with another matter out back.” You catch the last of her sentence just before the heavy door swings shut.

“Alright, talk! What am I doing here? Who are these people and how can they help me?”

Ross loosens his tie and flops down onto the couch opposite the fireplace. “These people are about the only people in the country who can help you. They’re from a long line of magic users and although categorised they have never posed a threat to us, on the contrary, they’ve aided us more times than we’ve had the right to ask.”

“Why should I trust any of you?”

Your blunt question hangs in the air as Ross raises a brow and turns to face you head on. “Because we’re all that’s stopping the Inferni from finding you—“

“And look how well that went last time.”

An agitated sigh breaks through Ross’s composure. “We grossly underestimated their desire for you.”

“Not to mention the sheer size of the operation or how badly they’d infiltrated the MTF,” you snap.

A low hum sounds by the door, making you jump to the side and tense, instinctively waiting for a strike.

“You should have come to us sooner, Andrew.”

A mature woman in a tailored pants suit stands by the door with her hands crossed over her chest and her eyes narrowed. Her long white hair is pulled neatly up into a chignon and her make up is impeccable right down to her manicured nails. She screams sophistication and looks completely out of place in the rural surroundings.

“Never the less,” her smooth voice carries over the crackling of the flames, “you’re here now and as we can’t change the past with tears or tantrums might as well get on with things.” Her head nods decisively and without another word she heads up the stairs.

“Clarissa, Annabel’s mom.” Ross informs you. “Between the two of them you’ll be undetectable so don’t do anything to piss them off.”

Leaning forward you rest your forearms on your thighs and lay your head in your hands. Sighing deeply you consider Clarissa’s advice, of course she was right, nothing you did now would alter the past but that didn’t mean it could be so easily dismissed.

“Look,” Ross matched your exhale and softened his face, “we’re trying, Y/n. Don’t think for one second that we’re brushing over what you went through because of our failures. Montehugh is killing himself over the fact that we let you get taken,” he loosens his tie a little further before sheepishly adding, “twice.” Squaring his shoulders he straightens his back and sits up. “But Clarissa’s right, if we’re too busy focusing on the past we’re gonna fuck up again so I’ll say this once and move on. I’m sorry, I’m so fucking sorry! I lay awake at night thinking about all the possible ways I coulda changed what went down, all the screw ups I made that contributed to what happened, the way I let them wipe my mind. I shoulda known, shoulda somehow done
something… But I didn’t, and I’ll never be able to forgive myself so I’m gonna try and make
amends and this is how.” Heavy remorseful eyes bore into the top of your head, you can feel them
even if you’re not able to meet them. “Kandomere has a fucking good plan, he’s gonna make them
pay and he’s getting you back your freedom — no need to keep running, Y/n — we just need your
co-operation for the next few weeks.”

“The girl knows you’re sorry, Andrew. That doesn’t make her predicament any less scary or
foreign.” Clarissa’s voice floats down the stairs a second before she does. “But you really ought to
try and forgive yourself. The magic used was complex, it was woven deep into your subconscious,
you were no more able to ward it off than stop a thunder storm, it was quite simply out of your
control.”

The older woman inspects her hands as she descends the stairs, only stopping to look at you when
she reaches the ground floor. “This is what the Inferni feed on, the disruption, doubt and shame.
You have all been played by their leaders so son’t waste your time on guilt or anguish, instead get
mad, get even.” A smile graces her face causing her eyes to crinkle and glint with mischief.

“Y/n, darling,” Clarissa strides towards you and extends a hand, “how lovely to meet your
acquaintance.”

As you reach to shake her hand she yanks you into your second hug of the hour, pulling you close.
With hone arm around your shoulder the other smooths your hair and she whispers soft words of
encouragement until you eventually relax your stiff limbs and hug her back.

“Kandomere has told me all about you.”

The sound of his name stings and you flinch before pulling away. You can’t talk about him so you
deflect. “It’s very kind of you to help me but are you sure you know the full story? It’s not safe for
you or your daughter.”

“I'm aware of the entire situation, Y/n. There’s no need to worry, we are all perfectly safe here.”

“Food’s ready!” Annabel chimes loudly from the other room.

Clarissa inclines her head and smiles, “Perfect timing wouldn’t you say?”

Ross chuckles, already well on his way to the kitchen. “For sure.” Holding open the door he looks
at you pointedly, “Shall we?”

With a weary shrug you shuffle away from the strange woman embracing you to follow obediently
into the kitchen.

“Don’t worry, after a good meal and a proper night’s sleep, things won’t seem quite so
overbearing.” Clarissa says softly.

As you reach the doorway you’re hit with the most delicious, mouthwatering smell. As if on cue
your stomach rumbles and reminds you of just how hungry you are.

“Come on then, don’t stand on ceremony, there’s more than enough to go around.” Annabel points
to the table where a vast pot of stew awaits.

“You’ve no idea how good this is gonna be.” Ross chuckles, ushering you to a seat and filling up a
bowl. “Dig in, and when you’re done, we’ll talk through what Agent K has organised.”
You’re warm and your stomach is full as you fight sleep in front of the dying fire. About half an hour ago the storm broke out and despite the flimsy looking front door, the house is doing an excellent job of sheltering you although you suspect that’s down to magic rather than design.

You’re seated next to Clarissa with Agent Ross and Annabel doing their best to hide their constant touches and familiarity on the other couch. It’s sweet but annoying and it's taken some verbal prodding to get the information out of them that you need.

However, with some prompting Ross has explained how Kandomere is intending to uncover all the MTF who have been infected by Liona and the Inferni by using a contact of Clarissa’s in the MTF office building. He spelled out how once they’ve all been identified Kandomere intends to eliminate the innocent from the Inferni in one fell sweep, detaining the Inferni to obtain the necessary information needed to progress to step two.

You’re shocked, not only at how willing the MTF are to use magic to their own benefit, but also by how fast Kandomere has orchestrated this operation.

“Necessity is the mother of invention.” Annabel smiles, piling more wood onto the fire.

“He’s certainly driven.” Ross agrees.

“He has good reason to be.” Clarissa comments, arching a perfectly plucked brow and throwing you a meaningful look.

“So then what? After he’s broken all the MTF out of their magically induced hypnotherapy or whatever it is, how does he plan on—“

Clarissa holds up a hand to stop you. “No need to worry about—“

“You don’t have security clearance for that information.” Ross states sternly, throwing his host a dark glare.

“Yeah well, forewarned is forearmed,” you spit back, suddenly much more alert than you have been.

“Andrew,” Annabel moves away from the now roaring fire to thread her fingers through his and tug at his arm softly, “it’s getting late, why don’t we clean the kitchen then I’ll show you to your room?”

Ross opens his mouth to argue but thinks better of it. With an audible chomp he grits his teeth and heaves himself off of the comfortable couch. With one final glance at you he disappears into the other room with Annabel.

Taking a small sip of her drink, Clarissa twists her torso to look you in the eye. After a beat where you assume by the cock of her head she’s listening to check Agent Ross isn’t coming back she speaks quietly.

“After the magic has been broken Kandomere will have hours at most to interrogate and break his suspects. The MTF will join forces with the LAPD and some other, non sanctioned organisations, to conduct the capture and elimination of the inner sanctum of the LA coven.” Putting down her
drink she folds her hands in her lap. “Currently the Inferni will be pooling their local resources to find you, the high priest won’t want to call in any Inferni he doesn’t trust implicitly because he knows they’ll try and use you themselves. When they don’t find you after a couple of days they’ll start reaching out to known magic users, and by reaching out I mean torturing for information and magic. We have a week at most before the Inferni call in all covens, which they will, because your power, though unstable, is huge. I returned from the city as this place is warded and secure and I have asked Kandomere to come here as I want to look him over, magically speaking. If he is in anyway holding any residual magic — well, it’s not a good idea for him to progress with his plan.”

Your throat dries as she picks apart what will happen and the churning in your stomach intensifies.

“However—”

You snap your gaze to hers and wait with baited breath for whatever bombshell she’s about to drop.

“He refuses to come. Do you know why?”

Her tone indicates that she already knows the answer to the question and that she’s unimpressed by it.

“My,” you answer flatly.

“Indeed.”

What can you say? Your head is begging you to throw caution to the wind and let him progress with the plan from where he is but your heart is arguing profusely. You know that anytime spent around him will shatter your resolve, that you’ll become his compliant fool again, no doubt setting yourself up for more heartache and pain… And yet you can’t allow him to face this unprepared.

Through gritted teeth you push out what she’s waiting to hear. “Do whatever you need to do, just please, don’t expect me to be happy about it.”

“I’m afraid it’s not that simple.”

Ice runs through your veins as you close your eyes. “Why not?”

“Because my darling, he won’t come on my say so.”

Exhaling out a curse you rest your head against the back of the couch in defeat. “Of course he won’t.”

“The sooner he comes the better.”

“For him maybe.” The bitterness in your voice is so strong you can taste it.

“For us all, Y/n. This whole operation is going to be tough on all involved, and there’s no guarantee that everyone will survive. This is the Inferni, you know how underhand they can be, let’s at least arm our soldiers as best we can as they gear up for this bloody battle.”

Gritting your teeth you hold out a hand and roll your eyes at the absurdity of it all. “I’ll call him, I’ll do it, just give me the phone now before I change my damn mind.”

The cell slips into your open hand as Clarissa takes her leave with a sympathetic smile. Moments later he answers with a gruff ‘Hello’.
“Kandomere?” Your heart is beating so fast it’s painful.

“Y/n?” God, the hopefulness in his voice is pure torture.

“Yes.” You work hard to keep your tone steady and void of emotion. “Clarissa says she needs to see you but you’re refusing to come because of me. It’s fine, come, do what you have to.”

“There’s no need—“

“Apparently there’s every need so do what she says and then maybe we can finally go our separate ways.”

The pause which meets your huffed words streets on so long you have to call his name again to ensure he didn’t hang up.

His reply is a curt, “I’ll be there by morning,” before he disconnects.

Tossing the phone aside you curl into yourself and will the tears away knowing that another long and sleepless night is ahead of you.

“You’re tired.” Annabel announces, strolling into the room with suspiciously impeccable timing.

“No, I’m—“

Her fingers brush against your temple as a strange sound leaves her lips and before you can stop yourself you’re sleeping deeply.
Chapter Forty Six

Although it’s a magically induced sleep it doesn’t stop you from dreaming and your mind is full of twisted versions of Kandomere and Illexia fighting first each other, and then you. Jolting awake in a strange room in the dark does little to allay your fears and foolishly you allow your night terrors to continue to plague your conscious mind. Before logic can kick in you crawl out of bed and make a dash for the window, yanking back the curtains just in time to find yourself illuminated by a set of fluorescent car headlights doing battle against the raging storm outside.

With haste you swish the heavy drapes back in place and dart away from the window. Somewhere amongst the confusion and clumsiness your brain had turned back on so taking a deep breath you gather your thoughts and try to prepare for what’s about to happen. The car arriving could only be that of a certain blue haired elf and now he knew you were awake.

Damn it all to hell.

Inside your ribcage your thundering heart shows no signs of slowing and you realise that the only way to move beyond the terror seizing you is to face it head on. On trembling legs and trying to suppress your rambling, incoherent thoughts you navigate your way around the unfamiliar, darkened room and head out into a dimly lit hallway. The undeniable sound of the cabin door downstairs opening and then closing guides you to the end of the corridor where you find the wooden staircase. Slowly you take the steps, focusing your mind on getting down one at a time. Your hand is aching where you’re gripping the rail so tightly but with your legs as unsteady as they are you daren’t ease up.

Downstairs you hear the crackle of the fire and it strikes you as odd that there aren’t voices. Surely Kandomere wouldn’t just let himself in, wouldn’t Annabel or Clarissa have been there to greet him? The answer was probably yes and they were probably now waiting for you. That thought causes your stomach to drop and your jaw to tighten. You didn’t want to do this whole thing with Kandomere, especially not with an audience but it seemed impossible to avoid.

A clearing of a throat is accompanied by Clarissa’s melodic voice calling up to you. “I can feel your magic, Y/n, the more unsettled you are the greater it’s pushing against ours. Please try to calm yourself.”

Coming into view you keep your gaze locked onto the last few steps as you descend them. Riddled with uncertainty you daren’t turn to look in their direction so you choose to stare at the grain in the wooden floor instead.

“It’s no surprise you woke when you did.” Clarissa says, calling your attention to her watery blue eyes. “You realise you’re linked to one another, yes?”

A half-hearted shrug lifts your shoulders in an awkward gesture.

“Come, sit, let me explain.” She pats the seat next to her and smiles warmly. From your peripheral vision you note that Kandomere is sitting in the spot you occupied earlier on the opposite couch to Clarissa so you’ve no choice but to join her or turn around and go back to the bedroom. Shuffling along you avoid looking in the elf’s direction at all costs, even though it means dealing with Clarissa’s unwavering gaze.

“Alright, I’ll start at the beginning shall I?” Her smile warms and she places her hand delicately on
your leg. “Your magic is powerful but has been dormant. I’ve read your files extensively and in my opinion Alexo was the key to unlocking it.”

At the mention of his name you shudder only for her hand to tighten reassuringly. To your right you see Kandomere sit straighter, his hands squeezing into fists.

“He attempted to tie your power to his using blood magic, the same way Liona manipulated Kandomere, however the magic in your blood made your experiences of this procedure vastly different. Because Kandomere has no magic, Liona had to build it up over time, drip feeding him her blood slowly so that when she finally took control he’d have no resistance. With you, Alexo pushed too fast and your magic protected you, grew exponentially until a catalyst was introduced and it consumed you. To simplify an extremely complex situation, your magic can be categorised as instinctive and intentional. Instinctive magic works, as the name suggest, on instinct, often in novices such as yourself, without the casters knowledge. Intentional magic is that used with wands and spells, those of us practising are aware of what we are doing.”

The more Clarissa talks the less aware of Kandomere you become. Her words wrap around you, forcing you to consider your recent history with a fresh perspective.

“Y/n, when you began developing feelings for Kandomere your magic instinctively and slowly wrapped around him with the intent of loosening Liona’s hold, and then when you became intimate and he bit you, ingesting your blood, he got an undiluted dose of the medicine fighting to free him.”

You fidget as the woman you’ve known only a few hours discuss with a frank bluntness, your ex love life.

“Unfortunately, when you filled him full of your magic, when you revived him, you opened up the floodgate. Blood magic is dangerous because in the wrong hands or in those of the ignorant, it can cause catastrophic and sometimes irreparable damage.”

With a remorseful frown you glance across at Kandomere. He looks ill at ease with his back ramrod straight and his eyes zeroing in on you. Not that Clarissa seems to care as she carries on regardless.

“Once he was open to magic and you were gone it took mere hours for Liona to complete what she’d started. As Alexo controlled you, she controlled him, only worse, he had no magic of his own to fight back, he was utterly defenceless.”

You blink slowly, trying desperately to marry her words to your emotions. You were holding on to so much anger and distrust but despite Clarissa confirming Kandomere’s innocence, you couldn’t forget the trauma you’d suffered because of him, no matter how unfair that was.

“But you’re still linked. You effectively brought him back from the dead so you were able to break their bond again. Just the smallest amount of your blood taken from you in the hotel suite was all it took.”

Glancing back to Clarissa you shake your head and whisper, “You really do know every detail don’t you?”

“Kandomere allowed my sister to read him. This is the process of entering someone’s mind and walking through their memories. She relayed the information. Between that and the folders he sent me, yes, I believe I do.”
Taking a deep breath you drift your gaze over to the flames and relax into the soft worn sofa. “So what next? You said you needed him here, what have I got to do with that?”

Clarissa laughs softly. “Everything, hopefully.”

“You don’t have to be a part of this Y/n.” Kandomere’s deep timbre is a stark contrast to Clarissa’s, breaking through your thoughts to seize your attention. Without meaning to, you turn to face him. “You are safe here and when I’ve completed this task you’re free to go your own way. There is nothing here dependent on your compliance.”

“This is true,” Clarissa nods, “but your assistance would make it a much faster and cleaner operation.”

You swing back to look at the older woman, your curiosity piqued. “How so?”

She arches her brow and tilts her head. “It’s no coincidence you woke as Kandomere arrived. As I said, you’re linked, not only by your feelings for one another but by magic. He has your residual power inside of him. This same link could also be there for Liona, and as a magic user, she will be able to use it to her advantage.”

“So…?” You prompt wearily.

“Your bond is stronger, it’s one you both entered willingly. You can eliminate any left overs from less savoury characters.”

“Y/n—“ Kandomere sighs, and despite his perfectly put together facade, you can see through the cracks. He’s exhausted, angry and above all, ashamed. As you look into his eyes there is such sadness that it takes your breath away.

Without allowing you to protest, Clarissa raise a hand to silence you and stands. “I believe now would be a good time for me to excuse myself. Take some time Y/n, darling, think through what I’ve told you and we can reconvene after sunrise. Kandomere, don’t allow your pride to endanger your men. You may rest on the couch unless otherwise invited.”

It takes a while but as she reaches the staircase you unravel the meaning of her last words. There’s nowhere else for him to sleep other than on the sofa or with you.

“Please don’t—“ Kandomere stands, shaking his head angrily. “The couch is perfectly adequate. Don’t—“ Again his head shakes.

Dropping your head you grab a throw cushion and hold it against you tightly, as if that can somehow protect you from the barrage of unwelcome emotion currently assaulting you. You’re still angry but less so at Kandomere and more at the situation.

“I am sorry I woke you, Y/n, had I known my presence here would disturb you I would have driven slower.”

Exhaling you clutch tighter at the cushion. “Please stop.”

After a pause, he closes his eyes and bows his head once before ridding himself of his jacket. He’s back in his MTF appropriate clothing, exactly like the night you met, even down to the silver gorget tinkling with his every movement.

“How?” Cocking your head you examine him closely. “Why aren’t the Inferni hunting you? How are you back at the MTF?”
He undoes his cuff links and rolls his sleeves up his forearms and you’re reminded of how good he looks like this. “Whilst I was under Liona’s influence I was supposedly working out of the office, however, if I was needed Montehugh called me in. The Inferni had to keep up the pretence of me working in order to avoid raising suspicions. I had Montehugh call me in last night. As far as the Inferni are concerned, I was called away just after you blew a hole in the building."

“Montehugh! Is he—“

“He is well. The moment you left the motel I called Clarissa. She arranged for her sister to deal with my trusted agents straight away. Theirs was a simple spell to break.”

Narrowing your eyes you think back to the hotel. “What about Illexia, he saw you take me.”

“He’s in lockdown at a secure facility, he cannot communicate with the Inferni.”

A sarcastic laugh bubbles out of you. “You mean X-Cre? I hate to break it to you but that place is corrupt as—“

“A non MTF facility.”

That stops you short. “Is it safe?”

“Yes. I’m taking every precaution. Every precaution.” His steely eyes bore into yours until you can stand it no more. Flustered and scared you watch the flames lick at the wood. “I trust only five people at the MTF. Until we have exterminated the infiltrators I’ve outsourced my needs.”

“Look, I don’t mean to come across as picky here but,” nervously you wring your hands, “you’ve been duped before, are you completely sure we can trust whoever it is you’ve cajoled into helping?”

A flash of anger is quickly replaced with hurt as he strides over to sit on the coffee table in front of you. Splaying his knees wide he clasps his hands in front of him and bends forward, bringing you eye to eye.

“We have a small network of magic users, each of them proven to be trustworthy. We use them sparingly. Given the nature of what we do we try to avoid utilising civilians, I’m sure you can understand why.”

“Of course—“

“These families have all been hurt by the Inferni. They have pledged their allegiance to us, and have proven themselves. I assure you I have not taken anything lightly in setting up this operation. I have not slept, nor will I until I have ripped that coven apart and slain anyone who had anything to do with what happened to you.”

As he speaks his face takes on a sinister snarl, and for a moment with the shadows dancing on the plains of his face you see the Kandomere who had taken great pleasure in hurting you.

“I— I should go.” Scooting back you throw yourself towards the side of the couch and are about to vault over the arm when his broken plea halts you.

“Y/n, please, no, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to frighten you.”

Pausing with your back to him you blow out a fearful breath. “I hate this,” you admit quietly, “that we were violated and used as weapons against each other. That the biggest emotion I feel now
when I look at you is fear instead of love.” Slowly you inch around, perching on the arm of the
couch with your feet resting on the seat you’d just vacated. “I’m so torn. I want to go back to when
you were safe but I can’t because they were so successful. I still love you, Kandomere, I can’t deny
that, but I’m scared, not of it but of you, of what you’re capable of. I’m terrified because I can’t
trust you, every movement you make could be the one that—” Biting your bottom lip you
manoeuvre off the arm drag yourself around the back of the sofa to grip it tight. “Take my room, I
won’t be able to sleep with you in the house anyway.” It’s not said to hurt him, it’s just the
exhausted truth, still you note how he closes his eyes in anguish. “Sorry.” It’s an afterthought but
it’s all you have.

“No, don’t be. I understand. I would apologise again only what is the point? You’re right, I’ve
done unspeakable, despicable things to hurt you, intention or ignorance be damned, you were still
harmed by my hands.” He glances towards you and you feel the agony in the depths of his eyes as
if you’ve been punched in the stomach. Doubling over you grip the couch harder and inhale.
“Please, sleep, I’m sure Clarissa will understand if you want to barricade the door, and I can wait in
the car, I can work just as easily in there as I can here—“

You’re horrified by what this relationship has come to but you’d by lying if you said the idea of
barricading yourself into the bedroom wasn’t somewhat soothing.

“No,” shaking your head vehemently you grit your teeth and look him in the eye, “stay, I— It’s
fine, I’ll— It’s fine.” How you wished you could tell him you were being stupid, that this whole
fucked up mess would blow over, how love would conquer all, instead, you offer him an
apologetic shrug as you back away.

Your foot in on the bottom step when he opens his mouth to speak. He blinks, then as if thinking
better of it, nods his head and turns away to scoop up a file laying on the coffee table. Following
his lead you make a hasty retreat without biding him goodnight, and as you reach your designated
room, as quietly as possible you lock and shove the bookcase across the door.
Chapter Forty Seven

Chapter Notes

Just a quick note to say thank you for all the comments you’ve been leaving. I want you to know that I appreciate them more than I can say.

Often I don’t have the chance to reply as time is stretched, or I genuinely don’t know what to say, but I read every single one, and am eternally grateful for your support.

And for those who comment often, I look for your comments to gauge how the story is going. You honest to God shape how the story progresses so thank you from the bottom of my heart ❤

As the grey skies lighten and the rain finally eases off, a soft knock sounds against your door. An hour earlier you’d shoved the bookcase back to it’s usual spot, anxious to appear calmer than you felt, and replaced it with your back. No one was coming into your room without your say so.

“The rain has cleared, take a walk with me?” Clarissa calls quietly through the wooden barrier.

God yes! Anything to get out of this house for a while. Scooping your dishevelled body off the floor you swing open the door and greet your hostess with a stiff smile.

“There’s boots and a coat in the closet, help yourself and meet me around the back when you’re ready.”

You’re fully aware that you look like shit but you don’t stop to do anything about it, you couldn’t care less if your hair is unbrushed and unkept, all you can think about is getting outside and breathing the fresh air. Ripping open the closet door you find the boots. They’re slightly too big but you still hurry to tug them on. Grabbing hold of one of the many coats hanging on the rail above you race to the door and make for the outside world. Keeping your head low you move swiftly, holding your breath in anticipation of bumping into the wrong person. It’s only as you allow the cabin door to close firmly behind you that you exhale and feel the tightness in your chest subside.

As promised, Clarissa is around the back of the house dressed much more appropriately for the surroundings. She waves you over and then points into the forest before striding past the tree line and out of sight.

Breaking into a gentle jog, you slip on the jacket. Although not too cold, everything is wet from the storm and you don’t fancy catching a chill. Once you reach the edge of the clearing you slow, the terrain is uneven and muddy forcing you to watch where you place your feet.

“Just follow the path, Y/n.” Clarissa advises from where ever the hell she’s disappeared off to.

As the light fades and you step beneath the plush tree canopy you question if what you’re doing is a good idea. You don’t know this woman or this land, should the desire to run away from a certain elf really stop you from thinking things through?

“Clarissa?” Planting your feet firmly you take a deep breath.
“Just ahead, darling, there’s a small clearing, you can’t miss us.”

Us? Your heart skips a beat and you crane your head to try and see through the trees. Oh god what if she’s brought him here too? Your question is answered a moment later when a voice behind you speaks. “Y/n?”

Spinning around you see Kandomere dressed in running gear heading straight for you. At the sight of him your heart lurches and you allow your instincts take control, setting off in the opposite direction at speed. Refusing to acknowledge him you concentrate hard on following the path through the dense vegetation until moments later you approach a small circular clearing. In the centre, Clarissa is looking up at the trees, her eyes closed and a serene smile alighting her face.

“Do you feel it?” She asks as you come to a standstill next to her. “The power here? Can you sense it?”

Glancing around you note that there’s no one else here.

“This is my ancestral alter, the place where my magic is at it’s strongest. Each stone that circles us represents a generation of our family and with each generation we grow stronger, drawing on those who passed before us. Do you feel their call?”

You don’t, all you feel is trapped and helpless.

“We feel you, Y/n. Your fear, your hesitation, your suffering. For one so young you have experienced more than your fair share of pain.” Clarissa opens her eyes and watches as Kandomere strolls into the circle wearing a look of absolute dejection. “And you,” she nods to the elf, “so much guilt, so much heartache. You really are a matching pair.”

“Shall we get this over and done with?” He sighs.

You side eye him warily, “Get what over and done with?”

The older woman lays a hand on your shoulder. “You needn’t worry, it won’t cause you any distress or pain.”

“What?” You ask with more force.

“What I came here for,” Kandomere sighs heavily, “Clarissa is going to get rid of any residual magic in my system.”

“Ah, well.” Clarissa chuckles slightly as she strolls to one of the smaller stones and perches on it. “There are a number of ways we can solve this little issue and by we, I mean you two. She waves a finger back and forth between you and Kandomere to stress her point. “The simplest and easiest would be for you to copulate, allow your instinctual magic to do it’s thing—”

“Excuse me?” Kandomere’s eyes open wide.

“However,” Clarissa smiles, “I can see how that would be problematic given the state of your relationship.”

Shaking your head you alternate between staring at Clarissa and Kandomere. “I don’t understand. I thought you could do this, why do you need me?”

Clarissa’s smile morphs to a look of sympathy. “You are linked, despite the current fragility of your relationship, your magic will find and eradicate Liona’s much faster and more effectively than
mine. It’s as clear as the nose on your face that the elf still loves you so he won’t resist. You’re right of course, I can do what is necessary however it will take much longer and I anticipate much pain and difficulty if I try to force my way in.” She holds out her hand, silently calling you to her side and mutely you amble forward. “I’m sorry, Y/n, but this goes beyond you now. Think of all the families affected, all the collateral damage already experienced at the hands of the covens you’ve collided with.” Her warm hand grasps your cold one and she rubs her thumb over your fingers, drawing you closer still and lowering her voice. “Time is of the essence. We must act fast. Within this circle you can use your magic safely. Under the protection of my ancestors no Inferni can reach you, you are safe, so please, let me guide you and maybe, just maybe, you can learn to trust him again?”

You feel your face pinch into a deep frown as you cast your eyes downwards. She’s putting you in an impossible position and by the expression she wears, she knows it. But she’s also right, how in the hell can you refuse when every minute that goes by there’s a good chance innocent people are being hurt.

“How else can we do this?” You whisper.

“Well, for starters, no matter how we proceed, you have to be able to look at him.”

“Clariss—“

Kandomere attempts to speak but you cut him off. “Walk me through what I have to do.”

“You don’t have to, Y/n, Clarissa can manage.”

Whirling around you shake your head. Taking a deep breath you lock eyes with the elf and hold his gaze. “Non of this was your fault, I know that, there’s no reason for you to suffer when other options are available. I don’t want my fear to be a reason for your pain.”

Looking in to the depths of his mesmerising gaze you swallow down your initial trepidation. You know what you’ve stated is right but you can’t move past what he has put you through, you can pretend to though, for the sake of getting through this.

“It’s decided then.” Clarissa cries a little too gleefully. “As I said the simplest option—“

“What else is there?” Kandomere growls, his jaw tensing rhythmically.

“You need to be there?” You need to have the sense of unity. With that in place her magic will automatically do the rest.”

Biting your lip you wonder how best to voice what is going around in your head without hurting the elf even more than you already have. How could you explain that there was no way on earth you’d ever feel at one with him again? You can’t even stomach to sleep in the same house as him, how did she expect you to feel protective of him?

Bringing his hands to his hips, Kandomere tilts his head back, looking up at the trees high above. “You do see the flaw in your great plan?” He asks tightly. “You’re aware that she barricaded herself in the room last night? All she feels for me now is loathing and terror. How do you propose we eradicate this in just a few hours?”

Heat colours your face as he calls you out.

“Ahh, I can help with that.” Clarissa pushes to her feet and strolls towards the centre of the circle, snatching your hand as she passes you. “Emotions can be manipulated, she still loves you, I can
feel it, I just have to make that the dominant emotion where you’re concerned.

“Wait, what?” Breaking out of her grip you eye the pair suspiciously. “You want to alter my
mind?”

Again Clarissa smiles. “Not in the slightest. I just want to rebalance your emotions.”

“No,” Kandomere rushes forward and steps between you and Clarissa forcing her to let go of you.
“I won’t allow it. I don’t want Y/n having anything to do with this anymore!” In the blink of an eye
he’s facing you, standing so close you’re almost touching. “Go back to the house. Stay inside.
When I agreed to your involvement I had no idea what was expected.”

“Don’t be so short sighted, Kandomere. The girl still loves you—“

“That does not make it acceptable to alter her feelings for our gain.” Kandomere snaps over his
shoulder.

“And you suffering at the hands of my magic is not atonement for what you did whilst under their
control.” The older woman bites back.

“She’s right.” Looking over at Clarissa you nod stiffly. It doesn’t matter how badly you want to
run, you can’t allow Kandomere to shoulder this alone. He never blamed you for what happened
when you were under the influence of Alexo so how can you turn away now? If he was back to his
pre-Inferni self, didn’t you owe it to him to do everything you could to help? Didn’t you owe it to
yourself to finish what you’d started back in Vegas? “How will you, I mean, how does it work?”

“Mi alma, it’s not necessary—“

“I want to do this Kandomere. I’m tired of being afraid of you. I’m tired of trying to look past my
trust issues. What happened, it wasn’t your fault, I get that now. We’ve been through hell and back
so why can’t we accept some help moving forwards? Why the fuck shouldn’t we cheat? I don’t
want to see you and see a monster anymore!”

He reaches up and places his hand on your shoulder causing you to instinctively flinch. A pained
expression crosses his face at your reaction. “You cannot cheat your way past the trauma I
inflicted, mi amor.” Dropping his hand he backs away slightly. “I would love nothing more than to
once again hold a place in your heart but papering over the cracks won’t help. If you are ever to
trust me again it has to come naturally, not forced by magic.”

“And in the mean time the Inferni grow stronger, slay everyone you’ve both ever known and kill
countless others, how noble of you, Kandomere, to place your relationship above all that.” Clarissa
huffs.

“Really?” He narrows his eyes. “It will take you that long to undo whatever hold Liona’s magic has
on me? I think not—“

“For gods sake, why are we even arguing?” You push past Kandomere to face Clarissa. “Just do it.
I’ll deal with him later.”

“Y/n, no—“

“Enough!” You roar, holding up a hand to silence the elf. “I want this, Kandomere. You might see
it as papering over the cracks but for me it’s the first step to mending a broken bridge. I want to be
able to trust you again. I need someone in my corner.”
“You’re tired and emotional, you’ll regret it later—“

“Then I’ll get her to undo it later but for now it’s happening so sit down and shut up.”

“Y/n—“

Exasperated you round on the elf, pulling yourself up to your full height. Pointing your finger at him you advance. “Is this your way of telling me I shouldn’t trust you again?”

He’s quick to reply. “No, of course not—“

“Okay, so is this a way of getting me out of your life?”

“What? How could you possibly think—“

Letting your anger break free you shove him hard. When he remains in place you find your fury upping. “Then why the hell don’t you want this? Why wouldn’t you want me to forgive you? To trust you again?”

His eyes catch fire and as you go to shove him again he grabs hold of your wrists. “Because it’s not what you want! You want to run away from the pain but you can’t, you have to go through it because that’s how humans process emotion. Using magic to repair what was broken is wrong—“

“Even when magic is what broke it?” You counter, meeting his heated gaze with a new found determination.

Clarissa had offered you an out and you weren’t about to let him take it from you, regardless of the motive behind his actions. Logically you knew Kandomere had been puppet but your heart was too heavy with the scars of his actions to see past that fact. If there was a magical way out of this mess then you sure as shit weren’t about to say no. You were both here through no fault of your own so why shouldn’t you let magic fix it.

“It’s called balance.” Clarissa states. “Y/n won’t forget what happened, nor how it made her feel. You’ll still have to work to get her trust back to the level it was but she won’t fear you any more, she’ll know you aren’t out to hurt her. All I intend to do is push at the hands of time, allow her mind to accept what happened and process it. She still loves you, even now, even after everything, and deep down a part of her acknowledges that non of this was your choice. All I need to do is nudge that to the surface.”

“This is happening, Kandomere.”

He searches your gaze for a moment longer before backing away and sighing.

“Good, now Y/n, darling, stand in the centre of the circle and breathe deeply, this won’t hurt but it will feel strange. Kandomere, out of the boundary rocks please, I don’t need your aura confusing matters.”

Setting your shoulders you walk to the spot as instructed, noting how Kandomere takes his sweet time to exit the circle. He tries to catch your eye but you block him out, the time for words has ended.

Approaching you from behind, Clarissa wraps her hands around your biceps and speaks low into your ear. “Close your eyes and feel for the magic. Trust that it will heal you.” Without hesitation you do as she says. You’re so fed up of the constant misery your current state of mind has you in you’re about willing to do anything to change it. “Good, now picture yourself as you are,
surrounded by a light…”

In your minds eye you see the image Clarissa describes, listening intently as she paints a beautiful picture with elegant words. Heat flows up your legs and into your body, filling and warming you until you feel sleepy. At Clarissa’s command you stretch out your fingers and let go of the fear, the animosity and the distrust, allowing the light to take its place and push the darkness from your burdened body. This magic is healing and pure, and even though you’ve never felt it before you recognise it wants to help. So you drop all barriers and allow it in, soaking up the goodness. As the seconds tick by you’re aware of your perception of Kandomere changing. You can still picture what he did, how he hurt you, how he frightened you but it’s not so all encompassing. You’re able to accept that it wasn’t really him, that the elf you love would never intentionally harm you and you know without a shadow of a doubt that he would lay down his life rather than be put in that situation again.

After a while longer the silence is broken when Clarissa asks, “Tell me, Y/n, how do you feel?”

Opening your eyes you search for Kandomere, smiling when his anxious face comes into view. “I feel great.”

“And what of Kandomere? How do you feel about him?”

His eyes widen and he leans forward as he awaits your answer. Meeting his gaze you offer him a genuine smile. “I’ve missed you!”

But instead of answering he simply regards you from across the circle, his iridescent eyes flickering to Clarissa every now and then.

“Kandomere?”

Dropping his head he stares at the rock in front of him. “Do you know what you just did?”

You tilt your head and watch him carefully. “Yes, I just remembered the person you were before the Inferni took you. It got lost there for a while, hidden behind the memories of the person you were under their control, but I’m able to think clearly now, able to see beyond the fear. I know that wasn’t really you, that you would never do anything to hurt me intentionally, I know that you love me and I don’t have to be afraid anymore.”

Screwing up his eyes he shakes his head. “I still did it all. It was still me who hurt you.”

“And I’m still the person who killed you!”

This at least gets him to look at you. “You never wanted to see me again, yesterday,” he whispers.

“And you wanted to prove to me how sorry you were yesterday.” It’s an underhanded response and you all know it but it still has the desired effect.

“I still do.” He says as if reading from a script you’d written.

Taking a shaky breath you hold up your hand. “Come here then, please?”

He looks completely defeated as he slowly crosses the space separating you. “Without the magic you wouldn’t want me here,” he says gently as he nears you.

“Without the magic, I wouldn’t have wanted you to leave.” You’re desperate to throw your arms around him but until he can see how genuine your feelings are you hold back. “I love you,
Kandomere. I loved you yesterday which is why everything was so painful.”

Clearing her throat, Clarissa encroaches on your private moment. “We did this for a reason, whatever you feel about the methods, let’s not forget why we’re here. Are you ready to move on?”

Searching Kandomere’s face you nod and wait. He’s obviously unhappy with the situation but he gives Clarissa the go ahead with a tired wave of his hand.

“Good. I assume my first suggestion is still off the table?”

Kandomere growls a harsh, “Of course it is.

“I had to ask.” Clarissa sighs.

Only for you, it wasn’t, not anymore. For you the past few months heartache haven’t been erased but it’s paling in significance with the rejection you’re experiencing now. Only there isn’t time to dwell on that right now. Swallowing down your hurt, you take a breath and roll out your shoulders.

“Okay, what now?”
A growl of frustration carries up into the tree canopy and you shake out your hands with a scowl.

“You’re still blocking me!”

Kandomere has the good grace to look guilty but he offers no explanation, instead he pulls away from your reach and crosses to the farthest stone. Avoiding your frown he sits, splaying his knees open wide and dropping his forearms to his thighs in a sign of defeat. Stepping between you and partially obscuring your view of the elf, Clarissa rests her hands on her hips and shakes her head. She’s agitated and isn’t shy about showing it.

“Kandomere I did not expect this from you. You know time is of the essence, why are you actively delaying the inevitable?”

A breeze has picked up in the time you’ve been outside and instinctively you bury deeper into your borrowed jacket. It looks like there’s another storm brewing and at this point you’re doubtful you’ll be inside when it hits. For the past hour you’ve been trying to connect with the elf just as Claissa has taught you but somehow he’s erected a barrier that’s keeping you out and he refuses to listen to your pleas to open up. You’ve learned how to feel for your magic and push it up and out, even managing to open up a circuit with Carissa, but doing it with Kandomere was turning out to be completely impossible.

“I am doing no such thing.” His smooth voice meets your ears and wraps around your mind. You’d missed this, the pull of his voice, the way his gaze liquified your insides and set your nerves on fire, the overwhelming sense of belonging you felt when you were near him. For too long you’d been controlled by your fear of the elf, by the pain he’d caused, haunted by the memory of love, only now he was refusing to welcome you back, pushing you away under some false sense of morality. Sighing heavily Clarissa turns her attention to you. Lowering her voice she steps forward.

“Do what you must to get through to him, time is running out, if he does not acquiesce before sundown I’ll have no choice but to step in, and it will not be pretty. I fear he is trying to force my involvement as he’s burdened by guilt and foolishly believes the pain my magic will cause him will achieve some sort of atonement—“

“I have informed you repeatedly,’ Kandomere bites, “I am not doing anything to hinder this process.”

Tossing him a withered glare, Clarissa places her hand gently on your shoulder. “Stubborn fool!” She grinds her teeth before blowing out a heated breath. “The storm is circling around, the trees will offer some shelter but don’t stay out here too long after it hits, it won’t be safe.” And with that she strides out of the clearing, the trees swallowing her as she heads back towards the house muttering angrily to herself.

Across the way Kandomere has dropped his head into his hands allowing you to take a moment to gather your thoughts. Staring at his silky hair, you try to come up with a way to get through to him. He was hung up on what you’d done with Clarissa, convinced that you were under some sort of magical spell but he was wrong, if only you could get him to see. You’d tried reasoning, manipulation, begging even, all to no avail. Every time you’d touch his hands you felt that road block preventing your magic from flowing into him despite his protests of innocence.
“What do you want, Kandomere?” Your soft question has him raising his head and narrowing his eyes. “After you’re all done with the Inferni and her, what then?”

He glances down at the forest floor, his hair falling from behind his ear to frame his beautiful face. “I haven’t thought that far ahead.”

“What about us?” His brows furrow at your question. “Have you thought about that?”

The rustle of the trees as a particularly powerful gust shakes the forest accompanies his fluid movement. With a gracefulness only elves seem to possess he gets to his feet and crosses the circle to stand in front of you. His moonlit eyes bore into yours as he levels his voice to answer your question.

“There was no us until a few hours ago, so no, I hadn’t thought about it.” He sighs and trains his superior gaze upwards. “But if I were to think of it, I’d know that whatever we had has gone, destroyed by magic. I know you think you’re healed but it doesn’t work that way. What you felt last night, that was real, this? It’s make believe. Worry not though, the magic will fade and you’ll be back to fearing me in no time.”

A shard of ice pierces your heart and you take a moment to digest his words. Oh yeah, that one hurt. Pulling your coat tighter you blink back the emotion threatening to over come you and try to settle your mind to work the problem. You needed him to lower his defences and let you back in but he was adamant it was over.

“You think the change is temporary?”

He nods once. “I know it is and I refuse to give you more reason to hate me when we leave this clearing.”

“If that were the case, why wouldn’t Clarissa say something?”

Again the trees dance in the wind and the tapping of rain hitting the canopy above warns you the storm is moving closer.

“She wants the Inferni taken care of. Annabel is exiled here whilst the current High Priest is in charge of the LA coven, if we take him out she’s free to return to the city with her mother. She wants them dealt with.”

“No,” your heart fills with pity for the elf who can’t accept that you’d moved past his manipulated actions, “if that were the case she’d have simply done the magic herself, your pain be damned.” Glancing at his hands resting on his hips you cautiously reach out to brush your fingertips over them as a plan formulates in the back of your mind. “But if you truly believe that this is it for us, that we can’t find our way back then at least give us the goodbye we deserve.”

His gaze drifts over where you’re touching him before he arches his brow and meets you head on. “I know what you’re trying to do.”

A smile lifts the corner of your mouth slightly. You’ve been caught but you’re prepared. “Then you’ll know you’re screwed either way because if what you say is true and we leave here without a proper goodbye I’m going to go back to fearing you and not wanting you near me and you’ll have lost your last chance to ever hold me again. But if we leave and my feelings stay, you’ll have rejected me when what I need most in the world is you, even if it is for the last time. You’ll have let me down—“ Biting your bottom lip you shrug your shoulders slowly, “so what’s it to be, Kandomere?”
Check mate.

You know you should probably feel bad about emotionally manipulating him only this is your hail Mary, your last chance, your fight or die moment so you’re fighting as dirty as you need to in order to win. After a brief pause, Kandomere gives a dry, unamused chuckle.

“You’re right, I can’t win but I can keep my integrity and you’ll know, when the magic wears off, that I loved you enough to respect your true wishes.”

Your heart drops to the floor as you desperately scramble to think of a way to change his mind. “Kandomere, please.” You know begging won’t work, you’ve already tried it and yet you can’t stop the words spilling out of your mouth. “I’m just asking for one last kiss, one last hug, one last goodbye. Please!”

Raising his chin you watch as his perfectly composed federal agent mask slips into place and he backs away. “The weather is about to get much worse, we should head inside.” Blinking once he assess you for a second before walking past to follow the path back to the house.

You stare at the space he no longer occupies, dumbstruck at his obstinance and stung by his rejection. It didn’t matter that it came from a place of honour, it still hurts that you can’t even tempt him into one last hug. Above the howling of the wind the sound of falling rain intensifies but as yet it’s not managed to fully break through the overhead cover, so you opt to sit where you are and mull over your bruised heart and wounded pride. Resting your backside on the damp floor you lean back against one of the larger stone markers and listen to the sounds of the storm. Giving yourself over to your surroundings you relax your tense muscles, letting the scent of the wet forest carry you away from the hurt Kandomere had unintentionally caused.

In the near distance the unmistakable rolling thunder comes closer bringing with it a heavier rainfall. The storm is almost directly over head, it was time to get back to the cabin. As a flash of lightning breaks through the roof of leaves you heave yourself up and the canopy starts dripping fat droplets of water that land with heavy thuds. Yanking the hood over your head you train your eyes on the floor and turn to tread carefully towards the path through the forest. It’s only as you reach the edge of the clearing that you notice the unmoving figure watching you from a short way down the path. He’s leaning against the bark of a giant tree, arms crossed over his chest, legs crossed at the ankle and water dripping down onto him, soaking through his running gear.

“Just go, you’re getting wet.” You know he heard you but he shows no sign of it. He remains motionless, watching your every step. Rolling your eyes you return your focus to navigating the route out of the forest. It’s muddy underfoot and a steady stream of water is making the conditions slippery but you make it to where Kandomere is waiting without incident. Quirking a brow he tilts his head, indicating that you should go first. But you don’t. Instead you move closer causing him to stiffen.

“Why do you get to make all the decisions?” It comes out as a whisper, spoken without thought. He doesn’t react so you continue to advance on him. “Why can’t you, just for once, give up control? For as long as I’ve known you, you’ve fought your urges, your true nature, too afraid of hurting someone.” By now you’re toe to toe and he’s straightened up, his back still against the rough bark. “Your way didn’t work, Kandomere.” His jaw clenches and as he inhales his nostrils flare. He’s scenting you.

“You smell different, like them, like their magic. That’s how I know.” His voice is low and breathy, making your heart pump faster.

Desperate to change his mind you unzip the jacket and toss it aside carelessly. “No, you’re wrong.”
In a moment of madness you take off, running towards the cabin as fast as you can, given the terrain. Bursting out from the shelter of the trees the unforgiving rain lashes down, the cold drops biting at your skin, stinging your face and hands. By the time Kandomere has joined you, having collected the discarded coat on his way, you’re drenched through, dripping wet and shivering.

“Try again!” You call above the elements, pushing your wet hair out of your face. “Who do I smell of now?” You demand.

“What are you doing?” He yells, his expression one of horror and fear.

Marching up to him you shove until he relents and steps back until you’re offered some protection from the trees. Tilting your head to the side you reveal your neck and a steely glare.

“Tell me if I smell like anyone else now.” You can pinpoint the second he goes to dismiss you, and having reached your limit, you slap down his hand that is reaching up to throw the coat over your shoulders.

“Y/n.” He growls out your name as a warning.

“Try again!”

“And if I do?” He snaps, “you’re still under the influence of their magic. Nothing’s changed—”

“Everything’s changed!” You cry, imploring him to just let you in. “Please. Please, just—” Throwing your hands into the air you search the woodland for inspiration. “Just smell me, that’s all—”

“That’s not all though is it? You know what will happen if I do, that’s why you’re pushing this.”

Sensing a crack in his resolve you advance on him, your head tilting to the right. “Can you smell their magic, Kandomere?”

He sneers and turns his head to the side but his body stays stock still so you carry on inching forward.

“Y/n, stop!” It’s a command but you ignore it. “I said stop!”

His head whips back to face you and his hands grasp the top of your arms. His expression now conveys his fury with his slight snarl and enraged glare but as he inhales to speak it contorts first to anguish and then hunger. His grip tightens and he drags you flush to his body to smell the juncture of your throat and shoulder. You freeze, your nerves exploding where you can feel him against your neck. A low rumble reverberates through his chest before he murmurs something in Övüsi, pulling you out of your stupefied condition. Seeing your opportunity you maneuver around and seizing a handful of his wet hair you press your lips against his, silencing his endless stream of words.

The second you connect his barrier drops. The wall holding him back crumbled and arms that were keeping you at bay suddenly wrap around to pull you closer. Opening his mouth, he draws you in, giving up any semblance of resistance to deepen the kiss. You’d almost forgotten what it was like to kiss him but in that second it all rushes back and you're greedy for more. Crushed against him, your head spins and your passion and hunger drive you to kiss harder until you're breathless but instead of fighting you he urges you on. Sliding his arms down to your thighs and bending slightly he hoists you up, fastening your legs around his waist. Dragging his hands back up to your hips to hold you, he spins, pinning you up against the tree. Without the need to support you, his fingers dance over every inch he can reach, starting with your legs and working his way up to your face.
where they hold you still. Ripping his mouth away he bears his teeth and fixes his scorching gaze to yours.

“You want me unchecked? Out of control? Wild?”

Tugging at his hair you lean down and press your lips to the shell of his ear. “No Kandomere, I just want you!”

With a roar he slams a hand against the tree and fastens his mouth to your neck, dragging his teeth carefully over your pulse point to make it bleed just a little. The sting is quickly soothed by the caress of his tongue and you shiver as he nips playfully. You’d almost forgotten about the weather when a flash of lightning illuminates the sky followed quickly by a bone-rattling crash of thunder.

“Kandomere, the storm.”

He glances up, refusing to be parted from your neck before dismissing the weather to return to his ministrations. Again and again he scrapes and kisses, nibbles and sucks until very soon, you care as much about the storm as he does. The passion between you grows, the need to overcome the last few months, as much as the urge to satiate your hunger controlling your actions. You can’t tear yourself away, you’ve missed this closeness, this intimacy too much to let it slip through your fingers. But you have a job to do to keep him safe so as he moves his plush lips back to your mouth you make the semi-conscious decision to push your magic into him. Without thinking too much about it you let the small tendril of white drift into him and like a ship on the tide you set it free, allowing it to float away and cleanse him. If he notices what you’ve done, he doesn’t react. Like a man starved, he continues to devour you and in return, you match his enthusiasm. Your tongues dance, brushing against one another, speaking a language only lovers can. Again he pulls back to follow the path from your jaw to your pulse point, only this time you can’t ignore the vicious tempest that appears to be just getting started. The brutal wind blows both of your hair into your face and another boom of thunder pulses through your veins.

“Kandomere? Y/n?”

Voices on the wind call to you and you can all but picture Clarissa on the porch shouting. As she shouts again, a little louder and a little more anxiously, Kandomere breaks the kiss to rest his forehead against yours.

“We should go in,” he says reluctantly, digging his fingertips into your ass.

Deftly he places you back on the ground, his body still trapping you against the tree as he takes in the storm around you. It’s violent and unforgiving, and even though the cabin isn’t far away, you’re suddenly very aware of how exposed you’re about to be. He glares, first at the sky and then to the cabin across the way.

“Don't let go.” Kandomere commands, seizing you uncomfortably tightly and tucking you protectively into his side. As the sky illuminates with another blast of lightning, you make a clumsy run for it, side by side. Leaving the borrowed jacket behind somewhere, you bow your head and brace yourselves against the horrific storm. Every step sees you battling against the elements, every raindrop feels like it’s tearing through your skin and every gust of wind steals the breath from your lungs. Although it only takes minutes, by the time you reach the cabin you're ice cold, sore and exhausted but it’s not until you get inside that you really feel the effects.

“What the hell did you do?” Clariddsa strides up to you both radiating a fiery wrath. Ice cold and drenched you shake your head scattering droplets of rain around the room. "You didn't stay inside the circle did you? You did magic beyond the boarders!” You catch up to her horror quickly, your
eyes widening as you realise your mistake. She raises her brows and peers at you with hard eyes. "You'd better hope this storm is powerful enough to disguise you otherwise you've brought the axe down on all of us."

"I'm so sorry, I wasn't think--"

"What's done is done, now we need to minimalise the damage. Kandomere, you need to find an alternative safe house, just in case and be ready to move. I doubt that luck will be on our side."

Kandomere cocks his head, his eyes wandering from the woman to the window. "The storm, it's you."

"Annabel actually, it helps cover us but I can't be sure if they'll be able to track the small amount of magic Y/n used on you so be ready." Clarissa gives you a quick once over and despite your fuck up, she offers you a smile. "I'll be able to sense anyone approaching so we'll have time to run, try not to worry, it will only interfere with the magic." Shaking out her arms she rolls her shoulders. "Oh," her smile widens, "and he's clean, I can't sense any darkness in him at all so if they do find us, it will have been worth it." She then closes her eyes and holds her hands over her face and after a moment starts to chant under her breath.
Chapter Forty Nine

It didn’t take long to pack what you needed seeing as you’d arrived with nothing. Clarissa had instructed you to change out of the wet clothes and head into the kitchen where you were to wait. Silently, Kandomere had followed you up the stairs and stood guard outside your room as you dressed, refusing to entertain the idea of waiting inside the room with a slow shake of his head. As soon as you were changed he’d led you down to the kitchen and pointed to a seat until you relented and sat down.

“What about you?” Your gaze sweeps over his form. The water soaked into his clothes made it cling to him and his wet hair dripped down his back. Hesitantly he glances briefly at the door. “I’ll wait right here,” you promise.

His jaw ticks but after only a moments pause he nods. “I’ll be right upstairs—“

“I know.“

“If anything happens—“ he clenches his jaw and inhaled through his nose, “come straight to me, I don’t care what Clarissa tells you to do, you find me first.”

“I could just come with you,” you suggest but he’s all too quick with his rebuttal.

“No! Stay here—“

“Why?” Narrowing your eyes you try to understand his reluctance. “Are you afraid I might try to jump on you again?” His pupils widen just enough for you to notice the change. “That’s it isn’t it?” You exclaim, your tone high with disbelief. “Damn it, Kandomere—“

”It’s not your reaction I am fearful of, Y/n.”

“Bullshit.” You snipe, gritting your teeth and turning away from the elf. You don’t hear him leave but you know after a breath or two he’s gone.

Exhaling you focus on the storm circling the cabin, refusing to allow your thoughts to drift anywhere near Kandomere or what had happened outside. There was way too much to unpack and quite frankly you were too angry to think about it all clearly. The house shudders suddenly as a particularly aggressive gust of wind slams into and you startle as an almighty crash of thunder sounds overhead. Jumping to your feet you inch away from the table in the centre of the room until your back is pressed up against the wall by the door. If the windows were going to give way you wanted to put as much space between them and you as possible. Eyeing the glass you try to control your racing heart, telling yourself that Clarissa and Annabel had everything under control but your body isn't listening. Your tense muscles are rigid to the point of being painful and your heart is pounding.

Time passes but no one comes, you’re left alone, pressed against the wall, praying that the Inferni hadn’t detected your reckless use of magic. You’ve no idea what’s happened to Agent Ross or Annabel, or even Kandomere for that matter, it should not have taken him this long to change.

Above the howl of the storm you make out a female voice shouting. Turning your head to the door you strain to decipher what’s being said only for the shouting to stop. Gritting your teeth you pin yourself against the wall, ignoring your instinct to run. You’re determined to keep your promise to Kandomere despite every nerve begging you to go and investigate.
"Run!" The cry of desperation comes from the next room and you can't tell if it's Clarissa or Annabel.

"Fuck." You grind out, your head snapping from one direction to the other, switching between the door next to you and the window across the room. Outside all you can see are the woods and they were giving you no clue as to what was going on in the next room.

"C'mon Blue, get a move on." Biting your lip you close your eyes and concentrate on breathing deeply.

“Move!” From beyond the wall you hear Clarissa, loud enough to allow you to recognise her voice. "Ru--" She cuts herself off with a blood curdling scream which drenches you in a blanket of fear. Glancing up you realise you can’t get to Kandomere without going through the room where Clarissa is still shrieking. Swallowing your anxiety, you rush to the window and try to peer around to the front of the cabin. Pressed up against the cold glass your breath fogs the window, not that it matters, you can’t see anything anyway, the position of the window means the front of the house is impossible to see. If only you hadn’t promised to stay put!

Knowing you wouldn’t leave left you with only one option. Pulling back from the glass you search the room for hiding spots. There are a number of cupboards you could potentially get into and a large storage closet at the far side. All were far too obvious. Making a rash decision you dive for the large oak table and duck beneath it, attempting to pull the chairs close without making too much noise. Huddling tightly in your makeshift shelter you wait. Clarissa is silent now and you’re not sure if that makes the situation better or worse.

With your heart trying to beat out of your chest, you wait, straining to hear anything above the storm until suddenly the house is bathed in complete silence. The storm dying instantly, as if someone had flipped a switch and turned it off. Pulling your knees tightly to your chest you hardly dare breathe in the eerie quiet. Why hadn’t you run when you had the chance?

A creak of the door draws your attention and you hold your breath as someone steps into the room. The chairs surrounding the table offer you some protection from prying eyes but equally impede your vision so you can’t see who is coming in. Heavy footsteps draw near followed by a deep inhalation.

“Y/n?”

Kandomere.

Every muscle releases and you let out the air in your lungs with a whoosh. On unsteady limbs you crawl out seeing his polished shoes as he steps towards the table and drags a chair out of the way. Holding out his hands he helps you up and pulls you into his embrace, wrapping his arms around you tightly.

“It’s time to leave.” His tone conveys the urgency behind his words so you don’t argue. “Come.” He squeezes you once and then steps away but snatches one of your hands in his, using it to pull you to his side.

“What hap—“ Trailing the elf into the living room you stop talking, the words stolen by the scene spread out in front of you. Three elven bodies litter the once cosy room, their dull, lifeless eyes staring at the various blood splatters sprayed over the walls.

“Annabel, Clarissa?”
Kandomere doesn’t linger, dragging you outside he hurries towards his car. “They’re alive but hurt. Ross has them. They’ll be okay.” Ripping open the passenger door he guides you into the seat, yanking the belt into position before you’re fully seated. Seconds later he’s behind the wheel, gunning the engine and speeding away from the area faster than was probably safe.

“Where are they?” You’re not entirely sure you want to hear the answer.

“They’re heading somewhere safe,” his eyes flicker over you before returning to the drenched track he’s navigating, “away from us.”

“From me you mean.”

“They knew the risk.“

Shaking your head you close your eyes. This was your fault, you’d used your magic outside the circle after explicitly being told not to. How monumentally stupid could you be? This whole thing, yet again, was your fault.

“What now?” Again a question you didn’t really want answering.

“We find somewhere to stay for the night and I make some calls. We’re going to have to get you farther off grid than I originally anticipated, somewhere your Bright magic can’t break out.”

Pursing your lips you turn away to stare out of the side window. “Does such a place outside of the MTF offices exist?”

You feel the weight of his gaze as he looks over at you. “I’ll find somewhere.”

“How?” Turning to face him, you tilt your head to the side. “You can’t. There isn’t anywhere.”

His brows knit together and he grips the wheel tighter. You can almost hear his the frantic speed of thoughts as he sifts through his very limited options. He knows that taking you to any of the other safe houses risks the lives of anyone in their vicinity. Given how badly the Inferni wanted you, they’d go through anyone and anything to get to you. In fact, how Annabel and Clarissa were still alive after they’d found you, you’ve no idea.

Assuming they were still alive.

Were they still alive? It’s completely plausible that Kandomere had lied to you. Oh god, what if you’d killed them.

“Where are Annabel and Clarissa?” You whisper.

His reply is brusque. “We can’t go with them.”

“You’re sure—“

“Annabel forbade us from following them,” he growls.

Relief floods through you as the gears shift in your head, so they were alive but they didn’t want you anywhere near. Understandable given the circumstances. But if even Annabel and Clarissa, with all their power, couldn’t protect you then what were your choices? Who could withstand the might of the Inferni? With a quiet resignation you reach the only feasible conclusion. Sighing deeply you lean over to softly lay your hand over his on the steering wheel. “It’s over Kandomere, there’s nowhere you can take me where they can’t reach me. Dragging me around is only going to
place innocent people in danger, place you in danger.”

He blinks slowly before the car speeds up. Patently you wait for him to respond, allowing him time to process everything. Minutes tick by and you reach the end of the track you’d been driving down. Without a pause, Kandomere swings the car right, out on to the main road.

“We keep moving,” he eventually growls, his words punching through the silence.

“How long can we outrun them? How far do we—“

His jaw tenses. “What do you suggest then? What bright idea is going through that head of yours? Let me guess, you want to try and make it on your own again.“

His sharp tone reminds you of the Kandomere he’d been under the Inferni’s influence, bringing back a rush of unwelcome memories of the monster they’d turned him into. There was no way you could allow them that opportunity again.

“I recognise that tone.” Wringing your hands together you look at your fingers twisting around one another. “That’s how you spoke to me on the good days, on the bad ones—“

In your peripheral vision you see him sit straighter. “I know what you’re doing and it won’t work querida.” Startled by the term of endearment you stare wide eyed at the elf as he pushes on, undeterred by your reluctance. “I have a plan, one that is already in motion. I simply need a little more time. If we keep moving they won’t be able to pin you down.”

“Assuming I don’t accidentally send out a homing beacon again.” It comes out dripping with sarcasm which you regret instantly as Kandomere’s expression morphs from resolute to pity.

“It was as much my fault as it was yours.”

“Hardly,” you scoff bitterly, looking away from his compassionate eyes.

“Amor—“ A gentle hand against your cheek forces your face back to his. He pulls his concentration from the empty asphalt ahead to look you in the eye. “I have one last card up my sleeve, one I’d hoped I would not have to play but events have led me to consider the unthinkable.” He glances back to the road.

*Events have led me to consider the unthinkable*. His words cut frighteningly close to the bone and you have to physically push back in the seat to stop yourself reacting. Yeah, you’d also been thinking the unthinkable. The unspeakable. The incomprehensible. You didn’t want to, in fact it downright terrified you but at this point it seemed the only possible way to keep the world safe.

“I know of someone.” He continues, pursing his lips and scowling. “A less than savoury character but for the right amount of money—“

Your brows shoot up and you laugh incredulously. “You’re last hope is a criminal? One who can be bought?”

“I know what you’re thinking—“

“Then you know how ridiculous your idea is.”

He smiles. “No, it’s not. We’re driving until night fall and then I’m calling Ulysses. He can arrange a meeting.”
“And then what? The Inferni come swooping in because this criminal has been bought off already by them and—“

“He won’t work with the Inferni.” Kandomere replies with certainty.

“Because he’s got morals?” You scoff.

“No.” Silver eyes meet yours as he reaches across to grasp your hand. “Because he’s Shield of Light.”
Running your hands through your windswept hair you are beyond shocked at what Kandomere has just suggested. He knows the Shield of Light wants you dead, and still he wants to hand you over. You’ve no idea how he’s reached the conclusion that it’s the safest option for you, but you’re aggrieved, despite having just been considering death as your only remaining option.

In the quiet interior of the car, the sound of the engine acts as white noise, allowing you to sink deep into the darkest corners of your mind. You’re a danger to everyone who deals with you, there’s no denying this, but you don’t want to die. You’ve come so far and faced so much that even the notion of bowing out, no matter how noble you perceive the cause, annoys you. Why should you endure all this pain, humiliation and heartache to simply roll over and die? Where was the justice in that?

It wasn’t fair but no one ever said life was, you only had to look at the histories of the human and orc races to know that equality and fairness were simply idealistic concepts employed by the down trodden to foster a spark of hope.

A soft sigh is closely followed by a, “Talk to me.” which cuts through your internal unease.

Moving your focus to the vista hurtling past the window you lift your shoulders in a half assed shrug. “I’m not sure there’s anything to say.”

You’d been travelling for all of half an hour, the dense trees still lining either side of the road which suggested you’re still a long way from civilisation. The low rumble of Kandomere’s doubtful hum companies the weight of his gaze on your hunched back as you decline to turn and face him. Instead you study the beauty of the forest outside.

“I have a plan, Y/n.” He is incredibly calm as he speaks and it’s unnerving. “Clarissa’s sister is working her magic through the MTF as we speak. By nightfall she’ll have identified all the Inferni who’ve infiltrated the organisation, manipulating them to file fabricated reports back to the coven. As far as the coven are concerned it’s business as usual at the MTF and MoD.”

Okay, this was new information.

“The Shield of Light agent will help us hide you. They’ll do just about anything to get in the way of Inferni plans. We’ve worked with him before. He won’t know who you are, just that the Inferni have a special interest in you. Once you’re safe I’ll return to the Inferni and work from the inside —”

You whip around to gape at him with a loud exclamation of disbelief. “What? What about Liona?” Your voice is high and you’re struggling to wrestle it under control. “She’ll know the second she sees you, you’re no longer under her magic.”

His rebuttal comes without as much as a blink. “She won’t see me.”

“And you can guarantee this?” A tentative glance in your direction tells you there’s something he’s hiding. “Kandomere, what aren’t you telling me?”

Licking his lips he takes a moment to inhale. “She was punished severely for what she had me do
to you. The high priest had her flayed and then removed from the inner circle. No one was to touch you except the high priest so she was sent back to X-Cre under Delavore."

You can’t control the shudder that travels down your spine at the mention of that place so you attempt to disguise it with sarcasm. “Oh great, the gruesome twosome reunited.” Hiding your face behind a curtain of messy hair you work to control your self. Bile is rising fast, burning your throat and threatening to choke you as you try and calm your erratic breathing.

“No, you misunderstand, querida,” his tone is carefully composed and his word spoken slowly, “she is not working for him, she is…”

His intentional pauses fissures your composure. “What?” You snap impatiently.

“She is in his care,” silver eyes meet yours, “as you were.”

For a moment you’re lost to the memories until you close your eyes to see her face in place of yours, her body being beaten instead of yours.

Anger overrides your initial sense of fear, twisting into a ball of bitter hatred in your chest. Gritting your teeth you round on the elf. “And you’re just telling me this now?”

“That creature,” he seethes, his lips curling as he unintentionally flashes his pointed teeth, “is the least of my worries at this time.”

Matching his tone you feel the sting of nails biting into your palm as you ball your hands with fury. How dare he keep that from you? Had he any idea what that elf had put you through? How she’d broken you? “How nice,” you spit, “that you don’t have to worry about the creature who tortured me for the best part of a month, the creature who experimented on me. The creature who—” you grit your teeth and bite back a snarl refusing to admit out loud how hard she had shattered you. “I am so very glad she didn’t even register enough on your radar for you to tell me about her fall from grace.” Fuck, you’re furious, so furious you could punch him in his stupid face.

“That is not what I meant and you know it,” he counters, reaching across to you but you slap his hand away.

“No! You know what she did to me, right?” Your voice cracks as you recall the treatment you’d received at X-Cre. “How could you possibly forget—“

“I didn’t.” Kandomere snarls, raising his voice unnecessarily loud given your surroundings, but it serves to shock you into submission. Seeing a break in your tirade he jumps on it. “Amor, at this present moment in time my priority lies with keeping you safe. Once you’re out of their reach, once we’ve purged the MTF and removed the LA Inferni coven, then I’ll be dealing with her.”

Your mouth, which had fallen open, clamps shut and your wrath and fury disputes as quickly as it flared. Slumping back against the soft leather you stare blankly ahead, trying to decipher and digest what he’d just told you.

After a while bright Neon lights appear on the horizon in the shape of a gaudy arrow pointing to what appears to be a run down gas station. In your peripheral you notice Kandomere raising his chin and sitting up taller. “We need to stop for provisions. You need sustenance.” He slows the car, effectively ending your present conversation.

“Did she… Did she tell you?”

“Don’t,” he warns, his fingers gripping the wheel tighter. “I cannot think of her right now, I can’t
have wrath dictating my actions. Not yet.”

Bristling at his privilege you look him in the eye. “There isn’t a second of the day I don’t think about what they did to me there and it’s not by choice. I can’t switch off the anxiety or sickening memories, no matter how hard I try.” Dropping your gaze you stare at the parking brake and twist your fingers together in your lap. “Do you have any idea what thats like?”

His inhale is deep as he slows the car and turns off the road. “Mi alma I can’t sleep without nightmares tormenting me with the suffering you’ve endured but no, how can I possibly imagine the atrocities you endured because of that coñ—” snapping his jaw closed he throws the car into park and turns in his seat to cradle your cheek. Instinctively you move out of his reach, not even registering what you’ve done until you catch his wounded expression and slow withdraw of his hand. “Get you to safety, purge the MTF, destroy the LA coven, these are my primary objectives. After this I’m going to give you the wand we took from you and allow you free rein. Do as you will, to her, to me, I care not as long as it brings you some semblance of—“

“Revenge?” You gasp, eyes wide.

He shakes his head and furrows his brows. “Peace.”

Searching his face you move your gaze from his starlit eyes to where his lips are set in a grim line. “I don’t think there’s any peace out there for me to find, not anymore.”

Your candid confession causes his pupils to widen as underneath his vest, his chest rises and falls with each deepening breath. He takes his time, drinking you in with his steely gaze that refuses to waver as he collects his thoughts.

“I keep asking myself the same question over and over.” He frowns. “It haunts me, has done since the moment I met you.” Pale eyes search yours, staring hard before a tiny smile pulls at his full lips. “I try to calculate how much more you can take. I wonder how you haven’t fallen apart yet because by rights, you shouldn’t still be here. But that fact alone explains why you are still here, still going still surging forward because you, mi alma, mi Corazon, are a fighter.” Darting out a hand he captures your face before you can dodge him whilst huffing out a small chuckle “You’re so stubborn that you even fight to spite yourself.”

Leaning into his warm touch you allow your eyes to slip closed. “I’m tired of it all though, Kandomere. I don’t want to play this game anymore.”

Unfastening his seatbelt he leans across and takes your head in both of his large hands. Pulling you gently towards him he rests his forehead against yours and speaks softly.

“What do you want to do?”

Opening your eyes you take your time searching his for answers as you sift through your scattered thoughts. What do you want to do? You want this all to be over without any else getting hurt because of you. Taking his hands in yours he holds them in your lap.

“What if I went back to the coven with the wand? Hit them hard and fast. They’d never see it coming and I could wipe them out without anyone else getting caught in the cross fire.”

You expect him to shut you down with a hard and fast no but instead he shocks you, considering your suggestion with a quiet contemplative expression. “What makes you think you’re able to control your magic now? You’re still very new to being a Bright, mi amor, how can you be certain you won’t accidentally destroy another building?”
There’s nothing but genuine concern in his tone as he pulls back to be able to see you better. Chewing on your bottom lip you think back to when you held the wand the last time. It belonged to you, you could feel that much. You hadn’t had to consciously think of how to wield it, it had come as naturally as breathing.

“I could try it first. The wand, it—” Closing your eyes you shake your head and let out a wry laugh. “This sounds so pathetic but when I held it, I didn’t have to think, it was organic, natural, it just did what I wanted it to.”

“You were very volatile and not yourself when you touched it last time.” Kandomere tilts his head slightly. “Are you sure you could control your urges? What if you happened across Liona in the lobby? Could you hold firm and not lash out?”

It’s a fair question and one you don’t know the answer to. “Honestly? I couldn’t say.”

Sitting back, Kandomere gently pulls his hands from yours and straightens his tie. “It’s an interesting solution, one that could go spectacularly wrong, however,” he eyes you and pauses, “I think you may given me a more solid idea. Give me five minutes, let me get you something to eat and drink and then we can go somewhere and perhaps, map out a solid plan of action.”

The slight cock of an eyebrow indicates that he’s waiting for your approval and makes you smile. “Okay, I can agree to that.”

He drops his chin in a barely there nod before offering you a smile in return. “I will not be long nor will I venture anywhere other than the gas station. If I am not back in six minutes then something has gone wrong and you are to drive off. If you have to leave, get off this highway and find a phone. Call the MTF building and request extension 4357, upon connection ask them how many foxes are in the chicken house, the answer should be zero, at which time ask for Montehugh. Anything other than zero, hang up and drive away as fast as you can. Retry again no less than four hours later. Do you understand?”

“4357, zero foxes.”

He exhales as you answer. “Good, there’s money and a concealed weapon under your chair. Use them if you need to.”

“You think—”

Leaning across he places a chaste kiss to your lips, then another to your cheek before finally kissing the side of your head as he quickly embraces you. “I will be no more than six minutes. Be safe. Be careful, and know that I am eternally sorry for everything I put you through.” He’s out of his seat before you can answer but before he closes the door, he ducks his head down and meets your questioning gaze. “También, mi alma, todavía te amo.”

And just like that he clicks the door closed and is striding across the forecourt away from you.
También, mi alma, todavía te amo - Also, my soul, I still love you
Chapter Fifty One

I've been so pressed for time that this is pretty much unedited but I felt bad for the massive gap between updates. If you catch any mistakes, please let me know.

You’ve been in the car for hours. Since the gas station you’d not stopped once and cabin fever had well and truly set in. Crossing your ankles you stretch out your legs, a groan of discomfort sounding in the back of your throat as you try to loosen your tight muscles. The road ahead appears endless which is only made worse by not knowing if there was an actual destination.

Kandomere, noticing your fidgeting, offers you a sympathetic smile. “We’ll stop at the next gas station.”

“Thanks.” Tugging your bottom lip into your mouth you steel yourself to broach a subject you’d been trying to bring up for a while. “Annabel and Clarissa, you, you’re sure they’re going to be okay?”

A slow blink and nod of his head accompanies his quiet, ‘yes’.

“You’re not just saying that to spare me, because if you are, please don’t, I need to know the truth. I mean,” shaking your head you think back to their cosy living room as you’d left, “there was so much blood and I heard Clarissa’s scream—”

“I swear to you, querida, though hurt, they are both going to be just fine. Agent Ross was taking them to another magical family who aid us. They will be well looked after.”

“And Ross? Is he okay?”

“He is, yes, he—“

The chirp of his cell cuts through the fledging conversation and silences you. Warily your gaze flickers between the phone now in his hand and Kandomere’s face. With curiosity, you listen to his half of the conversation but it soon becomes clear he is talking in code. Keeping silent you wait as patiently as you can until finally he ends the call and tilts his head in your direction.

“That was Montehugh.” His eyes list to the side and his expression turns pensive. “Things are not going well at his end, the coven have increased their activity exponentially and the task force are struggling to keep up. It seems that your burst of magic enticed other magic users out of hiding and the Inferni have been swift to recruit them. There have been attacks, out in the open, similar to the one you witnessed in Vegas.”

As he talks your chest tightens painfully, restricting your ability to breathe. In an instant you’re transported back to the night it all began, into the memory of the atrocity of watching your friends burning alive. The heat of the fire licks at your skin and the thick choking smoke smothers your heaving lungs.

Gasping for air, your eyes watering from the effort, you flail blindly as something binds your wrists
together, clamping them down into your lap tightly. Wrenching your eyes down, your startled to
find yourself seated.

“You are safe, mi alma. You are in my car. Listen to my voice, hear only my voice and breathe.”

Blinking rapidly, the lucid memory recedes and the sleek interior of Kandomere’s car replaces the
putrid horror show you’d been surrounded by.

“Good,” he breathes low and soft, “now look at me.”

Wrestling with the urge to run you turn slowly to meet his silver eyes. His brow is creased deep
and his lips are pressed together so hard they’re starting to turn white. Swallowing, you manage to
find your voice.

“How many have been killed since we left the city? And how many more have to die?”

His hands reach up to cup your face as he searches your eyes. “You cannot blame yourself for the
actions of others, mi amor. This is not a choice you have made, you did not kill those people.”

“But I did, they’ve done all of this to flush me out. If I hadn’t hid then—”

“They would have used you to annihilate the entire city.” He exhales, moving away from you to
unclip his belt and exit the car. Striding around to your door he opens it and offers you his hand.
With a heaviness in your limbs you remove your seatbelt and allow him to pull you out into the
open air.

The road is quiet, you’d hardly seen any other vehicles all day and the air so still it’s verging on
oppressive. Despite the heat you allow Kandomere to coax you into his embrace, leaning against
his broad chest as he places your hand over his heart. Concentrating on the rhythm under your
finger tips you match your breaths to his, relaxing against him until you feel somewhat normal
again.

“You did what was right. Staying in the city would have been beyond foolish. They’d have found
you in no time and forced you to do their will. Yes, people are dying but rushing in without a well
constructed plan of action will do more harm than good.” His arms constrict and he lays his head
atop yours. “We’re staying off grid for now. Slowly we’re regrouping without the Inferni realising.
Let’s reconstruct our defences before thinking about launching an attack.”

Sliding your hand down his chest you wrap your arms around his waist and inhale his spicy scent. Seconds later you let out a heavy sigh.

“I know,” he soothes, “but we must work the problem logically not emotionally.”

He’s right but it doesn’t make any of this easier. “I’m glad you’re back in my corner.” You admit.
snuggling deeper into his embrace. “I don’t think I could do this without you.”

Kandomere doesn’t react, he simply stands stock still, making you question if he’d heard you.
Only, how could he not have given his superior hearing? Squirming out of reach you look up at
him through knitted brows. His expressionless face is turned away and he refuses to meet your
gaze.

“What?” Your tone is flat and your voice loud.

Pursing his lips he glances at you from the side of his eye before lowering his gaze. Shoving his
hands into his pockets he drops his shoulders and head, resting his backside against the closed car
door. “I fear Annabel’s magic will wear off soon and you’ll regret everything that’s transpired between us.”

Of all the answers he could have given, this was possibly the least expected. Without thought, you shake your head. “Kandomere—” You so badly want to reassure him, to make him understand but you’ve used all the words already and still he can’t accept it. Taking a deep breath you move to join him, leaning your ass against the back door and pushing your hands through your messy hair. Searching the long empty roadside still lined with trees, your brain quietens and you settle on one thought.

“I love you.” It comes out easily, without hesitation or regret. “I get it though. I understand your reluctance to believe that this status quo will last, so I’m not going to push you.”

Kandomere blows out a breath. “Querida.” His face scrunches and his head drops lower still. “I want nothing more than to trust in your feelings. How easy it would be to silence my doubts and give in to my heart.” After a beat he squares his shoulders and stands tall, sliding his gaze to the middle distance, looking at something you can’t see. “However, I will not be weak. Whilst you are under Annabel’s influence you need me to be strong enough for the both of us.” He inhales and finally turns to look at you. “Heaven knows I owe you that much.”

There’s determination in his eyes and you know it’s pointless arguing yet there’s a question you need answering. “How long are you going to chalk it up to Annabel’s magic?”

Cocking his head he stares into the depths of your eyes and speaks confidently. “I doubt I’ll have to wait too long. I imagine you’ll feel the effects waning soon.”

“And when I don’t.”

He graces you with a longing expression, his eyes flashing with the true depth of his sadness for just a second before he plasters on a smile and makes his way around the other side of the car. “You will, mi alma, you will. Now, I must make a call and set up a safe house for tonight. Montehugh has set the wheels in motion but I need to speak with the individual involved.”

“The shield of light agent?”

Uneasily he glances around, not that it’s necessary, you haven’t seen another soul for hours. “Yes. She’ll offer us protection as long as we keep your ability under wraps.”

“And if I can’t?” It’s a genuine question that you blurt out nervously.

Steadying his gaze he looks you dead in the eye and without blinking replies, “Then I’ll have to kill her.”

The shock of his words physically jolts you, forcing you to take a step back to steady yourself.

“Mi alma, please understand. It is certainly not what I want to happen and I’m taking every precaution. She is not able to sense magic, she cannot feel or see it unless you somehow show it to her. The likelihood of this happening is extremely small, however, should the very worst occur, should she or anyone else find out you’re—” he stops short and once again checks the surroundings until he’s satisfied. “Let’s just say I’m prepared to do what must be done in order to keep you safe.”

Yanking open your door you gracelessly flop into the seat and tug at the seatbelt, muttering, “Great, more people put in danger because of me.”
Through the windshield, Kandomere shakes his head at you and scowls before raising his cell phone to his ear. His call is quick and he wastes no time climbing back into the car and getting back on the road.

“We’ll be there by seven. She’ll have food and clothes waiting. I’ll stay the night then head out in the morning. Alone.”

You whip around in your seat angrily only to come face to face with a smiling elf.

“Mi amor, que predecible eres.” He chuckles quietly to himself as he takes in your disbelief. “I’m joking, querida, just trying to lighten the mood.”

“Lighten the—“ Eyes wide you gape at the elf wondering how you didn’t notice the alien’s abducting him.

Keeping his smile in place he continues, unperturbed by your reaction. “Our destination is a lake house owned by the Shield of Light. Their operative will meet us there and settle us in but won’t stay. She has her own place in town. It’s secluded so we shouldn’t be disturbed, however, this seclusion may cause us issue should the need to evacuate quickly arise.” He pauses for a moment. “Whilst we’re there we’ll have to remain inside. I’m not sure how accustomed the locals will be to seeing an elf and human couple and we should avoid drawing attention to ourselves.”

“How long will we be staying?”

A raised eyebrow is swiftly followed by a determined, “Not long.”

“You know, I still think we should go back to the city and get my wand—“

“Your wand?”

Offering a feeble shrug you nod. “Yeah, what’s the point in denying it?”

Kandomere shifts slightly in his seat. “Maybe you shouldn’t express that opinion outside of my company unless you want to earn more enemies.”

With a dramatic roll of your eyes you toss him an irritated grimace, “No fucking shit.” Shaking your head you lapse into silence. He’s obviously not going to discuss your plan any further so you let it drop, for now.

The journey to the lake house is interrupted twice by Kandomere’s cell. Each time he relays the information after he hangs up. The MTF are struggling but for the moment, with help from Annabel’s sister, they’re on top of things. It wouldn’t take long for this precarious balance to tip the way of the Inferni though so whatever Kandomere has planned has to happen fast.

Eventually you pull up outside a beautiful house flanked, either side, by dense forest. Out front a young woman with blonde hair and stylish clothes waits to greet you. Without saying a word, she beckons you up to the front porch and into the house, waiting for the door to close firmly before she speaks.

“I’m Melissa. You must be Kandomere.” She regards the elf with distrust before focusing on you.
Quirking a brow she looks you up and down. “They didn’t tell me your name.”

“You can call her Miss Smith.” Kandomere declares, stepping in front of you. “Now if you’d be so kind, we’ve had a long journey.”

Melissa huffs but concedes regardless. “There’s food in the kitchen and clothes in the master bedroom. I’ve left my direct number by the phone. Dreyanne tells me you’ll most likely be gone tomorrow but there’s provisions enough for a week.”

Giving Melissa a slight incline of his head, Kandomere moves to show her to the door, all the while blocking you from her sight. “Thank you for your generosity and that of your operation, you are doing the MTF a great kindness that won’t be forgotten. I’ll speak with Dreyanne later and inform her of our plans.”

A disgruntled hum is all you hear from Melissa before the door is closed in her face.

“Wow.”

Starlit eyes peer down at you as Kandomere turns and leans against the exit. “Is there a problem?”

“Not at all, I just thought you’d have disguised your contempt for the Shield of Light a little better is all.”

His unwavering gaze watches you for a long time until you can no longer bear the weight of it. Spinning on your heel you decide to take a look around the house but you’ve barely taken one step when a gentle hand circles your wrist and holds you in place.

“Let me check the building first.” Stepping closer to you from behind his mouth presses against your ear to whisper. “Be aware, there may be bugs. Choose your words wisely.”

Nodding you allow his to pass, only moving when he gestures you closer. “Stay close.” Drawing his side arm he leads you both from room to room, giving you the most hostile tour of a house you’ve ever had.

The main living room over looks the lake. The cathedral ceiling towers above you and the wall of glass offering you an uninterrupted view of the vista floods the area with natural light. Three large sofas create a horseshoe effect around an ornate coffee table and on the far side of the room a giant open fireplace awaits invitingly. There are very few hiding places so Kandomere declares the room safe after only a brief search.

Moving onto the vast kitchen you trail quietly behind, watching with interest as he does his thing. You’re not overly concerned, despite the situation, having reasoned that if anyone were to be here then he’d have heard them already. The kitchen and subsequent dining room are also void of life.

Ascending the staircase you hold your breath. Despite your confidence that the house is empty, and your knowledge that Kandomere was on your side, it’s still unnerving to follow the stealthy, silent killer leading you from room to room. You begin losing interest in the house in favour of dissecting the elf’s every move. Every motion is so fluid that its almost like watching him dance and it strikes you that when he’d been under Liona’s influence he’d not been anywhere near as graceful.

“All clear.” He holsters his weapon and relaxes his stance.

Seeing an opportunity to sample the rainforest shower and wash away the last few days you hurry back to the master bedroom. “I am in desperate need of a shower so I’m just going to—–” Snatching
up one of the robes draped over the bottom of the giant bed you quickly open up the ensuite door and hang it on one of the chrome pegs next to the shower. Biting your bottom lip, you smile to yourself as Kandomere walks into the bedroom and an idea pops into your head.

It’s stupid, you know it is. It will never work and there are far more pressing matters at hand but still…

Peeling off your top you drop it in the nearby laundry bin. Not that it’ll be laundered, it was just shameful to mess up such a beautiful house. Next you shimmy out of the trousers you’d borrowed and again, throw them in the laundry.

“You know,” leaning against the door frame in just your underwear, you toss the elf a hungry, salacious smile, “I could really use some help washing my hair.”

His nostrils flare and his beautiful eyes narrow. “You won’t break me.”

Smirking, you lower the straps on your bra and reach around to unhook it. “You’re certain you want to stay over there?” You tease.

His jaw muscles flex and slowly his pupils widen as you discard your bra slowly. “I am,” he grinds out.

“One hundred percent?” You question, hooking your thumbs into the top of your panties. “Because, I don’t know about you,” dipping your head you look up at him through your lashes hoping against all odds, you looked sexier than you felt, “but I would really, really appreciate a little unwinding.”

Your attempt fails miserably. With disappointment you watch as he strides out of the room, away from you. Sighing you retreat into the bathroom, leaving the door open, just in case, and head into the hot, welcoming shower.

Only you can’t stop thinking about Kandomere. And instead of feeling horny, you’re feeling a massive amount of guilt. Guilt that you were continuously pushing at his boundaries even though he’d made it clear he’s not willing to give. Guilt that you could even think about sex when people were dying because of you. Guilt because here you were in the lap of luxury when Montehugh and the likes were working non stop to try and protect you.

The guilt weighs heavy so you shower fast, full of good intentions of finding Kandomere and apologising. Without even drying yourself you yank on the fluffy robe and go hunting for the blue haired elf. Stepping out of the master bedroom you hear him moving around in the house bathroom and quickly step across the hallway. The door is closed but not shut and you don’t even think as you automatically reach out and push the door open. As the opening widens you freeze on the spot, paralysed by the sight in front of you.

Kandomere’s shoes have clearly been kicked off and left where they’d fallen and his clothes are strewn around haphazardly. The elf himself stands under a steady stream of water, allowing the shower to rain down on him as he bites savagely on his lip and furiously pumps his swollen erection in his closed hand. His eyes are closed, head tipped back and thankfully he doesn’t seem aware of your presence.

For a brief while you stand and take him in. Inside your chest your heart is beating furiously and your stomach is tight with arousal but you don’t venture any further. You want to, oh god do you want to but you can’t, it would be beyond unfair. You’d searched him out with the intention of apologising and as much as every fibre of your being is telling you to join him, you can’t, because deep down, below the need and hunger, you know that’s not really what he wants right now. So
you back away, using every ounce of will power and strength you can muster to pull the door closed behind you. You’re just about to let go of the handle when Kandomere chokes out your name in a guttural, breathless moan and you have to swallow down the urge to stride back in there and touch him. Instead you march back to the master bedroom, close the door and head straight back into your own shower, which you hastily set to cold.

Chapter End Notes

Mi amor, que predecible eres - My love, how predictable you are.
After a long, ice cold shower, you’d sat on the bed towelling off your hair and vowing to keep things strictly professional between you and Kandomere. He was obviously struggling with the whole situation and the last thing you wanted was to make things harder on him. So you’d back off, follow his orders and hopefully get through this whole debacle alive and with as few casualties as possible. A soft knock on the door pulls your gaze to the emerging elf, back in his three piece suit without a hair out of place. If you’d not seen him in the shower you’d find it impossible to know he’d been doing anything other than work. He waves his phone at you, barely able to meet your eyes as he mutters, “there’s been an attack.”

Already freezing from your shower, what little blood circulating in your system drains and you pale considerably. Its enough to get Kandomere into your room as he strides over and places a warm hand on your cheek. Not that you pay any attention, instead you’re imagining the worst; the MTF building destroyed, all the people you know killed and the Inferni on the loose in LA, without anyone there to stop them. In your mind you see the plumes of smoke rising over the city, the bodies lying dead in the streets and the high priest stood over them all with a cruel sneer on his bloodied lips.

“You’re ice cold,” Kandomere states, his voice laced with worry. Yanking on the bedclothes he attempts to wrap them around your shoulders, only to stop when you suddenly come too and bolt from the bed towards to closet.

“We need to go,” hurriedly you grasp the first few items of clothes and tug them free, “It’s not, we can’t stay here when, we can’t—“

“No one was hurt.”

His raised voice cuts through your weak babbling and causes you to stop trying to cram your leg into the jeans you’d hastily picked up.

“They attempted to infiltrate the MTF by force, however we’d been informed prior and were expecting it. Three of their coven were killed, shot dead on sight, but non of ours were harmed.”

“So—“ you search the room with wild eyes looking for some way to piece your scrambled thoughts together. Kandomere had said an attack, not an attempted attack so something bad had to have happened. If it had been a complete failure surely he’d have used different terminology.

“What happened?”

He straightens up, rolling his shoulders before crossing his arms and you know instantly by his body language alone that he’s not happy. “They’re getting desperate. They’re making sloppy moves and becoming less concerned with keeping their activity under the radar.”

Dropping the jeans you meet his concerned eyes. “They’re even more dangerous if they’re desperate.” Your voice is strained and distant, mirroring your thoughts. “If they’ve tried forcing their way into the MTF building then they don’t care about consequences anymore.”

“Possibly,” he quirks a brow, “or they’re testing us. Three Inferni against our whole operation is not what we would expect from a planned attack. It’s more likely that they’ve realised what we’ve
been doing, which would mean I’m now a target again. It would also stand to reason they’ll assume we’re together given our history—“ He trails off, allowing you to fill in the blanks.

“So you think they’ll start looking for you now.”

“If it was a test, yes, however we can’t be sure of anything.”

“Except you know what you’re going to do, don’t you.” You can tell from his stance he’d already chosen his course of action and you know you’re not going to like it.

“We have to assume that all members of the MTF and our allied agencies are under supervision. The only ones the Inferni won’t suspect—“

A resigned sigh escapes you as the puzzle pieces slot into place. “You’re going back to the city and you want me to stay put because the Inferni won’t expect one of their fugitives to be hiding out in a Shield of Light safe house.”

His gaze flits around the room but you’re too defeated to care about being cautious. “What? You think I’m any safer here? In a house you’re worried might be bugged? You should have just let me go out on my own like I planned in the first place, then you could have focussed all your attention on ending that damn coven.”

“Don’t—“ He uncrosses his arms to rest his hands on his hips, readying himself for a fight.

“Im not,” you huff, “I’m just saying that maybe all this could have been avoided if we’d gone about this differently.”

His expression changes in the blink of an eye and he stares at you with steely eyes. “You honestly think this could all have been avoided if you’d disappeared?” His voice is cold and dark. “Or perhaps if I hadn’t brought Liona in? It definitely wouldn’t have happened if I’d listened to you in the first place but tell me, how does hindsight help us now?”

Rolling your eyes at his sarcasm you move to perch against the window seat. He’s on edge, no doubt torn between his need to protect you and the guilt for not being in the city with his men. It’s easy to forget just how much trauma he’s suffered through out your run in with the Inferni until moments like this bring it crashing down with it’s full force to suffocate the pair of you.

Slumping against the window you’re drawn to the orange glow from the setting sun as it casts a fiery aura around your shadow stretching across the huge bed. Lifting your shoulders in a lacklustre shrug you shake your head. “It doesn’t but we can learn from our mistakes.”

“And by that you mean I should let you wander off out into the world without protection, without help.” He actually growls as he storms past you and slams his hand down on the light switch. The bright, crisp lights illuminate every corner of the room, snuffing out your shadow as if it never existed.

“Well no, not exactly.” Running your had through your damp hair you wet your lips. “You could give me a burner phone, one that you don’t have the number for but that has yours, Montehugh’s, Ross’s, everyone’s numbers in so if, if I needed you, I could reach you. And money,” you rush, finding your stride, “so I don’t have to walk or hitch a ride and so I can pay for somewhere to stay. It doesn’t have to be dangerous, you could set parameters—“

He’s heard enough. “Which no doubt you would ignore the second I am out of sight. No, on your own you are vulnerable, you’re too easy to find.”
“So what do we do then? I can’t just hide here, We’ve got to do something.”

At this his lips curve into a predatory smirk and his silvery, narrowed eyes pin you in place. “I suggest we stop running.” Your heart flips uneasily as dread courses through your veins. It’s not his words that are unsettling you but the gleam of murder in his eyes. “We can no longer hide, I agree, but we can’t have you anywhere near the city. This would seem we have very limited options.”

Curling in on yourself you wrap your arms around your middle and bite your lip. As he approaches you slowly, you have to firmly remind yourself that he’s on your side now and won’t hurt you. Only he looks like he’s ready to strike and you’re all for self preservation at the minute so you surreptitiously lower your gaze and attempt to make yourself as small and non threatening as possible.

“What I’m about to propose is unconventional to say the least, however, now we have full control of the MTF, I believe we can orchestrate an attack of our own.” He sounds almost gleeful at the prospect. “If we lured the coven away from the city we could lesson the casualty number exponentially. Using myself as bait, I could draw them out where we’ve laid a trap. In one fell swoop we could obliterate them.”

Chewing on your bottom lip, you stifle your protests. He’s too close and look too feral to argue with.

“We have a good number of magical users on our side, if we utilised their unique abilities the Inferni would be distracted enough for my men to take them down. Of course it would have to be conducted with precision timing, anything less could result in an unfavourable outcome but I believe it’s manageable.”

Assuming you can get all of them exactly where you need them, you silently answer, gritting your teeth.

“You’re being uncharacteristically quiet, tell me, what are you trying so hard not to say?”

With trepidation you flick your gaze up to his for the briefest of moments. He’s staring at you with suspicion with quickly changes to confusion.

“Why do you look so fearful? I have no intention of including you in this operation.”

Your jaw clenches at how badly he’s missed the mark, clueing him in on his mistake. “That’s not what frightened you, is it?” He steps backwards. “Y/N?” His demanding tone softens and he sits down on the bed, dipping his head to try and enter your eye line. “Querida, please, look at me.”

Schooling your features, you wipe any trace of fear or doubt from your face and do as he asks. For his part the murderous expression that had started this has now been replaced with an anxious pinch of his brows and you find it much easier to meet his gentle demand.

He studies you and you can almost hear his thoughts speeding through his mind.

“I did it again. You saw me as the monster I can be.” You’re denying it before he’s even finished but he silences you with a shake of his head. “I recognise that expression, you’re trying so hard to hide it from me—“

“I’m not doing this again.” You sigh heavily. “We’ve had this conversation, nothing’s changed. It’s my issue to deal with not yours, you’ve proved yourself and I know you’re not gonna hurt me again, I just, I’m working to rewire that part of my brain but it’s going to take more than a few
Kandomere inhales deeply, giving you a curt nod before standing and adjusting his vest. “I’ll be downstairs making the necessary arrangements. I’ll do my best to stay out of your way until it’s time to leave.” The formality of his actions and words throw you off course and you gape, open mouthed as he makes his way to the door.

“Don’t you think I should be a part of this? I mean, if you want to get the entire coven somewhere then wouldn’t I make more sense as bait.”

He whirs around, eyes wide and nostrils flared. “I do not!”

You flinch at the volume of his statement only to watch him visibly shrink. “My apologies, I shouldn’t— I feel it would be safer for you to be as far from the operation as possible, should the plan derail, we can’t afford to allow them the opportunity—“ He closes his mouth into a hard line and gestures towards you.

“Kandomere?”

He waits but you’re unsure of what to say. Pulling the robe tight you move to join him only to watch, dumbstruck as he turns on his heel and all but flees the bedroom. Calling after him you listen as the click of his expensive shoes echo down the hall, growing fainter until you’re left straining to hear anything in the silence of the house.

Hours roll by and you see each and every one. The sun had set, dousing the sky with burnt orange and red until the inky blackness of night had smothered the dying embers of yet another awful day. You’d dressed in the black jeans you’d previously retrieved from the closet, and a comfortable long sleeved t-shirt, and taken up residency on the large window seat overlooking the lake.

Kandomere hadn’t been back to check on you and you hadn’t ventured out to try and see him either. You’ve so many doubts about his plan but what’s the point in voicing them? He won’t listen and you’ll only end up arguing so you pin all your hope on the MTF shutting down such a ridiculously flawed idea. It worried you because it was so unlike him. To suggest a plan riddled with holes was almost unthinkable from him and yet he had and he’d been almost excited about it.

Resting your cheek against the glass you look out over the lake. You’d turned the bedroom lights off hours ago and as night had claimed the sky you’d watched the glassy water with longing. It looked so peaceful, undisturbed and unconcerned with everything, it simply breathed, the surface gently rippling as the wildlife moved about in the depths below.

Once upon a time you wouldn’t have thought twice about heading down to swim in the lake. In your younger days you’d loved nothing more than day trips to the nearest lake to bask in the sun at the waters edge until the heat inevitable drove you to seek solace in the cool water. You’d been relatively carefree back then and looking out over the lake tonight caused a surge of nostalgia for times gone by.

Closing your eyes you find your thoughts drifting back to contemplate Kandomere’s plan again. If you didn’t think too hard, it was easy to imagine it working, especially when he had such faith in it. Imagining yourself free from the threat of the Inferni, you wonder what you’d do with your life. You weren’t the same person you’d been in Vegas, too much had happened, you’d done things,
things you couldn’t ignore. That didn’t mean you belonged in LA either. You certainly couldn’t see a realistic future with Kandomere anymore, but as that hurt too much to think about you pushed it aside quickly.

Perhaps you could become a magical consultant for real, working alongside the MTF to solve crimes— no, scratch that, you’d seen enough of the Inferni to last you several lifetimes, besides, it’s not like Kandomere would consider having you on staff, not when he’s so convinced you’re under magical influence yourself. Besides who were you kidding? There was no getting through this, one way or another you just know you’re going to lose it all.

A slight patter against the window forces your eyes to open. Rain drops are hitting the glass sporadically, playing a tuneless melody to accompany your misery. As the minutes tick by their intensity grows, the heavens opening to allow a deluge to hit the house, trees and lake. But the sound is soothing and tempts you to open the window so you can hear the unmistakable roar that comes with a heavy downpour. Throwing the window open wide you inhale the scent of wet earth and sodden trees, so similar but entirely different to the forest back at the cabin. This is nature at it’s best, cleansing and nourishing, deadly and powerful. Two sides of the same coin.

For a while you revel in the comfort of the storm, unflinching as the water bounces through the open window and wets you. The sharp sting of the cool rainwater reminds you you’re not dead yet and in some strange way this brings you hope. Pulling away from your perch, you stretch out your aching limbs and notice the emptiness in your stomach. You’re not hungry, you very seldom are these days, but you recognise the need to eat so begrudgingly you pull a hoody from the closet and make your way through the dark house to the kitchen, hoping there was something quick you could grab. For once luck was on your side. After fixing yourself a bowl of cereal and carrying it through to the main sitting room, you eat mindlessly, your attention still focussed on the storm outside. Before you know it, you’ve finished the food and have made yourself comfortable on the couch. Stuffing one of the plump throw cushions under your head you watch the rain allowing the sound to carry your thoughts away.

“Y/n?” Kandomere’s hesitant voice carries through the room clearly.

“I’m over here.” You answer, waving a hand over the back of the couch.

A heavy exhale meets your ears. “I’m sorry I disturbed you, I— Is there anything you need?”

“Some company would be nice.” You’re sure he’ll find some excuse as to why he can’t stay or some reason you shouldn’t be in here so when he responds by taking the seat next to your feet you’re more than a little surprised.

“I’ve spoken to Annabel.”

Dropping your feet to the floor you slowly manoeuvre yourself to a seated position. You’re tired and it shows.

“They’re okay, recovering well.”

Mutely you nod, wondering where he’s going with this. Only he doesn’t elaborate, instead he sits, unmoving, sharing the silence with you. Slouching down into the soft cushions you follow his gaze back out to the lake. Eventually he tilts his head upwards, resting it on the back of the couch. From the corner of your eye you see his eyes close and his chest rise and fall as he takes a deep breath. He’s wearing the same clothes he was earlier, minus the tie and jacket, which would suggest he’d not had any sleep either. This makes the gnawing concern in the pit of your stomach kick up a gear. He wasn’t making the best of decisions as it was without the added lack of sleep to mess with his
Reaching out, you hover your hand by his head. “You look exhausted Kandomere, would you let me—”

Prying open an eyelid he regards you for a moment, figuring out what you’re asking before a slight nod gives you the go ahead. Wasting no time you weave your fingers into the silky tendrils of his hair. Gently scraping your nails over his scalp, you pull slightly as you card all the way through to the ends. Over and over you move only your hand and arm, being extra careful not to touch his ears, until his breathing evens out and you’re pretty certain he’s asleep. Smiling at his peaceful expression you allow yourself one more, indulgent stroke of his extraordinary hair before standing to snag a blanket draped over the back of one of the other couches. Cautiously you lay it over him, your smile widening when he doesn’t flinch. Hopefully a little sleep might curb his enthusiasm when it came to luring the Inferni out of hiding.

The dawn has broken by the time he wakes. He springs to attention, eyebrows furrowed deeply as he quickly eyes his surroundings.

“We’re at the Shield of Light lake house, everything’s fine, you just fell asleep.”

He looks almost angry as he shoves the blanket to the floor and stands. “Why didn’t you wake me? I’m—I shouldn’t have let my guard down like that.”

Blinking away your fatigue you shake your head. “You needed sleep, Kandomere—“

“So do you.” He interrupts firmly, looking you up and down.

You shrug, “I’m not about to go toe to toe with the Inferni.”

Again his eyes dart around the room and his scowl deepens. You know he’s about to chastise you for speaking so loosely so you head him off before he can even start.

“When are you leaving? And what about me? I assume I’m to be kept under lock and key somewhere secret.” During the early hours you’d lost the will to fight with him. Tired and fearful, you’d decided to follow his every word to the letter, regardless of how crazy or dangerous you thought it sounded. You’d told yourself it was because the MTF wouldn’t sign off on anything too ludicrous but honestly, you just wanted to end this thing now.

His eyes sweep over you, his gaze intensifying as he stares longer than necessary. “You’re very pale, mi amor.”

“I’m fine. Will you answer—“

“Are you quite sure? Your eyes are glassy, there’s a sheen to your skin and you can hardly sit up right.”

He’s deflecting. “Okay,” you concede, holding your hands up in surrender, “have it your way. I’ll just sit here until you tell me otherwise.”

Concern laces his features as he bends down and lays his hand over your forehead. “Y/n!” He
gasps, his eyes widening. “You’re ice cold.” His free hand reaches under your jaw to feel for your pulse. “This isn’t right, your heartbeat is racing and you’re ashen. Why didn’t you wake me?"

Annoyed, you try to swat away his hands. “I’m fine, I’m—“ He grasps your face in both hands, sinking to his knees to look in your eyes. “Seriously, K—“

“Sabía que ella había hecho algo que no deliberó.”

Shaking free of his grasp you push him away and stand. “What—“ A squeak escapes you as his arms sweep your feet out from under you. Cradling you tightly against him he begins marching you to the door.

“Y/n, you are shaking. You’re showing signs of withdrawal, I think, I think we need to get you looked at, fast.”

You’ve no idea what he’s talking about, other than lack of sleep you feel absolutely fine. “Blue I’m fine, I don’t know what you’re seeing but really, there’s nothing wrong.” You protest, fighting against his hold.

“Look at you!” He insists, pausing in front of the mirror hung near the door.

Scoffing at his ludicrous actions, you roll your eyes dramatically before doing as he asks. A small crease forms between your eyebrows as you take in your reflection. He’s right, you look like shit. Purple crescents rest under your eyes and your skin has an unhealthy, sallow tint.

“Im just tired.” You insist, pushing once again against him to try and get him to let you go.

“Stop fighting me, I’m taking you up to your room.” Kandomere growls, pinning you tighter against his chest. “I want you to sleep.”

Relaxing, you breathe out a soft “Oh”. 

“You’re so cold,” he mutters, “too cold.” 

“I feel fine, are you sure you’re not—“

“It’s not me,” he says firmly, laying you on the bed, “it’s you, you’re, you’re freezing cold.”

Your face scrunches up as he tries to cocoon you in blankets. “Kandomere stop, I’m fine, you’re going to suffocate me at this rate. Just one blanket will be enough.”

“Please,” as his eyes lock with yours you can see the depth of his worry, “don’t argue, for whatever reason you can’t feel it but there is something very wrong here. Let me take care of you.”

Exhaling your frustration you drop your arms down and roll onto your side. “Fine but when I’m dehydrated from sweating too much it’ll be your fault.”

“A risk I’ll take,” he breathes, hurrying to cover you with anything he can find.

Now that you’re laid on the comfortable mattress, wrapped in luxurious blankets, your body suddenly feels as heavy as lead. Yawning, you close your eyes, and breathe deeply. In the background you hear Kandomere’s voice, only the words don’t make sense. As your mind fogs you allow the cadence of his tone to carry you to a dreamless sleep.
Sabía que ella había hecho algo que no delibería - I knew she’d done something she shouldn’t
Coming too, the first thing you notice is the ache running through your entire body. Stretching out your limbs you wince as joints pop and muscles tense.

“Querida?”

Raising your chin sends a spasm down your neck and into your shoulders, drawing a grunt from your dry lips. Maybe Kandomere had been right after all because in all honestly, right now, you feel like death.

“Querida? Can you talk?”

Your first instinct is to scoff at such a ridiculous question, however this soon dies when you’re overcome by a body wracking shiver.

“Joder! Y/n, there’s someone on the way to help, just hold on.”

Your throat is parched and when you attempt to swallow it burns like the surface of a thousands suns. A silent groan is all you can manage as your body inflicts hell on itself. Seeing your struggle, Kandomere slips his arm under your shoulders and gently props you up to offer you a bottle of water, only his actions unleash a fresh wave of agony which brings tears to your eyes. Slowly you sip at the water that does nothing to alleviate the raw torture in your throat. God, what the hell is wrong with you?

“Don’t move, don’t, don’t do anything,” Kandomere breathes, laying you down gently but even that hurts like fuck.

“It won’t be long, just try and lie still.”

The heat in your throat begins to creep down, engulfing your chest in a raging inferno. Gritting your teeth a slow trickle of a tear roll down the side of your face, the sensation making you shiver which in turns spreads the fire to your gut. Lost to agony a scream tears free and your entire body convulses.

“Joder, no sé qué hacer amor.”

You can’t answer, you can’t even open your eyes now as the searing heat licks up and down your frame.

Shaking violently as the onslaught increases you release a gut wrenching shriek. As your very atoms rip apart, your back arches, lifting your torso up and contorting your spine. Your body isn’t your own, your movements are out of your control as your muscles contract and twitch. You’re thrashing now, unable to stop, unable to think past the unbearable torture. Silently you scream for the torture to end, begging in your mind for some sort of release. Outwardly you gasp, splutter and shriek, gulping down what air you can to try and stay alive.

You lose count of the amount of times Kandomere apologises, you can’t focus on him long enough to even hear the entirety of what he keeps saying. What ever it is he chants it like a prayer, over and over until his tone tightens and he shouts. Suddenly hands grip your ankles, wrists and head, trying to pin you down. The shock of being held pulls you back from the brink and you’re just about able to make out what is being said.
“I said hold her down!”

“Do not hurt her.”

“Keep her still, do what ever you have to.”

“Don’t hurt her!”

“Do it or she’ll summon them straight to us.”

The hands on your head move to rest over your temples, pushing and releasing in a fast rhythm as your mind explodes with noise and colour. Another strangled scream is pushed out of your chest and with it some of the heat.

“It’s working.”

The colour you’re seeing swirls and the noise becomes somewhat familiar. Who ever is there is muttering something about light.

“Don’t let go!” Someone yells as another convulsion takes over your limbs.

Again you scream and again the pain and fire lesson. The fingers on your temples slow a little and you’re able to breathe now. Filling your lungs you exhale with a sigh, pushing out the pain until it’s a bearable ache.

“Okay, let go.”

Who ever had been holding you down lets go.

“Good. Good, Y/n, now breathe with me, deep breaths, in and out.”

You do as you’re told, finding it a little easier each time you inhale. Eventually you’re able to open your eyes only to have your breath stolen by the sight in front of you. A man you’ve never seen before is leaning over you, his eyes ablaze with pure white light.

He smiles, “Don’t be scared, I’m helping, don’t fight me, just let it all out.”

Blinking rapidly you stare at him in sheer amazement, watching as he somehow draws the fire out of your body through his touch and absorbs it. As your breathing slows and the ache disappears he sits heavily on the edge of the bed, removing his hands from you to rest his own head heavily in them.

“Well that was intense,” he laughs.

“Y/n?” Kandomere reaches, grasping your limp hand and pressing it against his heart. “Joder, you scared me.”

Groggily your focus flits between the man on the bed, Kandomere and a man who is hovering uneasy by the door. Nervously you attempt to swallow. It doesn’t hurt this time so you progress to clearing your throat before speaking. “What happened?” Your voice is barely a whisper.

“Magic.” Kandomere answers.

“Magic?” That didn’t make sense, you’d not done any magic and neither had anyone else since the cabin in the woods.
“Don’t talk sweetheart,” the guy sat next to you breathes, his back now bowed and shoulders slumped. “Conserve your energy ’cos we’re only half way done.”

With trepidation and a heavy feeling in your stomach you drag your gaze over to his lowered head and asses him. His dark styled hair is greying slightly at the temples and you guess him to be in his late thirties. Twinkling hazel eyes, full of intrigue, stare back above a slightly crooked nose and a friendly grin shows off his shockingly perfect teeth. He’s human, clearly exhausted after the weird magical pain removal, but still gorgeous non the less. Holding your gaze he chuckles, his eyes crinkling at the edges.

“Yeah, I know,” he nods, reading your dumbfounded expression. “Like it’s not bad enough that we’re a hunted minority, your magic has to go and act up when you least need it to.”

Your brows knit together in confusion. “My magic?”

The stranger tilts his head. “Yeah, Annabel mentioned you were new to this. Look don’t worry about it, I’ll talk you through it after we’re done. For now, rest up and drink something, you’re dehydrated. You’ll start to burn up again soon but when you feel it coming don’t panic, just let me know and we’ll sort it out.”

Shaking your head, you reach out to snag the man’s arm. “I don’t understand, what— how— who are you?”

He turns back and covers your hand on his arm with his own. “Sorry, I should have introduced myself, I’m Tom, Annabel’s adopted nephew, and the dude by the door, that’s Frank, he’s a doc. Now seriously, get some rest. I’m gonna go grab a snack and a drink. I get the feeling it’s gonna be a long night.”

Night? Letting go of Tom your gaze flicks to the window and you’re shocked to see that it’s dark outside. You’d been out of it for the whole day.

“What happened?”

As Tom and the doctor leave the room, Kandomere finds a spot next to you on the bed, leaning his back against the headboard. Stretching out his legs and crossing his ankles he takes a deep breath.

“Annabel thinks your magic attacked itself, a little like an autoimmune disease. Her best guess is that the small amount of magic you used on me set off a chain reaction, and it’s been building up ever since. You’ve been so intent on not letting any of it slip out that it began to see itself as a threat.”

“What?”

“It’s magic, Y/n, not science. It works differently for everyone but from what I just saw, I think Annabel might be right. We’re going to have to keep Tom around, incase this is a regular occurrence, we can’t risk you—“

“Going nuclear?”

He smooths a hand through your hair. “No, nothing like that, at least we don’t think so. No, Annabel said you’re more likely to purge the magic somehow, and going on how you were lit up just now, I’d hasten a guess that you’d expel the excess magic in some sort of light show.”

Sinking back into the pillows, you close your eyes to digest this information. It had been pain like you’ve never experienced, not even at Liona’s hands, but at least it didn’t appear to be dangerous to
anyone else.

“So, this is going to keep happening?” The fear in your voice is palpable even though you’d tried to hide it.

Kandomere strokes the back of his fingers down your cheek lightly, “Quite possibly yes.”

“And I can’t use my magic because the Inferni will use it to track me.”

“Yes.”

It’s an almost laughable situation. You’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t. Your mind flits back to the absolute agony of the flames scorching you from the inside and a new question bursts through your deliberations. “Does it hurt Tom? Does he feel what I do?”

“I don’t think so, he didn’t appear to be in any discomfort—“

“You need to check. I can’t agree to him doing whatever he did if he feels it, I can’t put anyone through that.”

“I understand your reluctance, querida, but the alternative is not an option we can take.”

“Unless you use me in your plan.”

*Your stupid plan that’s probably going to get everyone killed,* you add silently to yourself.

“I am certain he feels no pain,” Kandomere says in a firm tone, “now stop talking, drink this and rest.”

A cold bottle of water is pressed into your hands, signalling the end of the conversation. Allowing Kandomere to help you sit up, you bring the bottle to your lips, only realising just how thirsty you are when the water fills your mouth. Gulping down the entire bottle in one go, you finish your last mouthful before gasping for much needed air. In your desperation some of the liquid has dribbled from the corner of your mouth but before it can drop onto the bed, Kandomere wipes it with his thumb. The action draws your attention to the hungry expression on his face, and automatically your stomach twists. You know that look and what it means. A flare of desire licks through you and your heart speeds up.

“Kandomere.”

The huskiness of your voice causes his pupils to dilate, which in turn quickens your pulse. The ache of arousal grows between your legs and you swallow hard to try and disguise your need. Now was neither the time nor place to be having these feelings, however your body didn’t seem to want to listen to your mind.

“I should probably—“ He looks away at the doorway, his jaw tense and fists balled.

“Yes.” You agree weakly, trying to wrestle yourself under control.

When he doesn’t move, you find yourself turning your torso towards him. Like a woman possessed you have no idea what your body is doing as you inch towards him, leaning precariously close to his face. For his part, he remains stoic, almost frozen in place but as your lips ghost over the thick column of his throat his eyes slip closed. Sliding the tip of your nose along his jaw up to his ear you inhale his scent and let out a low rumble of approval. He smells good enough to eat.
“Amor.” His voice is strained and only serves to fan the flames you’re fighting to control.

Breathing heavily you stare at his pointed ear, knowing fine well that you could take what you wanted with a simple lick. And my god do you want it, only, you’d promised yourself you wouldn’t do anything until he was ready.

But, fuck, you needed him.

No! You refused to give in to your carnal desire. You aren’t an animal, you have some control and would exercise it even if it killed you.

“You have to go.”

Iridescent eyes lock to yours as his head whips around at lightening speed. You’re now millimetres from his full lips.

“Please, Kandomere. You have to leave, you’re too close, you smell too good—” It’s almost embarrassing how badly you want him.

His eyes drink you in, his lips parting to allow his tongue to dart out and wet them. And then, just as you’re about to spontaneously combust, he sighs and moves off the bed. Striding to the door he places one hand against the frame and grips it tight. “You should rest. We’ll be back up shortly.” Without looking over his shoulder he all but pushes himself through the opening and out of sight.

“Rest.” You mutter, clenching your jaw and dragging your hands through your hair. Like you had any chance of resting. Not when every nerve in your body was singing, not when your heart thundered like a galloping horse, not when you ached for the elf who wouldn’t touch you. So you lay there, in a tangled mess of confusion and hormones as the absurdity of it all tugged at the corners of your mouth. Only the smile doesn’t last, it is quickly wiped away in a soundless gasp when the burning flames from before tear through you from your chest outwards. Slamming your head back against the wall, your vision wavers, dark spots obscuring your sight. You’re sure you’re about to pass out when another spasm of heat pulls you from the precipice of unconsciousness, rapidly followed by another. Wave after wave of white hot agony slices you in two, each time radiating out from your heart and searing your veins causing you to thrash and contort uncontrollably. It’s all encompassing, and there’s nothing you can do. The faster your heart races the quicker the pain flares up, and very soon you’re unable even to breathe. With your breath caught and your blood boiling you’re just about conscious enough to face the truth, that this is the end, when hands seize your face and dig painfully in to your temples.

“Fuck, you’re— Damn!”

“Help her!”

“I’m trying, back up. Y/n, stop fighting me, I’m gonna help.”

A crescendo of colour and noise attacks your mind again, only this time you surrender straight away, accepting the chaos and embracing it.

“Excellent! Keep doin’ what you’re doin’ sweetheart.”

Relaxing into the disconcertion you’re able to inhale again. Greedily you gulp down air.

“That’s right, give it to me.”

Thoughtlessly you blink open your eyes, locking your gaze with Tom’s, except once again his eyes
are shining with white light, the soft welcoming hazel from before gone. He smiles as he loosens his grip on you.

“It’s okay, it doesn’t hurt, you’re not hurting me. Just relax and let me do my thing.”

Instinct drives you to place your hands on his arms. Holding tight you breathe deeply as the pain recedes to a quiet buzz in the back of your mind. For a while you just look at one another, your breathing falling into the same rhythm as he manages to take the pain and fire away from you. Eventually Tom moves his hands, sliding them into your hair then down your back, guiding you on to the mattress. Subservient and grateful you let him move you. Once you’re laid flat he steps away and his eyes fade to hazel. “How you doin’ there sweetheart?”

Scrunching up your face you nod. “Better,” your voice is unrecognisable despite trying to clear it, “I’ve got one hell of a headache though.”

He chuckles. “Yeah feels like you might’ve smacked your head, there’s a lump the size of Kansas tryin’ to grow. It’s okay though, I took care of it,” his eyebrows pinch together and his grin morphs into a smirk, “or I guess if would be more accurate to say you did, either way, you’ll be fine in a few hours.”

Ignoring the aches you sit up eagerly. “Wait! Is that it? Whatever that was won’t happen again?”

Tom’s face falls. “Oh no, sweetheart, sorry, that’s not what I meant. I mean your head, it’s gonna be fine.” The swell of hope in your chest bursts and you slump back against the pillows with a grunt. “But ah, new theory.” Tom turns to Kandomere who is staring at you with horror in his beautiful eyes. “She shouldn’t have been so juiced up in such a short amount of time. Not if it were just a build up of her natural magic.”

“What are you saying?” The elf pins his full attention on Tom with a heavy scowl.

“Well it doesn’t take a genius to figure out something went down when me and the doc left. You came downstairs with a face like thunder and she goes cataclysmic. Did you argue? Cos whatever happened, I think that’s what triggered this.”

Dumbstruck you turn to Kandomere silently begging him not to let slip what had transpired between you. It was bad enough without all and sundry knowing.

“Did you argue before? When it happened the first time?” Tom presses. “Look, no judgement, I just, if I know it’ll be easier to predict what will happen and when.”

You jump in before Kandomere spills the truth. "Sort of." Tom tilts his head and throws you a look of suspicion but you gloss over it as fast as you can. "It was more a disagreement than argument, I wanted something that I couldn't have and--"

"And I would like her to have what she wants but it's not possible at the moment, with everything as it is." Kandomere crosses the room and once again, grasps your hand in his.

"So you had an argument about it?" Tom says slowly.

"Not really." Kandomere answers.

"I'm not forcing the issue," navigating the unspeakable you try to find the right words, "it's not his fault, I know that. If things were different then, well, there's no guarantee, I wish things were different but it's not Kandomere's fault, not really, I'm just," Shut up! Stop talking! Stop! Your internal monologue screams and yet you carry on. "I'm upset that we're in this situation that neither
of us, we didn't ask for this. It's unfair!"

After a pause in which it's obvious your outburst has sideswiped him, Tom crosses his arms before adjusting to rub the scruff on his chin thoughtfully, "So it's not the elf who pissed you off but the situation?"

"Y/n--"

"Exactly," you hurry to cut Kandomere off. "He just kinda reminds me of it from time to time."

"Alright, we're getting somewhere." Tom points at Kandomere, "You need to go, the longer you stick around the more often her episodes are gonna occur-- now hold on, before you try to argue," he holds up his other hand to silence you, "I get that there's something going on between you and you probably want him close, but sweetheart, it's what's causing you to lose control." To his credit he looks genuinely apologetic as he speaks so you allow him to finish. "If I can get all the excess magic out of your system it might stop it happening again, but, a few days without the elf around and I can guarantee it won't happen again."

"How?"

"Alright, think of it this way, you've built yourself a fire and for days it's sat it the sun with the heat sucking out all the moisture until along comes a lit match. It doesn't take long for the inferno to take hold. Now let's say a fireman happens across it with a bucket of water. He manages to put the flames out but the embers are still in there, still hot and waiting. Soon enough the sun dries up all the water and you're back at square one with a roaring fire." Tom cocks an eyebrow. "I'm just suggesting we take away the match and the sun, see if we can't add a little more water and get this thing put out once and for all. Surely it's worth a shot for the sake of a few days."

"It is." Kandomere states with a resolute nod. "I have matters I have to attend to tomorrow anyway." He blinks slowly as you meet his eyes. "I leave at four twenty tomorrow morning. You'll have twenty four hours to do what you must but I warn you," his gaze grows steely as it moves to Tom, "if you hurt her in any way, Annabel or not, I will kill you."

Tom is quick to hold up his hands in surrender,"Whoah, alright man, settle down. You called us remember? I'm here to help not hurt so you might wanna dial it down a notch or fifty."

"You're leaving." Fear grips your heart tightly and for a second you think you're about to burn up again.

"Mi alma." He lowers his lashes as he looks to the floor, his blue hair falling to cover his face.

"Alright," Tom announces, "I think you two need a moment. I'll be back as soon as the elf goes, try not to get to worked up in the meantime."

You ignore his attempt at humour and his exit, you can think of only one thing. Kandomere is going to die. You'd held your tongue in the hopes that someone at the MTF would talk him out of his crazy idea but you'll stay silent no more.

"You can't seriously think you're plan is going to work? They're not stupid, they'll see right through it. Fuck, Blue, you can't do this, you're going to get yourself killed."

"How many times must I tell you, this is my job, it's what I've been doing my whole adult life. It will be fine--"

"The fuck it will!"
With his free hand he cups your face. "Fifty six magic users have come forward. Fifty six allies all desperate to see the Inferni come to an end. I have not entered this scenario blind, I've calculated the possibilities. Trust me, amor, I am thinking clearly, my emotions are not ruling my head."

"It's not about trust, you don't know wha--"

"What they're capable of? Oh but I do, I was one of them remember? I know exactly what they're capable of which is why I have to stop them now."

"Please--"

"Let Tom take care of you. Work on controlling your magic and let me do what I must."

"You--"

"I will be fine. It's a well planned tactical strike that involves over one hundred and fifty personnel. Teams have been prepping for well over twelve hours, which is significantly longer than they usually get. I will be warded and armed. I'll be--"

"Safe?" You spit, ignoring your pulsing headache. "Don't be naive, you're never safe when it comes to them, they'll--" He presses his index finger to your lips and his mouth to your forehead in a chaste kiss.

"There is no argument to have, amor, it is decided."

Just as you're about to laugh at his arrogance, a stab of heat pierces your heart and you jolt backwards. Crashing into the wall again, you heave against the agony that seems to have bypassed pain and headed straight for unbearable.

"Tom!"

Jerking from side to side you try to reach out for Kandomere but your vision fades and your fingers burn too hot for you to feel anything other than the flames consuming you.

"Already? The hell did you say to her, man?"

"Do it."

"What?"

"Do it, what we spoke about, do it now."

"You're sure?"

"Yes!"

As colour and noise blindside you, you're aware of a numbing coolness creeping from your head down your torso. This was new and you didn't like it. Trying to pull away from the sensation your strength seeps out of you, along with the heat. The chill takes hold and all the fire and pain dissipates in a foggy cloud of numbness until, after only a few moments, everything gives way to darkness.
Consciousness comes slowly, pulling you from the depths of your dreams without urgency. As you swim between being awake and dropping back to sleep your mind is full of silver eyes and blue hair. It’s almost enough to lull you back into slumber until someone nearby clears their throat. Suddenly on high alert your eyes fly open and your heart speeds.

“Whoah, settle down sweetheart, you’re perfectly safe.”

Pushing up on your elbows you frantically search the room, your heart crashing as you’re met with only one person instead of three.

“I know and I’m sorry.” Tom states softly, wearing an apologetic expression and holding his hands up in surrender.

“Where’s Kandomere?”

Wincing slightly, Tom rubs his hands over his thighs and pushes himself up off the window seat where he’d been perched.

“I’m sorry but I had to knock you out. You were lighting up like a Christmas tree, sweetheart. Honestly, you were even too much for me, and that’s saying something.”

Swinging your legs over the side of the bed you glare at the dark haired man slowly backing away to the door. “What time is it?” You demand gruffly.

“Seven-thirty.”

“AM or PM?”

“AM.” He reaches the doorway and awkwardly leans against it.

Your racing heart drops into your stomach as the familiar sensation of dread settles over you.

“I assume Kandomere has gone.”

“Yeah, hours ago.”

Fuck. Why did he have to be so obstinate? Why did he have to be so cocky? He was heading straight into danger and what was worse, he couldn’t see it for what it was. Whilst he might have hunted individual Inferni members in the past, you’re pretty sure he and his men had never gone up against a full coven, let alone one as pissed as the LA coven were sure to be. Damn him! He was going to get himself killed.

Curling your hands into fists you grip the bed clothes tightly. You’ve no idea where Kandomere is, nor do you have any real grasp on his plan but you have to do something. You can’t just sit here and wait for news, good or bad, you had to be proactive.

“Did he say anything before he left?”

Tom shrugs, “Just asked me to keep you safe, stop any more episodes and keep a low profile.”

“Did he tell you where he’s going? Do you know what’s about to happen?” Standing up, you stumble to the doorway, your limbs uncoordinated from the convulsions and sleep.
“I... know enough.”

Narrowing your eyes, you grab the wall for support. “Did Annabel tell you what happened to her because of me?” He nods. “So you’re aware of the danger you’re in, just being here with me?”

A grin tugs at one half of his mouth. “Sweetheart—“

“It’s a yes no question.”

He looks you up and down and drops the smile. “Yeah I got the lowdown before I came, I know the Inferni want you and I know why. What I don’t get is you and the elf, I mean, he’s about to face off against the Inferni and instead of taking his best chance at defeating them, he’s got you here, being babysat by me.”

You’re taken aback by his statement, unable to hide the shock from your features.

“What?” He grins. “Thought I was just a pawn in the MTF’s game? I know enough to stay in the loop, I have to in my line of work. Don’t wanna get caught up with the Inferni by accident.”

His little speech leaves you with a thousand questions but time is not on your side so you concentrate on the important ones.

“Do you know what Kandomere is planning?”

“I already told you—“

“Right, right, you know enough, whatever that means.” You cross your arms.

A slight frown pulls at his brows as he mirrors your actions, crossing his arms over his muscular chest. The movement brings your gaze to his now bulging biceps, and you step back nonchalantly. He’d been all smiles and charm, so foolishly you’d overlooked the fact that he could physically overpower you with ease, but face to face with his obvious strength you’re reminded to take precautions.

“Look, Tom,” nervously you push the hair back from your face and tuck it behind your ears, “I think I can help against the Inferni but I can’t do it without a wand. I don’t know what I’m doing without a tool to focus my magic—“

“Yeah he warned me you try this and he told me to tell you, you’re not practised enough either way. He also told me to remind you what happened last time you had a wand?” The inflection of his voice carries his intrigue making you believe he doesn’t know what actually happened. Good, it can stay that way. You were in no mood to go over your failures, especially not when time was of the essence. With your hands resting on your hips you shake your head.

“You can’t agree with him? You can’t possibly think they stand a chance against an Inferni coven?”

“I don’t know Y/n, he’s built a pretty solid coven for himself—“

“Have you ever seen what a few members of a coven can do? I’m talking about three or four? Because I have!” As your temper and frustration flare, you find your voice rising. “I watched a street full of innocent people get wiped out by four elves. Four! Kandomere is talking about a full fucking coven, all jacked up on magic blood.”

His eyebrows shoot north. “What?”
“Oh, he didn’t tell you that bit? Yeah, those bastards have been drinking my blood like fucking vampires—”

“Wait, what?” Tom gapes at you. “What the hell? Fuck, that is some twisted shit.”

Nodding frantically, you attempt to use his surprise to your advantage. “The people Kandomere has drafted in, non of them really know what they’re up against. Hell, he doesn’t really know.”

Tom scrunches up his face and runs a hand through his hair. “Not to be rude, Y/n, but these people have been facing off against the Inferni for years. Give them some credit. Besides, what do you want to do about it? I’m betting you already voiced your concerns so—?” He trails off with an apologetic shrug.

“Fuck!” Your hands are wound tightly in your hair, tugging against your scalp in desperation as curses fall quietly from your lips. Tom’s right, what could you do about it, wand or not you’re no way experienced enough to do anything other than get in the way. Unless…

“Can you use my magic? I know I have a lot of it but I can’t use it effectively, but maybe you could. I mean obviously you can absorb it so can’t you—“

“Y/n stop.” Tom shakes his head. “I’d love to be able to say yes but, I can’t, I can’t do what you’re asking, I mean physically. My magic is basically useless in this fight.” He rubs the back of his neck, avoiding your eyes. “I can take magic and filter it back into the surrounding area but I can’t make it do anything, not really. At best the natural habitat will get a boost and at worst it might affect the weather a bit but that’s it.” Sheepishly he glances up. “Sorry sweetheart, I wish I had more to give you.”

You turn away and begin pacing back and forth, desperate to think up a way to help. “Maybe someone else could—”

“It’s too late, even if there was someone who could handle the amount of juice you’ve got — and I can tell you now, there isn’t — we couldn’t get to them before it all kicks off.”

You’re working yourself into a frenzy as you walk blindly up and down, unable to grasp any firm idea that might help against the Inferni in any way. To hold so much power and yet be useless was tearing you apart. Guilt, anger and frustration washing over you causing your muscles to twitch.

“Sweetheart you need to calm down.”

Freezing in place you glared up at Tom, your top lip curling into a sneer. “Everyone who has gone with Kandomere are going to die and you expect me to calm down?” The ice cold fury in your voice steals the kindness from Tom’s expression as his smile drops into a fearful trepidation. “You need to tell me where they are! We need to do something.”

“Seriously, Y/n, you—“

“No! Enough!” Your voice carries loud and Tom clamps his mouth shut as you round on him and jab your finger into his chest, no longer concerned at the size difference. “Help me figure out a way to help, or leave. We’ve no time to argue, you’ve had a taste of what I can do so let’s try and use it! Damnit Tom, we can’t just do nothing.”

Tom looks down at you, his eyes searching every inch of your face. You can almost hear the cogs turning in his brain, trying to figure out his next move.

“Please, Tom.”
Pressing his lips together he throws his hands in the air and nods. “Alright, fine, I may have an idea but you have to promise me you won’t do anything stupid.”

With an emphatic nod you place your hand on your heart, “I swear, I promise! Anything you say.”

“Your elf is gonna fucking kill me.” Tom mutters as he backs out of the room. “Get changed. Wear something warm but practical, and meet me down stairs.”

“Two minutes!” You promise, rushing to grab fresh jeans and a t shirt.

True to your word, minutes later you’re perched on the bottom steps, lacing up a pair of borrowed boots.

Tom is reclining against the wall watching you closely. “Okay, here’s the MTF’s plan. They’re luring the coven out of the city, there’s a bunch of old warehouses the MTF once used for training. The idea is to fire off some spells, get the coven interested and lure them out.” Stretching out a long arm he reaches across and grabs a coat from the hooks. “Annabel, she’s trying to replicate the signature of your magic, tryin’ to get it close enough it’ll fool the High Priest.”

“Wait, what? Can she do that?” Tom chews his bottom lip and it’s all the answer you need. “Alright, so what’s your plan?”

“What if, and this is mostly hypothetical, but what if I could kinda do what you wanted? What if I could transfer a bit of your magic into some of the other magic users then get them to do a spell with the borrowed magic? That way we could split the Inferni. Our guys each work up some magic in separate warehouses and draw the Inferni out in smaller groups.” He tosses a short leather jacket at you and indicates for you to put it on.

“What makes you think they’d split up to search?” You ask, slipping your arms into the coat.

Cocking his head he throws you a withering glare. “They’ll be desperate to get to you, their best plan of attack would be to split up and find you faster.”

“Okay so we make the group smaller, assuming we can, then what?”

“You said they’d tasted your blood, so they’re a bit like scenting hounds. I’m hoping that any trace of you will have them so worked up they won’t be thinking as clearly. There’s two of my aunts friends going who can alter their appearance but they have to have a DNA sample first. If you’re there they can change into you, distract the Inferni even more. Together the coven is almost unstoppable but the more we can separate them—“

“Kandomere won’t agree to this.”

Pulling on his own coat he flings open the door and ushers you out. “If we’re careful, he might not need to know, I think I can persuade Annabel to include us without letting the MTF in on it.”

”But do we have time?”

He purses his lips, pulling the door closed behind you both. “I don’t know. Maybe? Hopefully.”

The air outside is damp and a gentle wind moves the tree branches overhead. It had stopped raining hours ago but water still clung to everything the wind couldn’t move, including the powerful looking, shiny black motorbike parked off to one side. Zipping up the leather jacket you come to stand next to the bike
“I assume this is yours?”

A goofy grin lights up Tom’s face but instead of answering he holds up a finger and presses his phone to his ear.

“Hey, yeah, it’s me. Look I’ve got a proposition to run by you—“

As the conversation unfurls you pick at the cuff on the jacket. It seems to be going well but Tom’s not giving much away. After explaining his idea he’s mostly just agreeing with whatever is being said. Finally he lowers the phone and with a shrug offers it to you.

Slowly you take the cell and raise it up. “Hello?”

“Y/n?”

You tense at the sound of the familiar voice. “Annabel? I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to use my magic out of the circle, I just, I forgot myself. I’m so sorry you got hurt, I can’t—“

“Y/n calm down!” There’s a tense silence followed by a sigh. “If we’re going to do what Tom has just suggested I need to know you can keep your head. I need to know you’ll do the job you’ve been given, follow the instructions to a ’T’.”

She doesn’t trust you. It’s understandable given what happened and it only serves to add to your guilt. “I’ll do whatever you tell me, to the letter.”

“And if Kandomere distracts you?”

Again, it’s a fair question. “He won’t, I won’t let anything distract me. There’s too many lives at stake.”

A quiet hum crosses the line. “Are you sure you know what you’re getting yourself into here? Have you considered what might happen if we fail? There’ll be no one there to protect you, no one to stop them taking you.”

Dropping your gaze to the floor you squelch the wet grass under your boots. Of course you’d thought about it, you’d done nothing but think about it. Licking your lips you inhale and try to speak with a confidence you’re bluffing. “I know what you’re getting at Annabel, and the answer’s yes. If shit goes sideways I know what I have to do. If it goes wrong, none of us get to walk away.”

Annabel sighs for a second time. “We can’t promise the safety of anyone, Y/n, but we’ll do what we can to protect the elf. If it all goes to hell, he’ll be one of the last to fall.”

Her declaration throws you. You can’t understand why she’d put Kandomere over anyone else, especially if she has family amongst the magic users.

As if she can sense your thoughts she continues on, “I fear that if something happens to him your instinctive magic may take over. Quite honestly if you’re there and we all fall, I doubt the coven will walk away, hell, I doubt the buildings will still be standing.”

Oh, now it made sense. “You think I’ll lose control if anything happens to Kandomere?” She’s just said as much so why you’re questioning her is beyond you, yet for some reason you need her to confirm what your heart already knows.

“I think if Kandomere dies you’ll wipe out every living thing in a five mile radius without even knowing about it, yourself included.”
Well that was brutally honest. Chewing on your bottom lip you think about the ramifications of Annabel’s revelation. You being there was a massive risk. If the Inferni got hold of you, they would simply force you to do their work, if not force the magic out of you all together. And if they didn’t but they managed to get to Kandomere, you knew you wouldn’t be able to hold anything back.

“What should I do?” You ask softly.

“I can’t tell you that.” Comes Annabel’s equally gentle reply.

You nod, even though she can’t see you. “Okay, can you answer me this then? What’s more dangerous, having me there, or not having me there?”

You hear her breathe out a smile, picturing the curve of her lip and the creases at the corner of her eyes. “I won’t actively discourage you from coming however, I’m not asking you to come. The chances of us getting out of this without injury are— well, they’re extremely slim on our best day, but if you’re here, maybe more of us get to go home than don’t.”

You’ve heard enough to make up your mind. “Thank you Annabel. I’ll do everything Tom tells me and I swear to you that I’ll keep my head this time. There’ll be no stupid mistakes from me.”

Hanging up, you hold the phone out to Tom who pockets it safely inside his jacket.

“Pull the sleeves down over your hands.” He stares pointedly at you until you do as he says. Nodding he gestures to the bike, sliding on elegantly. “You can cross your hands over each other if you wrap your arms around my waist. That way your hands stay warmer and I can shield you from some of the wind.”

Normally you’d be nervous about what you’re about to do, having never been on a bike before, but time was waiting for no-one so you hurriedly clamber on behind Tom. Slipping your arms around him you find any embarrassment at your closeness is vastly outweighed by fear, not that he seems to notice. Craning his neck he looks down at you.

“Try not to tense up. Just go with the bike. When it leans into the corners, relax and hold on, I got you, ’kay?”

“What about helmets?”

He laughs, his whole body vibrating with the force of his chuckle. “You’re about to face a whole Inferni coven and you’re worried about that?” His head shakes slightly before returning again to look at you out of the corner of his eye. “Sorry sweetheart, I don’t use one but don’t worry, you’re safe, the first sign of an accident and your magic will kick in to protect you.”

For a moment you relax but just as quickly your grasp around him tightens. “If that happens, if I accidentally use my magic—“

“Yeah, I know,” Tom laughs, “the Inferni will come straight for us, so how’s about you chill the fuck out and we get there safely yeah?”

Ignoring the swirling vortex of anxiety currently residing in your chest you bite down on your bottom lip and nod.

“Great. Hold on tight.” With a wink, Tom turns the key and presses the ignition button. Giving
your hands a gentle squeeze he raises the kick stand and twists the throttle, carrying you towards what could possibly be the biggest mistake of the MTF’s history.
Chapter Fifty Five

The bike is agile and Tom clearly knows how to handle it as he expertly weaves through traffic and down highways. Burying your face into his back to protect yourself from the elements you contemplate how he can stand the constant wind in his face, surely there had to be some sort of magic being used. Periodically you shout to him, asking how much farther but every time the answer is the same, 'not far now'. Eventually you give up and pass the time by watching the scenery speed past. Hours pass, your grip around your companion never failing for fear of accidentally using your magic to protect yourself. Instead you cling tightly and nervously worry your bottom lip.

Towns and cities fly past, the names of some you recognise. From what you can tell, you’re drawing closer to LA and sooner than you'd thought possible leaving you to wonder just how fast Tom was driving.

The sun in strong and high in the sky when he slows the bike and turns off the main route, heading west into a small town. At this more sedate pace you feel confident enough to loosen your grip and sit up, taking in your surroundings without clinging on to Tom for dear life. Beautiful family houses dot the side of the road, each with a well manicured lawn and double garage. It's idyllic, down to the plush trees lining the street and the children’s toys strewn across various lawns. Clearly the people here felt it was safe enough to leave stuff lying around. Slowly the urban landscape changes giving way to the heart of the town. Shops and restaurants line the road as you cruise down the main street. With a pang of envy you take in the small town vibe and brightly coloured facade, watching as the townspeople carried out their everyday lives without care.

God it hurt to see knowing that could never be you.

"How much--" You begin for the umpteenth time only for Tom to cut you off with a chuckle.

"We're about ten minutes out." He calls, tilting his head slightly so it's easier to hear. "Just the other side of the town. See the forest up ahead?"

Oh good. More trees.

You nod.

“That’s where we’re headin’.”

True to his word, ten minutes later, you find yourself on a flattened dirt road winding through the trees, leading into the forest. The air is dry but there’s a dampness clinging to the trees that smells sweet and inviting. Filling your lungs and closing your eyes you inhale deep.

“Here we are.”

Opening your eyes you drink in your surroundings. Just ahead, nestled between a tight copse of impressively large trees, a three story, wooden house pokes through the greenery. Green paint is peeling from the building and what you can see of the roof is slightly crooked but it looks homely and inviting. A covered veranda runs the entire length of the house and disappears around each side. Dotted around the porch are a variety of comfortable looking seats looking well worn and at home in the quaint space and you’re surprised, and on edge to discover most of the seats occupied.

“This doesn’t look like a warehouse.” You mutter under your breath.
“That’s ‘cos it isn’t smart ass.” Tom rolls his hazel eyes as he helps you off the bike. “This is one of the families helping us. And that,” he points to a woman who looks suspiciously like Clarissa, “is my Aunt Annabel.”

The blonde woman strides over, her features tight and wary. She’s wearing blue jeans and a light blue sweater but she looks anything but relaxed.

“You must be Y/n.” She extends a manicured hand that you begrudgingly take. “I believe you met my sister and niece recently.” An eyebrow quirks and she allows you the time to connect the dots. You wince. “Clarissa and Annabel. Yeah.” Unable to suppress the guilt your gaze slides to the floor and you draw your arms around your middle. “I’m sorry, everything that happened was my fault. I’ll understand if you don’t want me here.”

“I spoke to Annabel, she thinks this ridiculous scheme you’ve thought up might actually work—”

“Actually Aunt Bel, it was my idea.” Tom straightens up and folds his arms defensively over his chest.

“Yes well, we could certainly use a Bright, I’m just not entirely sure we’re utilising you the best we can.”

Furrowing your brows you glance at the older woman, intrigued as to what she’s getting at. A sly smile tugs at the corner of her lips and she narrows her eyes a little as she steps towards you. A sliver of fear flashes through you at her expression. It’s not unfriendly, it’s calculating, and it makes you wonder just what is going on in her head.

“I’m the one who dealt with Kandomere and his agents at the office, I’ve seen what you’ve done and what’s been done to you.” Pursing her lips she moves next to you, placing a hand on the small of your back, pushing you gently towards the house. “I’ve seen what you’re capable of and it seems to me that someone of your power could be rather useful against an entire Inferni coven.”

“Aunt Bell.” Toms tone is wary as he side eyes the older woman.

With a flick of her hand she brushes away his concern and smiles widely up at the house. “Come on, you’re no doubt hungry after your journey. There’s plenty of food inside and everyone’s dying to meet you.”

There must be a dozen people sat out on the veranda and names are thrown at you in quick succession as a range of smiling faces come over to greet you. It’s just as bad inside the house with yet more people crowd around a table heaped with food, all stop what they’re doing to say hi. Hiding behind a tight, fake, smile you give the room a quick wave. Thankfully this appeases them and they all return to what they were doing, including the loud chatting and laughter.

From the outside it looks like a relaxed, friendly gathering. Small groups sit chatting animatedly and smiling, whilst others are jostling for position around the table, scooping generous amounts of food onto their plates. Men and women, their ages staring as young as twenty all the way up to sixty something, enjoy the relaxed atmosphere, all the while trying to ignore the oncoming danger. It’s a strange situation to be in and you find yourself unsettled by the oblivious nature the group seem to have adopted. Surely they had to know the danger they were up against?

"C’mon Y/n, dig in." Tom, who has elbowed his way through the throng to get to the food, holds up a plate towards you. You're not hungry but you accept the offering out of politeness anyway.
The second you take the plate, Tom turns back, complaining loudly to the young guy next to him about hogging all the potato salad.

The easy and familiar exchange grates against your frayed nerves and sets your teeth on edge. These people were family, they didn't deserve to be in the predicament you'd put them in. It had been almost easy to overlook Kandomere's 'magic users' when they'd been a faceless group of strangers, you could almost imagine them as trained and ready to face off against the coven. Not now though. Now they were brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Families who had no place putting themselves in danger to fight your battle.

As surreptitiously as you can, you edge away, heading for the backdoor to distance yourself from the crowd. Slipping silently out the door you pull it gently closed behind you and exhale a breath you hadn't realised you'd been holding.

Out on the empty veranda you're afforded some privacy and solidity. The trees looming overhead, block out the sky, shrouding you in peaceful shade. Here its marginally cooler and you sink into a cushioned swing seat gladly, setting your untouched plate of food down next to you. Sighing deep you get another lungful of the sweet, damp forest scent, and mindlessly rock the swing back and forth. Staring into the green canopy you mull over the new turn of events.

Somewhere along the line, your mix up with the Inferni had morphed into a full blown war, with Kandomere now drafting in soldiers left and right. Soldiers who weren't soldiers at all and ones who had no right being dragged into this bloody battle. Leaning your head back and scooting further down into the seat you close your eyes. Your thought process is jumping from the people inside, to Kandomere, to the Inferni so fast it's hard to keep up. In your minds eye you see Kandomere at his desk in the MTF head quarters. You can picture him down to the tiniest details, including the deep furrow of his brow you're sure is fixed to his handsome face right now. It was obvious he felt backed into a corner and his natural instinct to fight his way out worried you immensely. For all his calm composure he showed at work, you knew what lay underneath and in this particular situation, you were all but sure it was his inherent characteristics that was driving him forward.

A crescendo of noise drifts out to you as the backdoor opens, pulling you from your thoughts. With a silent sigh you plant your feet firmly on the floor to stop swinging and sit up straighter, watching with careful eyes as Tom and the older Annabel file out.

"You really should eat." Tom points at your plate.

Brushing past her nephew, Annabel strides towards you, her steps purposeful.

"May I?" She gestures to your head.

Frowning, it takes you a moment to process her request, but then the memory of Kandomere telling you she was basically able to read minds flits through your thoughts. With a tight shrug you look to Tom only for Anabell to step into your line of sight.

"I would like to sift through your mind, see if I can't answer some of the questions that are so obviously bothering you."

With a second shrug you offer her a half assed nod. She'd already seen everything Kandomere had to show so what did you have to hide? She moves to stand in front of you, placing her warm palms on the side of your head. Awkwardly you fold your hands in your lap and wait with a stab of fresh anxiety as she does her thing.
Minutes pass and she doesn't move. A flurry of a breeze teases wisps of hair into your face and still, no one moves. The air grows heavy with tension and eventually, unable to stand it anymore you open your mouth to speak but Tom holds up his hand and shakes his head. After what feels like an eternity in the oppressive atmosphere, Anabell finally takes a deep breath and lowers her hands.

"Well, you've been through the wringer." Bending over she collects up your plate folding herself into the place it just occupied. "Here, eat something, you're no good to man nor beast if you pass out." Her watchful eyes remain fixed on you, making it clear that she'll go no further until you do as she says. Reluctantly you spear some food with your fork and begin to eat.

"Alright, so, let's start with your most recent fear shall we?" A soft smile meets your gaze as you twist to look at her. "No one is fighting a war on your behalf. This isn't about you for anyone else here, we all have our own issues with the Inferni, especially the LA coven. Quite frankly a lot of the older generations have been waiting for an opportunity such as this, one where we're able to confront them without fear of repercussion from the MTF. The Inferni, they've taken from all of us and it's time they paid for their wrongdoings. This opportunity that your situation has provided us with is a once in a lifetime chance at retribution and yes, revenge, for all of us here but we're not fighting for you." She purses her lips and pauses for a second. "That's not to say we aren't all working together to defeat them and help protect you, just, our motives are not quite so altruistic as you've maybe been led to believe."

Thinking logically, it wasn't hard to image how the Inferni had amassed such a large group of enemies and it would stand to reason that law abiding citizens such as these wouldn't dare go against the MTF so, again, it was easy to understand their eagerness to go against the Inferni now.

"I do agree with your misguidings when it comes to the MTF though," Anabell sighs and pinches the bridge of her nose. "Kandomere has a very impressive record and he certainly knows what he's doing when he's hunting individual Inferni." Her hand drops into her lap and she rubs the top of her thighs before standing. "In this case however, he's well and truly out of his depth," she mutters, pacing to the edge of the veranda and gripping hold of the hand rail.

Panic lances your heart and you're quick to discard your plate and find your feet. "So what can we do to stop him?" You ask in a rush, joining her. Gripping hold of the rough wood you relish the slight sting against your palms as it grounds you in the moment.

"I'm not sure we can stop him, per-say," From the corner of her eye she glances at you before spinning to face you directly. "What we can do is take this chance and give it our all. Even if it means breaking every rule in the book."

An ominous shiver slides down your spine. "What do you mean?"

“I mean, I think you might have been right.”

Tom moves to join you, a hand at the nape of his neck rubbing absently. “What are you suggesting Aunt Bell?”

“Y/n has a connection with the wand the MTF confiscated.”

Wait, what?

Eyes wide, your heart leaps into your throat and you grip the handrail even harder.
Annabel speaks quietly but with determination as she pushes on. “She doesn’t need spells when she has the wand, it’s intuitive.” Turning her back on you, she places a hand on Tom’s arm, pulling it down to his side. “You’ve felt her magic, Tom. She has more than all of us combined. Shouldn’t we be utilising that?”

Your head is spinning. It’s what you’d wanted all along, the ability to fight, to right the wrongs you’d accidentally caused.

Tom isn’t convinced though. “Aunt—“

Annabel’s grip tightens on him. “This is literally a once in a lifetime opportunity, Tom. We actually stand a chance, a good one of knocking the Inferni down with her help. If we beat them,” her voice turns wistful, “imagine it. LA without an organised Inferni coven. We’d be free to return. All of us.”

You don’t have to think about the words that pour, unchecked from you in a breathy rush. “I want to do it, if you can get my wand I can, I can help, I can end this, I know I can, I just—“

“Come on Tom, this is a no brainer.” Annabel nods, reaching back to cover your hand with hers. “Together, we could really make a difference.”

Hazel eyes full of concern and trepidation seek out you out. “Y/n?”

Meeting his gaze you can’t disguise the spark of fire running through your veins. Annabel was offering you everything you’d been looking for since fleeing the Inferni in Vegas. She was giving you back the power the Inferni had taken the moment you stepped into the library and met Mia. Nothing could turn back the time, there was no undoing what had passed but this was a way of setting things right. If you succeeded in beating - no decimating - the LA coven there’d be no way the Vegas coven would try anything.

“I need to do this, Tom.” You implore softly. “If I don’t then non of us have a future.”

“But Kandomere—“

You shake your head slowly. “He isn’t like us, he doesn’t know what it’s like.”

“You don’t need to do anything other than what you were going to.” Annabel chimes in. “When he calls you tell him what he needs to hear. The rest, well, that’s up to me.”

Your heart is thrashing wildly, beating so hard your vision is almost pulsing. In the back of your mind you acknowledge that your reaction isn’t entirely from fear. Theres a part of you that is excited, excited to be facing off against the Inferni, excited to be able to finally do something, and possibly more than anything excited to get your hands back on your wand.

“Okay.” Tom concedes, “tell me how it’s all gonna go down.”
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!