This is an Alpha's world

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This is an Alpha's world

by KristinStone

Summary

... but it would be nothing without an Omega by their side.

In a world where Omegas are nothing but breeding machines and sold to the highest bidding Alpha love is a mere product of biochemicals. Romantic novels enthuse over the true and pure love above biology and chemical body reactions. But when Reba gets sold to her Alpha she has to face the dark and grim reality that some Alphas still live in 1849 and see their bond mates as nothing but housewives and breeding machines ... although even that she isn't allowed, among other things. If she will find happiness in her life or end up choosing to share the same fate as her Omega mother depends on her own willpower and strength.

Notes

Disclaimer:
Do not, I repeat, do not read this if you have a trigger of any sort. This story includes elements of an abusive relationship and emotional abuse. I will not justify my decisions in this little brain baby of mine to any of my readers. Comments if meant constructive or otherwise positive are highly appreciated. I'm happy to explain should things not be clear to any of you.
in my own universe.
Addiction

Reba closed her grey eyes. White walls, cold light, and the smell of the detergent they used for the tile floor disappeared and gave way for her imagination. She replaced the humming of the AC with something Reba imagined waves crashing on a beach would sound like. She didn't know if it had anything to do with the real noise, but it was better with reality.

The nurses had hummed when she'd started the insemination therapy after her first heat at the age of eleven. After her 14th birthday they had stopped humming soothingly or talking to her at all.

Reba received the injections every second evening right before bedtime. The schedule had never changed, not even the slightest bit.

Getting up at 6 am, taking a shower at 6:10 am, having breakfast at 7 am Reba had never known anything other than starting her day with school at 8 am, eating lunch at 1 pm and then afternoon classes until dinner at 6 pm. And after two hours of relaxing or talking with friends, she was brought into the medical wing of the academy for insemination.

When she'd had her first session, the doctor she'd never seen again after that day had told Reba that her body would have to grow accustomed to ejaculate for the time when she'd have an Alpha to mate her. Reba later read in Darwin's Theory of the Omega Species that Omegas could practically get addicted to an Alphas semen. Something nature had done to prevent an Omega from leaving the cave and the Alpha for too long to ensure biological reproduction and survival of the species in hard times. Finewood Academy kept eight sterile Alphas solely for the purpose of milking fresh semen from them for insemination therapy or direct penetration.

The headmistress, Mrs. Gold, a blond Beta woman with a back as straight as a ram rod, had asked her after her first Heat (unattended by any Alpha influence to soothe her painful and maddening Heat-cramps and therefore often referred to as "Cold Heats") if she wanted to see a nurse or an Alpha regularly. Reba had heard horrible stories from older Omegas at the academy about brutal defloration by the Alphas in the west wing on the second floor, so she'd chosen the nurse.

Her roommate, Vivian, on the other hand couldn't have had her first time early enough. Reba remembered watching her like a hawk when she'd returned from defloration. Vivian had smiled, her blond hair a sweaty mess and her lips swollen from … whatever she'd done with them. Reba and her had never grown to be friends and so she hadn't asked Vivian how it was, what exactly he'd done to her but she remembered waking up in the middle of the night to find Vivian silently crying under the shower of their en-suite bathroom. Reba had noticed blood on her sheets and changed them before Vivian had finished her shower.

None of them had ever mentioned it. The only thing that had changed between the young girls was that Vivian and her friends had stopped mocking her every time Reba returned from insemination … at least until Vivian developed a liking in being fucked into the mattress by some Alpha twice her size and built solely from muscles and hardness.

The imaginary sound of waves got mixed in with the sighs of Vivian when she would finger herself after coming down from "harvesting" (as the direct treatment was called among the students) and licking off her digits covered in slick and infertile Alpha cum.

Reba had once or twice in her Heat thought about screaming the magical words "Get the Alpha down" to let him tend properly to her nagging need and throbbing feeling between her thighs. But an Omega at the peak of her Heat was not allowed to make any decisions to avoid shame and regret as
soon as the hormones ebbed down again and the senses returned to normal.

Mrs. Gold would ask every Omega who uttered the demand of an Alpha during Heat afterwards and if the answer remained the same. If so, one of the eight Alphas had a new student assigned to him.

Maybe the restricted number of Alphas was another thing that kept Reba's wish for big hands kneading her breasts while hips snapped and buried a thick, leaking cock inside her pussy at bay. There were 300 Omegas at Finewood and about 200 were in Heat-age. Reba had done the math. When there were about 66% of all Omegas sleeping with the Alphas on a two-day rhythm like she received her insemination therapy, than every Alpha fucked eight, under-aged Omegas per day.

The thought grossed her out like only else spiders could. She would rather endure Vivian and her friends' mockery than being one of EIGHT Omegas, one Alpha inseminated on a single day. Sometimes she wondered if they ever got bored doing the same thing day in, day out. Reba was certainly bored from her strict school schedule and boring routines.

Her only light of the day was Scarlett – a racy name has never been more misplaced in all history – her calm and shy best friend. Scarlett also took insemination instead of harvesting and was addicted to writing. Whenever she could, she wrote. Everything. On her 16th birthday she had already finished six plays, 37 short stories, one epic novel about an Omega striking down the reign of the brutal Alphas (she had been severely punished when Mrs. Gold had found out about the plot) and three romantic novels à la Jane Austen.

The world had never seen such genius in such … simplicity. With her raven-black hair, cool grey eyes and pale skin Reba wasn't exactly a beauty beyond compare but Scarlett? Well, she was one of those girls the others whispered about that she could be lucky she was Omega because nobody would want her if not for her dynamic. She had dark ash blonde hair, was a bit pudgy no matter the efforts of their PE teacher, and was way too shy to lift her warm brown eyes from the floor when Reba and she weren't alone together.

Scarlett was the daughter of a minister in the government and his Omega wife. Her parents had brought her to Finewood one day after her 6th birthday like it was the common rule. And although she had parents who could've found Scarlett a mate themselves in her prestigious circles, they'd preferred to let Mrs. Gold take care of it.

Every year in spring and fall, the Omegas who would attain full age before their next Heat or had already celebrated their 18th birthday at Finewood were auctioned to the highest bidding Alphas.

Reba opened her eyes when the nurse was done inseminating her for the last time. The auction Scarlett, she, Vivian and about 17 other Omegas would be sold was only two days away. She was extremely nervous fearing that no rich, bored, lonely Alpha from "the outside world" would buy her and she would end like her mother. She hadn't attracted anyone's eye and the academy had set her free to be hunted.

Reba hated thinking about the Hunt but most of the Omegas at the auction were "Babies of the Hunt" just like herself. She put her nightgown back on and could feel the hot semen move inside her as she stood.

The Hunt was basically what the name said. Alphas paid a lot of money to hunt drugged Omegas at the peak of their Heat. One Hunt lasted three days and by the end of it the Omegas were inseminated by possibly every participant of the Hunt leaving them pregnant with a stranger's child. The Omegas had lost every chance of finding a mate to bond with after carrying out a Baby of the Hunt. They were used one Heat after the other until they couldn't take the Hunt, the pregnancies, and the taking away of their babies to induce Heat more quickly anymore.
Two days after her 18th birthday, so three weeks ago, Reba had received access to her personal file with information about her mother. Reba knew her mother had had two children, one Beta son, Michael, and one Omega daughter, Jane. There was almost no information about Michael but some about Jane. She was older than Reba and hadn't been to Finewood but another Omega Academy, Woodlark a little closer to Flint. But that was pretty much all Reba found out about her.

Reba couldn't help asking herself if they looked like siblings? Did they share certain traits as their mother? Reba had found a picture of her in her file. She was practically a carbon copy of her; the same pale grey eyes, the same Omega typical soft, rounder build, the same curly black hair. She even inherited the little dimple that only appeared in her right cheek when she grinned. Reba saw nothing from her "father" in herself when she looked at her reflection in the mirror and she couldn't care less to know anything about the Alpha that mounted her mother at the Hunt. In her mind, he was a rapist and a sick pervert.

Reba sometimes wondered if Jane felt the same burning rage inside her chest when she thought about their mother. Or did she even know about her siblings? Jane was a year older than her, which meant that she could already have a child herself, an Alpha who took care of her … or she could also be doomed to serve strange Alphas in the Hunt as prey; voiceless, faceless, undignified.

But Reba wouldn't allow her thoughts to go down this dark road. She didn't even know, if she had had the same childhood as she had. At the age of three months, the usual period until Heat was due again, she had been ripped from her mother's arms and got into Finewood almost straight away. A short time in a hospital to make sure Reba was a real Omega and off she was into Finewood's nursery. Her file had stated that her mother had killed herself only three days after having her being taken from her. A few questions later Reba knew all the details of her death. Heat had set in almost immediately and she'd taken two times the fatal dose of sleeping pills before taking a bath. She'd drown himself in her sleep. Since knowing that, Reba had avoided bathtubs and all kinds of pills like the plague.

Arriving in her double dorm room in the east wing Reba found Vivian's bed empty. Nothing unusual. She was probably enjoying her last session with her Alpha upstairs on the other side of the building.

Reba felt hot slickness pool in her panties and lay down quickly before it all ran out of her again. Tonight, it was somehow different from other times, somehow not so gooey and sticky, more fluent and … moving. But Reba told herself that she was being ridiculous and that it was just her fluttering, churning stomach rotating from her anxiety of ending up in the Hunt if she wasn't bought in two days.

Reba had her nose buried in one of her beloved history books when Vivian returned shortly after bedtime.

"Enjoying being undesired, Rabe?" she panted, kicked the door close behind her and slumped down face-forward onto her bed.

Reba watched her content face and smelled the familiar scent of Vivian's Alpha on her. It was stronger than usual. He'd probably mounted her more than once as some sort of a grand goodbye.

"God, he was so … rough today," Vivian started to moan and rolled onto her back, "I hope my new Alpha knows how to handle an Omega like me, rough until I scream and writhe under him."

"I wish you all the best," Reba murmured disinterested because Vivian was telling her this for the 100th time.
“You really should be a bit more interested, Rabe. After all, I've been where you've not.”

“In the bed of an Alpha who gets paid to fuck you into shape for another Alpha who will breed you until he grows tired of you. Thank you, I've read everything I need to know about breeding with a mate and bonding to feel prepared.”

Vivian snorted and leaned up on her elbows letting her delicate fingers catch a drop of cum seeping out of her swollen cunt. It was a bizarre image to watch the white, milky fluid against her tanned skin. She hummed around her finger and made a show of licking it clean again. Reba unconsciously shook her head and looked back down to her book. Five minutes later their mutual silence ended as Julia snuck in.

“Did he do you good, too? Mine was mad today,” she whispered and winced when she sat down on Vivian's bed. Seemed like she had been a bit too mad for her biology, Reba thought and deliberately ignored their conversation, concentrating on how Napoleon started a war out of pure love for his Omega Josephine. Her favorite story. It wasn't that Reba was a fan of war but the idea of loving and admiring your Omega so much that you sent men to war was giving her a strange warm and fuzzy feeling.

One day later, the Omegas were allowed to have a little party. Alcohol was allowed but rationed so that they would not look drunk and utterly wasted at the auction the following day.

Vivian was totally losing it on the dance floor sandwiched between her best friends, Kimberley and Julia, laughing louder than all the others, and even drowning out the music straight from the Beta clubs around Flint. Reba stood around at the side watching the others having fun and drink. Scarlett was talking to Mrs. Gold about her literary works and tried to bargain then out. She wanted to at least have them handed over to her parents (a luxury Reba didn't have) and by the look on Scarlett's face when she returned, she had been successful. Reba handed her a glass of punch and clinked their glasses together.

“To our last day at school,” Scarlett sighed with a wry smile and sipped the sweet, pink fluid.

“To our last day as free Omegas without the burden of an Alpha to please.” Reba sounded much more resentful than she'd intended to, but just as much as she felt. The approaching auction was getting to her nerves and usually she was good at masking her emotions, but tonight Reba couldn't bring herself to care how she appeared.

“Aren't you excited … or happy? We'll be mated at out next Heat.” Scarlett studied her friend's face with a sympathetic look.

“I will be excited tomorrow when some rich Alpha pays millions of Dollars for the right to pump my womb full with his seed. Not a second earlier.” Reba glanced over to Vivian and took a long sip. “There will probably only be old, disgusting men who are all after her and we will end up as prey for the Hunt.”

Her bitter tone cut Scarlett like a sharp knife. If anyone was safe from the Hunt, it was Scarlett. Her parents would never let anything as degrading and awful as that happen to their little Omega princess. It was most likely that Reba would end like her mother. Sleeping pills and a hot bath
suddenly didn't sound too bad to her anymore.

Mrs. Gold must've picked up one or two words of their conversation because she stalked over to them and Reba's shoulders tensed under the glare of the strict headmistress.

“No talk about the Hunt. Not about any of you or one of your fellow Omegas,” she hissed and stared down her remarkable straight nose. Reba had received that look more times than she could count, but it still made her want to duck her head between her shoulders and sneak out of her sight.

“I'm sorry, Mrs. Gold,” she apologized and cast down her eyes to the sparkly flats Reba had bought just for tonight.

“And, I shouldn't be telling you this in advance, but you definitely have an Alpha, Rebecca.”

Reba's eyes shot up to Mrs. Gold.

“What?” she whispered, feeling a heavy weight lift off her shoulders. Scarlett's eyebrows were somewhere close to her hairline and Mrs. Gold nodded, her stern look relaxing a bit.

“Yes, the only question that remains is: Will it be him or another Alpha who bids highest on you?”

“What's his name?”

Reba's excitement was apparent in her voice, not matter how hard she tried to keep it down, and some Omegas standing near them turned their heads curiously.

“You will see for yourself at the auction tomorrow.” Mrs. Gold wouldn't tell them anymore. She had already said more than she was actually allowed to. Pre-auction, direct interest should not happen because that meant that an Alpha, a fertile one with money to buy an Omega, had had some kind of access to the mostly underaged Omegas. Then the whole separating and educating them without any outside influence would be undermined and premature Heat could already end with pregnancy. Not good.

When Mrs. Gold left Reba and Scarlett alone again, the girls were both completely dumbstruck.

“Now you must be excited,” Scarlett laughed after waking from her stupor. Reba tuned into her laughter and felt, indeed, the knot of excitement in her guts twist harder leaving her with a faint feeling of nausea and lightheadedness.

She didn't sleep that night and she was sure Vivian lay awake too. At least until Reba heard her roommate's light snoring around one a.m. Reba just couldn't find the calmness to sleep that night. Her mind raced inside her pounding head picturing "her" Alpha, the one that had already saved her from the fate her mother had endured.

When the clock on her nightstand showed 6am, Reba got up and followed her daily routine into the bathroom. She was incredibly tired and the knot in her guts only twisted harder the more time proceeded. In a few hours, she would have her mate for life and he would have probably deflowered her already. Alphas weren't known to be very patient once they had something they desired and Reba was something they desired, if only because of her biology. Vivian's loud knocking on the door pulled Reba out of her thoughts.

“Get the fuck out of there! I need to shower too!” she screamed through the thin wood separating them from each other. Reba quickly finished her shower and Vivian almost ripped her outside the bathroom before banging the door shut behind her.
When she would usually go downstairs to have breakfast Reba heard a quick, short knocking on the door. One of the Beta nurses brought in a tray with food for her and Vivian who just got out of the bathroom.

“You'll receive new clothing for the auction. Pack your belongings and leave the room as empty as you found it when you arrived. Mrs. Gold will be talking to you before the auction starts. Do not leave your room after 9 am for your own safety. Do not sneak out to get a glance of the Alphas.” She gave Vivian a stern look remembering an incident only a year ago when she, Kimberley and Julia had tried to get a look of the arriving Alphas, only to cause a complete chaos with their scents. Vivian just smirked, reveling in the memory of the arriving Alphas, only to cause a complete chaos with their scents. Reba remembered hearing shouts, growls and the voice of Mrs. Gold desperately trying to bring the Alphas back to reason. The scent of an unbound Omega in Heat was for Alphas like cocaine was for Betas.

“Every Omega has to be her room when the Alphas arrive. If she is not following this rule, she will not be listed at the auction.”

“And end up as prey?” Reba asked horrified. The nurse nodded. That was the moment Reba saw something like fear cross Vivian's face for the first time. She was a Baby of the Hunt as well and, also never wanted to end like her mother. This one time she would obey a command for her own good. The nurse left and returned 15 minutes later with two snow white dresses in their sizes. While Reba needed a healthy 12, Vivian wore size 6. Pretty small for an Omega but she was sporty and sexy and beautiful and blond and… pretty much everything Reba was not.

The dresses smelled overly sweet and almost too much to be wearable. They fit perfectly, making them look as good as possible, and moving the focus on their individual best features. For Vivian that were her long legs and for Reba her full cleavage. They didn't talk. Each of them too nervous and currently too self-centered to care for the other. Reba kneaded her cold hands, breathing shallow and fighting against her nervous nausea. Vivian paced the floor, her high heels dangling in her hand while sucking on one of her blond strands.

When Mrs. Gold entered the room at 9:13am, Vivian stopped immediately and looked at the headmistress like a deer in the headlights. Mrs. Gold gave her wet strand a disapproving glance but said nothing to it.

“You will go downstairs and only talk when I address you should an Alpha have a question. You will not talk to your friends and you will not touch them or any of the Alphas. After an Alpha has bought you, you will go off the stage and wait in a room behind it. Again, you will not talk or disturb the auction. Should you disobey, you will be given as prey for the Hunt and all those years at Finewood Academy will have been for nothing. You will receive your belongings and a coat when the auction is over and your Alpha has paid for you. Then you can say goodbye to your friends and leave with your Alpha.” She studied the two young faces in front of her. “Do you understand?”

They nodded, too scared and nervous to say a single word. Reba followed Mrs. Gold out of the room and noticed Vivian hadn't moved. When she looked at her, she swallowed thickly. Reba had never seen so much fear in Vivian's brown eyes. Mrs. Gold lifted an irritated eyebrow and cleared her throat to usher Vivian along but she seemed glued to the ground until Reba held out her hand, offering her the false security in the physical connection between their sweaty palms.

Vivian mouthed a silent "thank you" and finally they walked downstairs into the atrium with the stage that had been built for the auction yesterday evening while the Omegas had celebrated their little "prom". They walked past the door and around the actual atrium where the Alphas were already
seated on comfortable, silken armchairs in a soft eggshell color. Reba could smell them like she was right among them. It was dizzying.

Her mouth watered and her stomach made a dangerously low growl. It was answered by Vivian’s. They weren’t sounding like starving animals the entire time, right?, she asked herself and glanced over to the Alphas through the French doors when she heard a loud, deep rumble of laughter. Vivian pulled back her hand from hers and started rubbing her sweaty palms over her thighs.

Mrs. Gold led them onto the stage where the other 18 Omegas of today's auction were already waiting. The only thing separating the Alphas from them now was the heavy, dark purple velvet curtain that would be pulled up at exactly 9:30am. Mrs. Gold scanned the nervous, pale faces in front of her and nodded approvingly before stepping through the curtain. The noises of the Alphas’ conversation died down immediately.

“Gentlemen, welcome to our annual spring auction. This year 20 well-educated and trained Omegas will be given to the highest bidder. As always, we do not endorse bigamy or polygamy. You have all been informed beforehand and your DNA has been tested and classified as safe regarding mating with whatever Omega you may buy today.”

Scarlett was whimpering behind Reba. She could hear it in her breathing. But Reba wouldn't risk becoming prey to soothe her friend. Scarlett had nothing to fear. Reba had.

The smell of the potent Alphas just a few yards away let her heart beat faster. A lifetime without direct contact and now she was confronted with 35 of them. It was driving her senses to a maddening degree of hypersensitivity. She smelled various, different aftershaves, deodorants, fragrances all mixed together, all made to attract Omegas. Reba had to cover her mouth and nose when she took a deep breath, trying to clear her mind again, to usher out the fog that was building up inside her brain.

Her ears picked up every whisper in the room, making Mrs. Gold’s voice unnaturally loud and almost too loud to listen to for too long. She heard breaths; long, steady, and calm from beyond the curtain and, also shaky, shallow, and almost whining ones next and behind her.

“Please remain seated until asked otherwise. Lift the curtain.”

A whiff of the strong Alpha scent left Reba breathless when they were finally revealed to the buyers. She was pulled forward by one of the Betas working at Finewood and positioned between a small Omega girl Reba didn't know particularly well. Her name was Kate but that was all she knew. On her other side stood Julia breathing so shallow, Reba feared a moment she would blackout until she realized she was breathing just as shallow as she did.

As soon as all Omegas stood in a straight line, the auction started.
Reba forced herself to stay calm as she scanned the Alphas in front of her. They ranged from their mid-thirties to mid-sixties age-wise. Each and every one wore a dark suit, had their hair groomed flawlessly, and their eyes glanced more or less intensively over the Omegas at offer.

She felt watched. Well, of course, she stood on a stage in front of an audience. But somehow she felt like someone watched only her. Reba let her eyes caress the Alphas in front of her and wanted to grimace in disgust when she saw the clear predatory gleam in their eyes, licking their lips, moving in their seats as their custom-tailored pants growing tighter.

But then she saw the source of her initial discomfort. He sat in the third row, second seat from the left. Piercing blue eyes and dirty blond hair, long enough to cover the top of his ears, and despite his younger age, he was already greying at the temples. He looked her directly in the eyes, not once regarding her body, posture, figure, dress, not even her lips – just her eyes.

When he leaned back in his chair and rested his chin on his left hand, he moved with grace. A quality not typically found in Alphas.

Reba's heart skipped a beat when she thought that this must be the Alpha already claiming her as his. She wanted it, she wanted to be his. Where the other Alphas looked brutal, heavily muscled, and perfectly able to smash somebody’s skull with their bare hands, he looked (although not any less packed with muscles) lean and his eyes seemed brooding.

One could easily forget that Alphas weren't always governed by their biology when presented with 35 Alphas practically drooling on their suits as soon as they saw a line of Omegas in front of them. They were all rich. The money had to come from somewhere, but Reba believed only "her" Alpha to be intelligent enough.

He sat there calm and controlled, watching her like she was a riddle he needed to solve. She wanted to be his. When the Alphas had had enough time to look at their possible mate, Mrs. Gold opened the auction, starting with Kimberley and Julia. Kimberley was first. She was ordered to take a step to the front and the bidding began.

They started with 10 million and ended at 14.75 million. An Alpha with straight, red, shoulder-length hair bought her. He wore a satisfied grin on his face when Kimberley was led off the stage. Julia was shaking next to Reba, knowing she would be next. She wanted to soothe her and give her the necessary bravery to make the instructed step forward. Mrs. Gold had to repeat her command twice before she followed, the Alphas already frowning at her disobedience. A man with short black hair bought her for 12.5 million.

One after the other left the stage. Sums up to 28 million Dollar were paid until only Scarlett, Vivian, Reba and Kate were left. During the entire auction Reba felt "her" Alpha's eyes on her. Once or twice she dared to glance over to him, fearing he might have started bidding when an offer was made from his corner of the atrium. But he had remained silent …apart from a bored sigh after about two hours had passed. He'd glanced at his watch on his right wrist, indicating that he was left-handed.

Reba smirked lightly, being left-handed herself.

Scarlett was next. She wasn't a beauty and that was clearly reading in her price. She might come from a wealthy family with a name others would kill for, but she was bought for only 20.1 million by an older Alpha who seemed to pity her more than being aroused by her. Maybe, Reba thought, it was good for her friend. A kind Alpha who wasn't just after a child when it came to her. Yet, that
could also mean that he would betray her as soon as a beautiful Beta came along.

There were 18 "lonely" Alphas left in the audience and "hers" was still among them. Next, Kate was bought for 22.9 million by an Alpha who was smiling feline at his new property when she left the stage.

Now, it was down to Reba and Vivian and 17 patient Alphas confronted with their last two options for today's auction. Reba's back ached from standing for so long and she didn't even want to imagine the pain Vivian endured in her ridiculous high heels. When Mrs. Gold called Reba's name, she first thought she might have misheard, but it was her turn now.

She stepped forward and was relieved when she saw "her" Alpha sitting up a bit straighter. A little sigh escaped her, loud enough that only Vivian could hear it who lifted a curious eyebrow.

“Bids begin at 15 million,” Mrs. Gold announced, tiredness slowly creeping into her steady voice.

A brute of an Alpha in the first row lifted his hand. Reba hadn't paid attention to who was still without a mate by now. The wrong Alpha was scanning her body for the clearest signs of her fertility. His eyes lingered on her breasts for the longest time probably imagining his children sucking on them for milk. Reba had to suppress the need to cover her cleavage and shiver in disgust.

She looked over to the Alpha she was rooting for and wished for him so make an offer. She couldn't have been so wrong in reading his looks or could she? Slight panic set in when Mrs. Gold started to count down. Vivian smirked. Only one offer and that was even lower than Scarlett's.

“20 million,” the blond Alpha finally sighed seconds before it would have been too late. The brute turned around irritated.

“Didn't know children were allowed to participate as well,” he sneered but the other only showed a grin that didn't reach his blue eyes until he turned towards the stage again. Reba had almost screamed a loud "thank you" but behaved herself.

“Well, those hips look like they could carry triplets. And those will be mine. 25 million.”

“30 million,” the voice from the third row said without letting a single second pass. Reba's eyes went wide. 30 million for her?

The brute growled deeply, turning his head slowly to the other Alpha who was smirking like a cat now.

“31 million.”

“35 million,” came the answer just as quickly as before. Mrs. Gold watched the two men carefully. One wrong word and whatever tension was building up between them could snap and this day would end in a disaster.

“35.5 million,” the brute hissed through clenched teeth, “first sitting here like a bored child the entire time and now this?”

“40 million.”

A high-pitched noise escaped Reba and she felt her heart race even faster than it already did. She wanted to be his and he seemed to be willing to pay every price for her. The brute grunted and turned back around to scan Reba another time.
“She's not worth that much. You can have her.”

“Sold,” Mrs. Gold said before another word could be spoken by anyone. The seriousness returned into the Alpha, her Alpha, her mate. She couldn't hold back her light smile when she walked off the stage but it disappeared when she saw the look on Vivian's face. This expression of absolute loathing because she knew none of the remaining Alphas would pay that much for her.

In the end, Vivian was bought by the Alpha sitting next to the brute for 31.75 million. Still more than for every Omega except Reba, but Vivian didn't like being second, she never did.

The other Omegas had heard the sums for Reba and looked at her wide-eyed when she entered the back room. As Mrs. Gold had instructed they remained silent until Vivian entered and shoved Reba from behind.

“What the fuck was that, Rabe? 40 fucking million? You're not even worth half that much. You're still a fucking virgin!”

She was about to answer her when Mrs. Gold entered, clearly having heard Vivian's shouting. Reba remembered the threat to be given as prey and bit her tongue hard.

“You can be extremely happy that the auction officially ended with your price otherwise you would share your mother's fate,” Mrs. Gold hissed and Vivian, now officially (as she had just said herself) no longer subject to her, held her head high and her nose even higher as she demanded her coat and belongings, and to be handed over to her Alpha.

“You will leave this room in the order you entered it, young lady. Except you, Rebecca, you will come with me immediately. Say goodbye to your friends. Your belongings and coat are already being given to your Alpha.”

Reba could feel Vivian glare her way but ignored her deliberately. She hugged Scarlett tightly and stroked her cheek as she started to cry.

“We will see us after the next Heat. Promise.” Scarlett smiled, tainted with the hurt of separation from her best friend, and hugged her a second time. Reba smiled at the other Omegas she hardly knew and avoided looking at Vivian when she accompanied Mrs. Gold out of the room.

“Why am I allowed to leave earlier?”

“You witnessed what happened between the two interested parties regarding you. I don't wish to keep them here longer than necessary and because one will definitely leave once you are given into his care, it's simple.”

Reba almost had to run to keep up with Mrs. Gold's long, rapid steps.

“Was he the Alpha who addressed previous interest on me?” she panted.

“Yes.”

“How did he know about me?”

“He didn't. He asked for the smartest and most obedient Omega and you are very smart and moderately obedient. Scarlett was my second suggestion, leaning more to be obedient side. After showing him pictures of the two of you, he decided for you.”

Reba stopped in her tracks. “But isn't that illegal?”
“Yes, it is. Would you like to bring your Alpha to prison for wanting a smart and beautiful, and not just fertile mate?”

Mrs. Gold crossed her arms over her chest and lifted one of her thin eyebrows.

“No, Mrs. Gold, I would not.”

“That’s what I thought. And now please hurry. The tension between them has been enough to choke someone.”

They hurried to the entrance hall where the Alphas waited for their newest property to be handed to them. Reba found hers instantly. Standing, he towered not all but most of the other Alphas. His posture was lean and sporty but not thin.

He looked like one of those Alphas heroic love songs were sung about, Reba thought and scolded herself a second later for such a novelettish thought. Scarlett would've loved her for this. In her best friend's mind Reba was too closed-up about her feelings. Well, not anymore it seemed. She fell for him without having even touched him or having heard more than numbers from his lips.

He held a silvery coat in his hands and talked with Scarlett's Alpha, no emotion showing in his face, still seeming to brood over some puzzle or riddle he needed to solve.

“He's your Omega,” Mrs. Gold announced and his eyes met hers before descending to Reba standing in front of the tall Beta woman. He didn't say anything, just held out the coat so Reba could easily slip her arms into it. His knuckles lightly grazed her upper arms in the process of helping her into the also heavily perfumed clothing item and Reba involuntarily shivered. The ends of her nerves were even more sensitive being so close to him now, let alone being touched by him.

“Well, I hope you enjoy your overpriced little breeding toy,” the brute sneered in front of them and Reba could more feel than actually hear her Alpha's deep rumbling growl behind her.

“Your car is waiting, Mr. Ness.” Reba looked up into Mrs. Gold's face and saw that little hint of worry that one only noticed when one knew her each and every expression.

Mr. Ness nodded slowly and laid his huge hand on the small of Reba's back to gently push her towards the open entrance door. God, she didn't even feel the coldness from the fresh April wind hit her face. All Reba could concentrate on was his hand touching her, bringing his body like a protective barrier between the others and her. She was high on the feeling of having an Alpha taking care of her and she didn't even know his full name. Reba couldn't care less.

When she sat inside his pre-heated black limousine, she took a deep breath. It all smelled like him. Heavy, warm, welcoming, and, most of all, safe. She closed her eyes and slid deeper into the seat pulling her coat close around her and imagining the pressure to be his arms holding her tight.

Reba didn't hear the loud voices and the punches landing on hard, tense muscles and bones under expensive fabric coming in from the outside. The other backdoor opened and her Alpha sat down to her left. He held his fabric handkerchief to his split lip and barked at the driver to finally drive on. Reba watched him wide-eyed, feeling aggression and adrenaline seeping out every pore. The knuckles of his left hand were bleeding and started swelling up.

He carefully felt for his teeth, completely ignoring his Omega while the car turned on the driveway. Reba looked back over her shoulder to the academy, seeing the brute sitting on the gravel ground and shaking his head as Mrs. Gold held out her hand to help him up again.

“Do you prefer Rebecca or do you have an abbreviation you're used to?” she heard the Alpha growl
next to her and turned her head back to him. He still held the now blood stained handkerchief to his mouth but now had a file on his lap that looked – yes, it was her school file with that horrible photo of her as an eleven-year-old, marking it the age of her officially becoming an Omega.

Reba saw his eyes lazily scan one page after the other until he glanced over to her silently demanding an answer to his question.

“Reba, only Mrs. Gold ever called me Rebecca.”

He nodded and turned back to her school file.

“Um, how am I supposed to address you? "Alpha" doesn't seem very personal.”

He didn't even look at her when he mumbled, “You can call me Kristján.”

“Christian,” she murmured, testing it on her tongue. Reba frowned a bit. Somehow she had expected something more … Alpha.

“Not Christian. Kristján. It's Icelandic,” he hissed irritated and glared at her, “I thought I had requested a smart Omega. You can't even pronounce my name correctly.”

She was taken aback by that. “Well, I'm sorry. This is the first time I meet an Alpha or hear an Icelandic name. No need to be rude, Kristján.”

By the glance she received now, Reba would've rather jumped out of the car than endured it a second longer. Kristján's eyes bore merciless into hers as his nostrils flared under his angry breath. He lowered the handkerchief and leaned in so close she could almost taste his blood on her tongue.

“Don't get bratty with me. I'm not having a good day,” he whispered lowly and waited for her breathed "sorry" before leaning back into his seat again.

A single drop of his blood had fallen on Reba's white dress, drying in a perfect circle in a vibrant red color. She stared down at it and tried to calm her churning stomach. This closeness in the limited space of the car brought with it had first made her blissful and left her lightheaded, but now it made her feel uneasy. Kristján could knock her out with one well-placed hit like it must've happened with the brute only minutes ago. She was no match to him.

In Darwin's Origins of the Dynamics she had read that aroused Alphas could hardly control themselves. Did irritated count as aroused?

Reba traced around the little red spot on her thigh and decided to make herself invisible as long as she felt the tension vibrate from his body or until they were at his place – her new home.

The thought of mating with him in his current mood made her shiver. The second she had smelled and touched him, she had desired mating like she'd never desired anything in her life. But now she had an incredible fear of the pain he would most likely inflict on her. The memory of Vivian's sobs under the shower flooded her mind again and she involuntarily started shaking.

Reba closed her eyes imagining waves crashing on a beach again, blocking out the noise of the car, gliding smoothly over the lonely road and heading towards the towers and skyscrapers of Flint, the smell of the Alpha next to her and the leather they sat on, and the coldness creeping up her neck when her guts twisted into a tight, rock-hard knot.

Warm fingers suddenly intertwined with hers on her lap and made her gasp before she opened her eyes. Kristján was checking with the back of his left hand if his lip was still bleeding while the thumb
of his right hand lightly traced over her skin.

“Are you cold?”

He didn’t look at her, his attention still solely directed to the bloody cloth in his hand.

“No, I am not. Just-” Could she speak openly? Wasn’t she even expected to confide in her mate?

“Just?”

Kristján turned his head and lifted an eyebrow, never stopping to stroke her hand with his thumb.

“I’m just a bit scared.”

He let out a heavy breath and pulled his hand back. Reba made a little unhappy noise at the loss of contact. Kristján tugged his bloody handkerchief away and intertwined their fingers again without otherwise paying her any attention or reacting to her previous statement. He simply kept on reading her file.

Reba cast her eyes down, watching his thumb stroking over her soft palm, and instantaneously felt herself calm down with every little touch. She sighed contently and leaned back against the headrest of her seat. The weight and warmth of his hand on her thighs flooded her brain with endorphins, clouding her mind in a pink, fuzzy haze. Reba savored in the feeling than enveloped her, warm and tender, and watched the sun slowly set over the city ahead. Trees and meadows got fewer and fewer the closer they got to the high buildings that blocked the view to the ocean. The sound of a page being turned drew her attention back to Kristján.

“You know, you could ask me everything that's in there,” she mumbled completely relaxed again.

“I know, I could,” he retorted, squeezing her hand once, “but this is faster.”

And much more impersonal, she thought and turned her head towards the window. Reba briefly wondered what the other Omegas were doing right now and if they too had already been cut down, sneered at, and insulted by their Alphas. Well, he said, he had a bad day. Maybe it would change as soon as they were home. Hopefully. Reba could only wish for something other than a grumpy Alpha as a mate for life.
The sun had completely set when the limousine drove into the fancy part of Flint with high polished skyscrapers and eventually came to a halt in a deep-level garage under one of them.

“We're home, Sir,” the driver announced over the intercom and Kristján disentangled his right hand from Reba's tight grip.

Her senses were flooded by what she'd seen so far. Hundreds of people, walking on sidewalks, sitting and chatting in cafés, or hurrying to get to the next bus or train. She'd wanted to step outside, hear the noises, smell the air scented by so many different people but at every stop-sign and red light Kristján's hand had closed tighter around her fingers. Almost as if he feared she might escape, she thought and smiled at his Alpha-typical possessiveness.

Now that he pulled his hand back, she missed the contact like someone had sucked all the oxygen out of the car. Kristján closed the file he had read twice on the drive and left the car without even looking at her. The driver opened her door and she was met with a disgusting mixture of smells of rotten garbage, air pollution, and too much carbon dioxide in the air.

“Not as fresh and flowery as Finewood air, huh?”

Reba nodded, covering her nose and mouth with her hand, and watched Kristján shake his head annoyed before he shouldered the box with her belongings from her former life. She followed him towards a brushed steel door behind which a simple yet elegant elevator was hidden. Inside Kristján pulled a keycard from the inside of his navy-blue coat and held it in front of a scanner next to the door. The elevator beeped one time and drove up to the 107th floor.

Reba's stomach dropped as the pressure suddenly pushed her into the floor. Instinctively she sought his hand and was met with a sharp turn of his head and a merciless glare.

“Never rode in an elevator?” Reba shook her head and cautiously let go of his hand again. Now she was sure, she was supposed to seek his closeness when she felt pain or fear. It was the basic principle between Alphas and Omegas. The reason Omegas mated with Alphas (apart from the obvious one) was securing their safety! First lesson ”Dynamics” in 5th grade. Kristján rolled his blue eyes at her silent answer.

“What did they even teach you your whole life?”

“History, nursing, house holding, literature, -”

“Yes, thank you. They definitely haven't taught you what a rhetorical question is.”

A sharp response sat on the tip of her tongue but Reba remembered that she was supposed to be his for the rest of her life and starting of like two angry cats, was definitely counterproductive. The elevator came to a halt and the doors opened with another beeping sound.

It was completely dark around her. The only thing Reba could make out were gigantic windows forming the entire wall before her and granting a spectacular view of the city below, and at the horizon …

“It that the ocean?” she whispered, walking blindly into the high space.

Soft, warm light shooed away the darkness around her revealing an almost empty, great room. There
was a black leather couch creating a stark contrast to the polished, white marble floor, a high ceiling with a crystal chandelier above her head, an open kitchen where Kristján had switched the lights on and … was currently washing the hand she had held in the car the entire time. An open staircase to her left led up to the gallery where the private rooms in this apartment seemed to be located, and the best thing of it all, a large terrace on the right.

She was already on her way towards the glass door leading outside when the Alpha stopped her.

“You will not go outside!” he said loudly but Reba wanted to hear the waves. Real waves. The real ocean.

“Stop, right there!” Kristján shouted now and stalked towards her. He yanked Reba away from the glass door by her arm, his grip tight enough to leave her bruised. She yelped in surprise and pain, and stumbled back against him.

“You will not disobey me! Ever!” he hissed only inches from her shocked face, “when I give you an order, you will be obedient. You will not second guess me. You will not discuss my commands. Is that understood?”

Reba felt her heart beat faster than ever. Blood rushed in her ears and her mouth dried within seconds.

“Is that understood?” he repeated, tightening the hand around her upper arm. She nodded quickly, hoping he would let go of her again. He did and the blood returned painfully into her throbbing upper arm.

“Follow me.”

Kristján was breathing heavily through his nose as he walked towards the stairs. Reba followed him close out of fear he might drag her by the hair with him, if she didn't obey. His strides were fast and wide and Reba had to practically run to keep up with him. He climbed the stairs and walked past a bedroom with large glass walls providing a clear view to a messy bed – clearly his – and stopped in front of a plain grey door.

“Your room,” Kristján announced, pushing said door open.

“Are we not sharing a room? How are we mating, if we don't share a bed?”

“Don't worry. My legs are quite capable of carrying my body from my bed to yours if need be,” he sneered and waited for Reba to walk inside the room.

It was a simple bedroom. Twice as large as her dorm room at Finewood Academy. There was a double bed with what seemed like bedding for four. For her nest, she thought and let her fingers glide over the silky white sheets.

Around the corner to her right was an empty bookshelf across a dark green armchair, a matching chaise longue and a side table. On the other side of the room was her en-suite bathroom with more glass walls. The only windows to the room was another glass front just like downstairs. Reba frowned when she realized that she couldn't see the ocean from her window.

“Take off your dress, throw it away, and wash this awful perfume off your skin. You smell disgusting,” Kristján hissed by the door and Reba thought she must've misheard.

“You are extremely rude. With what did I deserve such a treatment?”
He growled dangerously low but left without further comment. Insulting an Omega's scent was like calling an Alpha a coward. Reba blinked away her tears as she took off her clothes as instructed. She wrapped her arms around her middle and cautiously stepped into the bathroom. The bathtub was right in front of her standing along the wall. Left the toilet, right the washing table and the separate shower. White fluffy towels that smelled brand new lay over the edge of the bathtub and waited to be wrapped around her clean, wet, warm body.

Reba found a simple block of soap in the shower and sniffed on it suspiciously before deciding the faint smell of lilac was going to go well with her natural scent. She rubbed the soap almost forcefully into her skin, never wanting to hear anyone, and especially not her Alpha, to tell her she would smell disgusting, again. This was her first day with him and, although she didn't know what she'd imagined it to be like, this was definitely not it.

When her skin was red and burned from her heavy scrubbing, Reba turned off the hot spray of water and reached for the towel. She wanted to go and search for something to wear when she saw her Alpha sitting on the foot end of her bed, disgustedly eyeing her auction-dress on the floor next to him. Reba played with the tips of her long, dripping wet hair and anxiously awaited his next move. She didn’t have to wait long.

He reached out his hand to beckon her closer. Reba stepped before him and held her towel so tightly around her chest that her muscles began to shake. Kristján stood up and let his warm hands travel up her upper arms, and eventually cradle her face. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath between them. She watched his expression closely. Her heart was beating faster, being so close to him, smelling his very own, warm scent, hearing his breath, and feeling it on her wet skin.

“You still reek,” he whispered and growled deeply as he took a step back. Reba was close to tears.

“Did they bathe you in that perfume? Rubbed it into every pore of yours?”

Reba didn't smell whatever he found so nauseating. All she smelled was freshness and lilac. Suddenly her heart skipped a beat. What if, what he found so sickening, was her own natural scent?

“Take another shower. In your wardrobe, you’ll find new, clean clothing. When you're dried and dressed, you can come downstairs for dinner.”

Reba nodded and hurried back into the bathroom, starting the shower even before the Alpha had closed the door behind him. She scrubbed her skin until it hurt and she drew blood on her upper arms. A few minutes later, she wore an unflattering dress in white and was still searching the drawers for underwear when realization dawned that he probably hadn't bothered getting her some.

“Sure, why should a little, obedient, stupid Omega need underwear? Or clothes at all? Does he think I'm just a breeding machine without feelings or modesty?” Reba muttered before giving up her futile search and checked her reflection in the mirror of her wardrobe. She had her long hair in a loose braid, unravelling at the end because she didn't bring her hair tie with her. She had one in the box with her belongings but that probably still stood in the kitchen. The dress was doing nothing to make her look desirable; completely hiding her hourglass figure with too wide fabric.

With a long sigh, she shook her head. She couldn't do anything about it now and having only eaten a bit of breakfast today, she was feeling like a starving woman. She needed to eat. Barefoot and with her heart beating up into her throat, she walked over the gallery towards the stairs. Reba smelled food and her stomach rumbled like it had done this morning being faced with the Alphas. She followed her nose through a door under the gallery she had missed earlier.

Kristján sat at the top end of a long dining table, reading again. Scarlett would have loved him for the
sole reason that he read so much, even if the only thing he seemed to be reading were files.

“You took very long,” Kristján murmured when Reba pulled out the chair on his right.

“I was searching for underwear.” She scanned his handsome face for a moment. “Omegas do wear undergarments.”

“You don’t say.” His eyes shot up to hers, looking at her sternly. “Your headmistress didn't provide me with your size. And as tradition dictates you won't be needing underwear or anything at all tonight anyway.”

Reba swallowed thickly. So, she would lose her virginity today. Well, what had she expected? That he would court her first, she scolded herself for her own naïveté and finally took a seat.

The table was filled with steaming hot foil potatoes, fresh sour cream, salad that smelled of herbs and vinegar, and steaks. Her mouth watered at the sight of it and the lack of lunch today. But she waited patiently until Kristján put away the papers in his hands and filled both their plates.

“I will discuss the rules under which you will live in my care after dinner and before we retire into your room for defloration. As I understood from your file you chose not to come into contact with a sterile Alpha at Finewood Academy?”

“Yes, I preferred insemination therapy over direct treatment.”

“Harvesting,” Kristján muttered, cutting his steak. Reba watched him, puzzled how he knew of the internal name for it. His muscles were apparent under his grey dress-shirt, especially when he sliced a piece of his steak. The light contoured the broad chest and wide shoulders he sported, and left Reba almost hypnotized when she thought about how they would move over her when his body claimed hers for the first time tonight.

“Eat.” The command was almost too far away to penetrate her otherwise focused attention. They didn't speak during dinner. She had her mouth constantly full, sometimes moaning around the delicious bites. Reba felt his eyes on her again but the need to eat was stronger than the will to please him right now.

After she'd finished her portion Reba reached for another foil potato but Kristján clicked his tongue on her and lifted an eyebrow that left her feeling uneasy.

“Don't overeat. You don't want a heavy stomach later in bed.”

She nodded and folded her hands over her lap, waiting for him to finish his meal as well.

“As I already said,” he started when his plate was finally empty, “I expect complete obedience from your side. When I tell you something, I want you to follow my order. It's your duty as an Omega.”

Reba huffed an unamused laugh.

“Do I amuse you?” he asked sharply. Reba swallowed thickly.

“We're not living in the 1850s. Omegas have more rights now. We're not just nice objects to look at or breeding mares.”

She was his property in some way, yes, but she was still a living, breathing individual with a mind of her own and feelings to share.
“In my house it's still 1849.” The little smile on Reba's face disappeared again. “You will not leave my apartment without my permission,” Kristján continued, “and you won't invite anyone here. Ever. I will provide you with everything you request and I approve of.”

This sounded like a prison to her.

“I had more freedom at Finewood Academy. I thought, I would get my own household and all as soon I had my Alpha,” she said carefully. Reba winced when his fist came down loudly on the table.

“I am not your Alpha! You are MINE! I bought you; that makes you my property just like this table or the dress you're wearing!” he shouted and Reba dug her head between her shoulders.

“I'm sorry, Kristján,” she whimpered quickly, hoping it would calm him down but it only provoked the opposite.

“An apology mumbled and without eye contact is just another insult,” he sneered. Reba lifted her gaze to his cold blue eyes and she repeated her apology. The hard lines on his face smoothed a bit and he nodded approvingly. Reba wasn't sure if she could live with him. His rules and the way he snapped out of nowhere didn't sound too promising for a nice future.

“Do you understand my rules? I will introduce additional ones if time shall make it necessary.”

“Yes, I understand.” Her hands were shaking under the table but she'd managed to keep her voice steady. Kristján leaned back in his chair and nodded approvingly once more.

“Good. Now go to your room and wait there for me. I'll be with you in a few minutes.”

He waved his hand dismissively and Reba thanked every higher power for the opportunity to bring a little more distance between him and her. Even if only for a couple of minutes. Alone in her room she paced the floor, kneading her sweaty hands and running her palms over the thick fabric of her dress.

That will be off soon, she thought and swallowed against the nervous nausea creeping up from her stomach. Reba forced herself to stay calm and breathe in a steady, slow rhythm.

Suddenly she heard a deep rumbling like … the purr of a giant cat. When she slowly turned around she saw Kristján standing by the door. He made that noise, this sound that calmed her down instantly.

“Has anyone ever purred for you?” he asked lowly and closed the door behind him. Reba was paralyzed by the sound, only shaking her head as an answer. Kristján came closer with his eyes glued to hers, clearly giving away his arousal with his scent. It suddenly filled the air; this musky smell Reba had often smelled on Vivian when she'd come back from harvesting.

“Would you like me to continue?”

Reba nodded. Sweat ran down her neck and her breathing grew faster just like her heartbeat, the closer the Alpha came. When he purred right in front of her it felt like a soft hand caressing her. Reba moaned silently and her eyelids fluttered close. His huge hands on her shoulders seemed to come straight from a dream.

Warmth spread out from the spots he touched and traveled down into the pit of her stomach. Reba could feel herself get wet, felt it run down the insides of her thighs where it usually would've pooled in her underwear. Her mind was down to breathing and following her instincts. She lifted her arms when Kristján's hands closed around the hem of her knee length dress.
She didn’t feel any shame standing naked and aroused before him while he was still fully clothed and deliciously purring for her. Reba followed without a second thought when he guided her towards her unused bed, laying her down and hovering over her, taking in every inch of her exposed, flushed skin with his hungry eyes.

Slick ran down her slit, leaving a wet spot under her. Reba reached up to touch his face, proving to herself that he was real. He was. Kristján let his hand move over her smooth skin, high on the knowledge that he was the first Alpha to ever see and touch her like this, and he would be the only one. Ever. All this underneath him belonged to him and it would be until his death.

Reba's senses were all directed to him. Every little movement he made was registered. She had been right. His body over her looked like one of a Grecian warrior, claiming his prize after a victory. And this was all for her.

Reba felt her lips curl into a smile at that thought and she leaned up to taste his mouth. Kristján smirked when he withdrew. She whimpered at the loss of the closeness, but bit her lower lip when she saw him unbuttoning his dress-shirt. At least the first two buttons so he could pull it over his head and present Reba his naked torso.

She sat up, wanting to touch him and feel the heat she’d already sensed through his clothes, and let her fingers glide through the short grey and dark blond curls on his chest. But he caught her wrist before she could reach him.

“Lay down,” he whispered, his voice raspy and heavy with arousal. She followed his command. There was no fear of what would happen. She felt safe with him, no matter the bruises that were already showing on her upper arms. Her mind was screaming that he wouldn't hurt her. No, he would keep her from all harm there was. Giving herself to him was the most natural and most logical thing in the world. She was meant to be here in this comfortable bed and watch him open the dress-pants that were already showing his erection, straining against the fine wool fabric.

But when he was naked too, panic suddenly set in. Reba's mind was alerted. Vivian's sobs returned into her conscience, and Reba started to tense up, even winced when Kristján touched her knees to push her legs apart. He felt the slight resistance and stopped, hovering over her again and lightly stroking his fingers up and down her ribs. Reba started laughing out of reflex.

“I'm ticklish.”

“Obviously,” he purred and started kissing her kneecaps, watching her relax at the sound he made. His erection stood proudly and hot precum dripped onto her mons pubis. The scent that was filling the air now was thick, bespoke of the arousal in the room, and clouding their brains with hormones. Their only purpose was to heat them up more and work up their desire for each other.

“Will it hurt?”

“I will be careful and you're wet enough for it to be more pleasure than pain.”

Kristján never stopped his soothing purring and Reba felt her body relax without her consent. It reacted to the call of her Alpha. The animality of it made her shudder and a hot streak of slick dampened her even more, making her ready to be mated by him; to become his for eternity.

If her mind would've had been clear from the sexual haze it was drowning in right now, she would've been nervous or even resistant. He hadn't said even one friendly word to her. Not a single one. Reba had wanted a devoted, loving Alpha by her side who understood her sometimes slightly strange humor or at least showed her everything she'd seen in the books at Finewood; the Aurora
Borealis, the Niagara Falls or the Great Chinese Wall.

But she was enveloped in his scent and her mind only worked in one direction. Kristján positioned himself between her soft thighs. She hooked them around his hips like she knew that this was where they were supposed to be. His face was only inches away from hers, staring into her dilated pupils as if searching for something. With his body covering hers so completely, her brain was overwhelmed with the many sensations: the leaking tip of his cock pressed against her entrance, his breath against her sweat covered skin, the musky scent of his precum clouding her brain even more than the closeness to him already did.

He purred loud and deep when he pressed harder against her wet opening, making her even wetter. Kristján dipped his head into the crook of her neck. The vibration from inside his chest travelled over his lips into her body. Reba wrapped her arms around his shoulders and sighed breathlessly. With her eyes closed, she solely concentrated on the body over her and the pressure between her legs.

“Relax,” Kristján purred and her muscles obeyed instantly. He used the opportunity to ease inside her. Reba's eyes flew open, her jaw dropped from the unknown pain and strange pleasure between her thighs. Her nails dug into his skin, needing something to hold onto as he started rocking back and forth. It hurt but his precum and her slick helped with the friction.

She whimpered into his shoulder. He didn't react to it. Reba knew this was what every Omega had to go through and she'd imagined, feared, it to be worse. It didn't take too long until Reba felt a foreign feeling starting to build up in the pit of her stomach. Kristján sneaked an arm under her and pulled her closer, manipulating her to arch her back and lift her bouncing breasts towards his hungry mouth.

He licked her hard nipples and feasted on the gasps that escaped her lips, moaning over her when he felt her tight cunt grow even tighter with each of his thrusts. He purred and picked up speed when he chased his own climax, knowing she must be close to her own. Her high sighs grew even higher and more breathless.

His knot grew with every movement and sound he coaxed out of her. Reba pushed him in with her heels on the back of his muscular thighs. Kristján looked down at her. Her face was twisted with pleasure and still a bit of pain.

The little hairs on her hairline had been turned into curls from her hot sweat. She writhed underneath him and pushed against his knot. With one solid thrust, he was inside her and muffled her painful, surprised yelp with his mouth. Kristján groaned against her lips when he came and she contracted around him, her pussy milking his cock for every drop of fertile cum he was so willing to give her.

Her insides were in a complete turmoil. She felt deep pain and discomfort with his weight lying motionless on top if her and his knot hooking them together behind her pelvic bone, stretching her like she never thought possible. Kristján leaned his forehead against hers and they breathed heavily against each other’s face.

Reba watched him when the initial blissfulness had ebbed away again. Sweat covered his skin. His eyes were still closed as he caught his breath. The feeling of being so full with him and the hot cum inside her womb was simply delicious. Yet, Reba feared doing something wrong again. The little time they had already spent together had made her wary. She didn't move an inch, only listening to his heavy breathing.

Without a word, Kristján turned them both around so that she was straddling him, still tightly connected to one another. He looked up to her sitting upright and let his eyes wander over her exposed body. His hands lazily stroked up and down her thighs at his sides. Reba swallowed thickly, not sure what she was supposed to do right now.
“Come here,” he whispered, yet his voice seemed like a shout in the quiet room. He guided her to rest on his chest before he pulled one of her many blankets over them. She sighed contently when his arms wrapped around her. This was exactly what she wanted; being close to her mate and him taking care of her. Reba felt sleep creep into her heavy limbs and slowly the knot swelled down inside her making way for his semen to slowly drip out of her sore entrance. She had never felt so content in her entire life, willing to forget the mean things he’d said to her over the day and the stupid rules he forced upon her for this one, beautiful feeling of happiness and safety.

Reba was almost asleep when his hands curled around her sensitive upper arms, still sore from trying to get rid of the perfume under the shower. She hissed and followed his motion when he pushed her off him.

Maybe she was turning too heavy for him to be comfortable, she thought and was almost certain that he would gather her back into his arms as soon as he’d found a comfortable sleeping position. But she was wrong. In the spare light that shined through the tall windows she could only barely make him out. Yet, Reba could hear the rustling of clothes, the metallic jingling of his belt buckle as he gathered his discarded clothes, and she sensed his movement on the mattress as he stood.

“Where are you going?” she asked unsure and sat up, covering her breasts with her blanket. It smelled of him and his semen.

“To bed. It’s late. I have work to do tomorrow.”

“Wha- You’re just leaving? Shouldn’t yo-”

“What?” he snapped. “What is there I should do now? I tended to you. I deflowered you as tradition dictates. I knotted you and I even stayed after the knot had disappeared again. I gave you everything I have to.”

“Have to?” Reba asked in a whisper. This sounded like it was nothing but a duty to him. That having an Omega was only an annoying social demand he needed to fulfill for status and power. He left without another word or glance, and the feeling of bliss turned to a bitter taste in Reba’s mouth.

Her first day as an Omega with a mate and she could only hope for it to get better in the future.
The next morning Reba found a note on her nightstand commanding her to come downstairs immediately after waking up. She picked out a long nightgown that covered her exposed and sore body. There were a few tiny drops of blood on her sheets. The only hints that she’d lost her virginity last night.

She left her room and was welcomed with the smell of breakfast lingering in the air. The little breakfast table next to the kitchen was set with everything one would need for the most important meal of the day: Orange juice, bagels, cream cheese, jam, fresh bread, and a pot of coffee. Kristján was on the phone, standing in the kitchen and stirring his tea on the counter.

“Good morning,” Reba said quietly and stayed standing in the middle of the room. Was she allowed to sit down already? Which was his seat?

“Good … I’ll call you later … No, I’m not coming to the office today.” Kristján hung up and sighed, “Good morning. Did you sleep well?”

She nodded and started kneading her hands nervously.

“Good, take a seat and eat.” He took his cup of tea and licked the spoon dry before discarding it into the sink.

“Aren’t you eating with me?”

“I already ate.” And with that he walked into his home office right under the staircase. Well, at least he’d bothered making her breakfast, she thought and let out a heavy sigh as she sat down and began eating. She never liked coffee so she didn’t touch it. Reba would’ve rather had a tea like Kristján had had. Maybe next time.

She watched the city wake up below her. It was nice to see it but she also felt incredibly lonely while hearing Kristján talk on the phone in his office. She wanted to try and connect with him again. Maybe he was in a better mood today. And he actually was.

When she knocked on the door he’d just ended the next call.

“How can I help you, Reba?”

Her name sounded nice from his lips when he wasn't angry or irritated.

“I … I just wanted to talk to you.”

“About what?”

Well, the way he treated her yesterday or that she was still not wearing any underwear? “I don’t drink coffee.”

Kristján arched an eyebrow and looked down into the half empty tea cup in front of him. “Rather tea then or something else?”

Reba giggled. “Hot chocolate would be great.”
He nodded still arching an eyebrow and her giggles died down. Clothes!

“You said, if I wanted for something I should just tell you.”

“Yes, I remember,” he said lowly.

“I would like to have some clothes to wear. Especially, underwear.”

“What's your size?” Kristján pulled out his smartphone and typed something on it. He didn't seem too interested in her answer so she remained silent. “If you don't tell me out of false modesty or embarrassment over a few pounds too much, I won't be able to give you what you desire, Reba,” he murmured and held the phone to his ear.

“Twelve.”

“Hello, Antonia, yes … please pick out 20 different outfits in size 12 … she's about 5'5”.” He covered the speaker. “Your shoe size?”

“Um, 6 ½,” Reba answered surprised. She had thought they would go shopping but it seemed he just ordered them for her like take-out food.

“Matching footwear in 6 ½.” He listened to the person on the other end of the phone and nodded eventually before ending the call. He checked his flashy, silver watch and looked at Reba waiting for any other request she might utter now that she was sated and had slept the first night under his roof.

“Anything else?” he asked as she remained silent. Reba shook her head and returned into her room. Well, and now?, she asked herself. Taking a shower? Not a bad idea although she didn't want to wash off his scent. But it would probably ease her tense muscles and wash away the smeared blood between her legs. In the end, it hadn't been as painful as she'd feared it would be, but she definitely felt… changed. She was a true Omega now, mated and with her Alpha who might be a bit rough (well, not just a bit) but who provided for her.

A few hours later, she heard a knock on the door. Reba had found something to occupy her mind with after the shower. In the building, across from hers lived a happy little family. An Alpha with his Omega and two very active, round-faced twins, a boy and a girl. It was a bit like watching an old silent movie of a stereotype happy family going over their day.

After a second, louder knock Reba snapped out of her staring. She got up from her chaise longue and walked over to the door to open it.

The chauffeur who had brought her here from Finewood carried in a ridiculous amount of shopping bags and placed them on her bed. Behind him, Kristján entered the room to find Reba completely stunned by the many clothes he had bought for her with nothing but a simple phone call.

“Try them on,” Kristján ordered walking to the chaise longue she had sat in only a moment before and rolled up the sleeves of his cool blue sweater. Reba let her hands glide over the many packages and for the first time felt like the concept of getting gifts and presents was something that could feel nice and not like an obligation to give something too.

“Go on. I have other things to do than wait for you to get dressed.”

Reba looked over her shoulder to him and bit her lower lip. He wanted to admire his Omega in nice clothes like every Alpha would. Maybe he had just been in a foul mood yesterday, she thought and hoped to never see him in such a state again.
From the 20 outfits only eight were remotely her style; simple, clean cuts that wouldn't reveal too much, dark colors mostly.

"Why aren't you wearing the lime dress?" Kristján asked after the sixth dress in various shades of blue and violet.

"Doll colors make me look sick," Reba explained while checking her image in the tall mirror in front of her. She could hear him standing up and coming closer before he appeared in the mirror behind her. His hands lay softly on her wide hips as he stood so close that his breath tickled her neck.

"Try it for me," he whispered and squeezed her hips once. She nodded, feeling her senses being clouded by his scent again. She'd been right. In everything that was not a toned down color she looked like she'd just crawled out the nearest graveyard.

Kristján saw it too and shook his head. "No "Doll colors" for you."

In the next weeks, he purred her into mood almost every night until taking him in was no longer a mixture between pain and pleasure but pure pleasure and a chance to get to know him. He liked being on top like every Alpha, Reba assumed. He was after her orgasm just as much as his own; maybe even more so.

Sometimes he even ordered her to come around him without having developed a knot yet. She did. Every time without exception like her body was not her own. It was almost frightening what power Kristján seemed to have over her. Even when she was angry at him for snapping at her again or calling her out on behavior that would never have been considered disobedience at Finewood Academy, he always managed to get what he wanted when he entered her room in the evening.

Reba had almost grown accustomed to the fact that he left her after "the deed was done". But only almost. Whenever he left and she was sure he couldn't hear her, she silently sobbed herself to sleep feeling like nothing but a whore or a toy he used for his pleasure.

True, she enjoyed it too but only her body not her mind. She was extremely bored, slept a lot. It was the only thing she could do, apart from watching the family across the street. Kristján ignored her if he wasn't after what was between her legs.

"Do you wish for something?" Kristján asked when Reba stood by the door of his office. She didn't know how he knew she was there having his back turned towards the door but he did.

"I would like to know why you don't want to spend time with me." Her voice was weak and shaky, afraid she might anger him. She had almost entirely avoided being punished by him out of pure fear but he had ways to make her feel punished like he'd do it for a living. He slowly turned around and closed the file in his hand before he leaned against his desk and crossed his arms before his chest. The gesture was intimidating in its simplicity.

"I am spending time with you. Every night. And I'm still waiting for your Heat."

She turned a bit red at that last comment. She'd been with him for a month now. It would be another four weeks until she would go into Heat. He had the questionable luck to have bought her almost right after her last cycle had ended.

"Soon," she whispered and looked down to her flat shoes, "but that's not what I meant. You hardly talk to me. I'm not allowed to leave the apartment but I don't have anything to do here either. I'm bored, Kristján."

He regarded her with one of his brooding looks. Eventually, he nodded and put the file to the side.
“What would you like to do?”

“Go outside,” Reba answered quickly, hope lighting up her features until he saw the dark shadows cross his face.

“No. What would you like to do inside?”

“Why am I not allowed to go outside?” Reba hadn't left the apartment once, not even dared to look at the terrace. She could still clearly feel the pain and panic when he'd snatched her away from it on her first day.

“Safety. And I don't like repeating myself, Reba,” Kristján growled, “what do you want?”

“Books? A purpose? Conversation? Anything but silence, a cold shoulder, and isolation!” it broke out of her and Reba knew the second her voice had died down again that she should've stayed calm. His face grew even darker but Kristján didn't snap. He simply took a deep breath.

“You want a purpose? Good. Get into the kitchen. In the cabinet over the sink you'll find some cooking books. From now on I expect you to have dinner ready and served when I come home from work every day at 6pm.”

Well, being his cook was better than sleeping the whole day, Reba thought still not satisfied with anything here.

“I will see what can be done about your other oh-so-charmingly uttered wishes,” he sneered and resumed reading the file like he'd done when she had entered the office. Well, that went better than she'd momentarily feared.

One day later Kristján had definitely proven that he had listened to what she'd wished. Well, at least about the material things. When he returned from work that day, he had a heavy box in his arms and let it slam down on the kitchen counter behind her. Dinner was almost ready which seemed to find his approval for once.

“For you. Like with the dresses. Sort through it and put in your bookshelf what you want to keep.”

Reba lifted her eyebrows and wiped her hands dry on one of the kitchen towels. She slowly approached the brown box. Kristján watched her closely as she pulled out the first of many books. A history book. French Revolution. His shoulders relaxed when he saw her smile.

“Thank you,” Reba said quietly and wanted to dive right into the box when she remembered the dinner on the stove. Later.

They ate in mutual silence. He wasn't commenting on her cooking skills but filled his plate with a second portion so either he'd skipped lunch or he liked it. Reba settled with the latter one. It made her feel like she was actually good at something in his eyes.

After dinner Reba tried to carry the big box into her room but she couldn't even lift it off the counter. Kristján saw her struggle and helped without a word only to leave her in her lonely room again.

Reba sorted through the gift from him and smiled more and more. Great thinkers and poets would now inhabit her empty bookshelf. The only book she didn't want was a manual on how to fix plane motors. Must have been a little mistake or something. She giggled. Or he tried to make a joke, Reba thought and sighed contently at the sight of her filled bookshelf. French Revolution, Darwin's Theories (All books he ever wrote about Dynamics), mythology and legends. Reba especially liked the one about Norse mythology; she had already started flipping through the pages about Ragnarok
and Fenris. She couldn't lay it out of her hands. Even falling asleep with it in her hand long after
midnight that day.

A week later, Reba's heart was beating fast and made her chest feel too tight to contain her
nervousness and childlike excitement. Today was the scheduled Omega meeting. Finally! Today she
would eventually get to see Scarlett again. Reba would see all the others too, but Scarlett was and
would always be her light of the day. Once every cycle the Omegas were allowed to meet. It was set
in the basic Omega laws and regulations from 1974. And today it was her first! God, Reba was so
excited. Her chest felt like it might be bursting every second.

Reba had worried that Kristján would deny her the meeting because she hadn't had her Heat yet but
he had only murmured something about not disturbing him while reading the newspaper.

“Why are you running around like a headless chicken?” Kristján asked lowly from the door when
Reba was grunting in frustration because she couldn't reach the zipper on the back of her dress.

“Today is the Omega meeting and I don't want to be late.”

“Who says you're going to attend?”

Reba stopped in her tracks and slowly turned around to him. No, no, no, she thought. Panic slowly
crept up her spine. She'd looked forward to meeting Scarlett for more than five weeks now. She was
about to calmly protest when Kristján's lips curled into a smirk and he pulled a small necklace out of
the pocket of his charcoal gray dress-pants. He had just punked her. Reba still had to figure out a
way of telling when he was making one of his rare jokes and when he was dead serious.

“I want you to wear this tonight and another dress. This is too-” Kristján looked her up and down. “-
showing.”

Reba glanced at herself in the mirror. The dark red dress was providing a nice cleavage and the hem
even covered her knees. She didn't think it was showing too much but he was the Alpha. She
wouldn't debate with him about such a minor thing. Kristján stepped behind her and pulled the half-
done zipper all the way down again. He slid the straps from her shoulders and planted a feather light
kiss on her neck right over the spot the bonding mark would be as soon as he would finally claim
her. She hadn't asked him when he would finally bond with her. Maybe he wanted to wait until her
next Heat.

The warmth his body emitted was hypnotizing and she closed her eyes in pure content. Cold, thin
metal snaked around her neck and she drew in a shaky breath. Reba leaned back against him and let
her head roll against his shoulder. She craved this closeness to him, hadn't had it enough for her taste
in the weeks under his care. If it were up to her, she wouldn't let him go to work or even leave her
bed the whole day. His scent gave her a feeling of home for the first time in her life.

“Do you like it?” Kristján whispered into her ear and Reba opened her eyes again. He'd pulled down
the dress completely now, letting her stand in nothing but her chalk white underwear. The diamond
in the shape of a drop sat perfectly in the little groove between her collar bones.

“It's beautiful,” Reba breathed, touching the expensive trinket. It was heavier than expected. His big
hands moved down to her hips and he squeezed briefly before moving to her wardrobe to pick out a
dress for tonight. Reba watched his thoughtful face and saw him pick out the only dress that neither
showed cleavage nor shoulders.
“This. The color will look superb on you.”

It had a rich dark blue color. It would look breathtaking like everything he had bought for her. Kristján handed her the dress and wanted to leave again.

“Um, would you stay? I’m sure I will need help with the zipper.”

“I have to get ready myself but you know where you can find me,” he turned her down and left the room. What had she expected? Really? Reba looked at herself in the mirror and traced over the diamond around her neck. It must've cost him a fortune and it seemed like he … liked her? But he still didn't want to spend time with her.

Yes, it was true. As soon as he was home she always knew exactly where to find him: either between her thighs, in his office, or in his bedroom. But whenever Reba tried to start conversation with him he shushed her or told her he had a lot of work waiting to give his undivided attention to.

“But I need his attention, too,” Reba sighed and started to get dressed with slumped, heavy shoulders. She didn't really feel appreciated and he hadn't once tried to engage in conversation with her. Sometimes Reba wondered why he'd paid so much money for a mate if he didn’t actually want one? What he took from her, he could get from every Beta slut at every second street corner.

As expected Reba needed his help with the zipper and knocked on the door of Kristján's walk-in closet as she found his bedroom empty. He opened the door and fastened the second diamond cufflink. Reba stood before him dumbstruck. He looked amazing. A dark blue three-piece suit matching her dress and a pure white dress-shirt that smelled of summer and freshness.

“I … I need your help,” she stuttered and turned around. His breath traveled down her neck like a feather light hand caressing her and leaving her with goosebumps all over her skin. Did he even know what he did to her while doing so little? She turned around when he was done and took him in for a moment. He looked incredibly handsome and she didn't just think that because he was her mate no. Every other Omega, Beta and probably Alpha would agree with her.

“Done staring at me?”

She snapped out of her thoughts and nodded, happy to see the faint hint of a smirk on his lips. He definitely liked being appreciated for his looks. Vanity was a major trade in every Alpha and he was no exception.

Scarlett's face lit up when she saw Reba enter the high ceiling room. Reba found her immediately and wanted to go over to her but Kristján held her back. He pulled her close and buried his nose in her open hair.

“Behave,” he whispered into her ear and made her shudder from the sensation of his breath on her cheek and neck. It was a threat and one she wouldn't risk. Reba nodded and he released her hand with a fake smile. Her feet couldn't bring her over to her friend as fast as she would've liked it. They hugged each other tightly, screeching highly, and turning in circles around each other and asking each other how they were. Scarlett looked like life itself. Cheeks rosy, hair neatly done and the dress fit her perfectly. She looked happy too. Something Reba had to fake when Scarlett asked her how it was to share bed and table with Kristján.

“Rabe, didn't know if you would even come today. You know with not having had your Heat yet.”

Reba closed her eyes. She had almost forgotten about Vivian over her happiness seeing Scarlett again. When she turned around her eyebrows flew up to her hairline. The woman who stood before
her was not what she'd expected. Vivian had cut her long blond hair into a short bob and her dress was particularly designed to show her already scarred bite mark on her shoulder. She held a glass of water in her hand and looked a bit rounder it almost seemed.

“You're pregnant,” Scarlett phrased what Reba had already guessed, “congratulations.”

“Thank you.” Her smile was wide and honest. “Jackson didn't want to wait a single Heat before impregnating me. He bit me on the car ride home. Can you imagine? By the time I saw his mansion for the first time I was already bound and mated.”

Definitely not what Reba had done on her ride to Flint.

“Henry waited until my Heat ten days ago. We used birth control though. The mark still hurts a bit but I'm so happy with him. He even allows me to keep writing as long as I don't forget about my duties,” Scarlett said with a warm tone in her voice. Kimberley arrived with her Alpha and kissed him sweetly before joining the little group and congratulating Vivian to her pregnancy. Reba nipped her glass of champagne and felt like an outsider. All this talk about bonding and spending their first Heat with their mate. She couldn't participate in all of that and it made her feel lonely.

Julia came next also carrying a glass with water and wearing a wide cashmere sweater to also let everybody know she conceived. Well, good for them, Reba told herself but was feeling the little pang of jealousy in her chest. They were all happy and completely content with every fucking part of their life and she felt like a mere object her owner pulled out to play with whenever he felt like it.

“And what about you, Rabe? Your dress is really nice but not very revealing. Was his bite so weak that the mark is an embarrassment to him?” Vivian laughed and her two lap dogs chimed in.

“Yes, you haven't told us how your bonding was.” Scarlett's friendly face was sincere and Reba hated it but she would rather lie than tell any of them that she was still unbound to her Alpha.

“He did it in the first night,” she lied and Vivian lifted a suspicious eyebrow. Fuck, did she knew more or was Reba really such a lousy liar. “Bit me hard as we climaxed. It … it was wonderful. This combination of pain and pleasure.”

“Really?” Kimberley asked eyeing her up and down like she ALWAYS did when she was around Vivian. In the few brief moments when they had been alone she'd almost seemed like a nice girl. But with her she was just as unbearable like Vivian was.

Reba had to stand her ground. “Yes.”

“And how was Heat with him?”

“Haven't had it yet.”

Julia giggled and Vivian showed her triumphant smile she didn't even tried to hide as she sipped her water. Reba thought for a moment and knew only one second later why she was the worst liar on the planet. The Claiming Bite set off the Heat within a few hours. Another thing she knew from Darwin's Theory of the Dynamics.

“Excuse me a moment,” Julia snickered and walked towards the door. Reba closed her eyes and cursed inwardly.

“So, what was the bonding like again? I think I missed that part when you mentioned you were still unbound.”
Vivian laughed highly and other Omegas turned their heads towards them.

Scarlett's expression turned sympathetic. At least what Reba could see from the corner of her eye. God, she wanted to dissolve into thin air or have the earth swallow her just to end this awful moment.

Somebody heard her plea but it wasn't God or the earth. A large hand curled around her upper arm from behind and yanked her away from the other three Omegas.

“We're leaving,” Kristján hissed into her ear and pulled her towards the door.

“Can I say goodbye to my friend?” Reba asked although she knew the answer already.

“I think, you said enough for one night.”

His eyes glared like never before. His hand around her upper arm closed painfully, so she knew there was no use in fighting.

Chapter End Notes

Over the next two weeks I'm not going to able to upload. But the story will continue.
“I expected you to be smart enough to know what you are supposed to tell people and what not!” Kristján shouted as soon as they were back in the solitude of his car. Reba kept her head down. The sound of his voice was already enough to let her know that punishment awaited her at home. He had never shouted at her like this before. Apologizing wouldn't help her now that much was clear.

Kristján barked at the driver to get going already. Reba winced under the volume of his voice next to her. She started praying in her head although she wasn't religious in the least.

She prayed he would cool down until they'd arrive home again.

But it was hopeless. The crowded streets prolonged the car ride to the extent that Reba was shaking with the fear he would blow up right there in the limited space of the limousine.

He didn't. Kristján clenched his teeth and fists, drummed his fingers on the leather seat between them, or shouted at the retarded drivers who seemed to park on the streets only to slow him personally down. She thought about soothing him but she knew better than to bring herself into the spotlight of his attention.

Kristján grabbed her by the arm as soon as they were in the apartment.

“You embarrassed me in front of everyone with your stupid and unnecessary lie,” he hissed, his face only inches from hers. He vibrated with anger. So much that Reba feared he might hit her. He didn't, although the look in his eyes made her heart beat faster and cold sweat break out on her forehead. Kristján didn't say a single word as he dragged her with him into her bedroom. Maybe he would rape her as punishment, not even bothering with purring her wet before violently thrusting into her, Reba thought horrified and fight-or-flight instincts kicked in.

She tried to screw her wrist out of his iron grasp but it was all for nothing. Kristján was so much stronger than her and was completely unimpressed by her attempts to free herself. He saw red and that wouldn't change until he had found a way to let off out his anger.

“Let go of me! Please! Kristján, I'm sorry. Please don't hurt me,” she plead as they walked up the stairs but was only met with an angry growl.

He practically threw her onto her bed after he'd kicked open the door with a loud bang. Reba couldn't breathe for a moment; her head was shutting off. Noises were nothing but a droning, unidentifiable buzzing around her. Her chest hurt from hitting the mattress with too much force. Her head felt like exploding, thudding with the rapid beating of her heart.

“I wanted to wait until your next Heat but you seem too eager to wait.”

Kristján's voice was threateningly calm now after his previous screaming in the car. Reba felt him open her zipper of her dress and her stupor ended. She tried crawling away from his hands and the bitter anger that filled the air. But he pushed her down into the mattress and straddled her legs that kicked at nothing but the empty air.

“Please, let go of me;” she whimpered under him, tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Why? This is exactly what you wanted. I will give you a mark none of your clothes will be able to hide. You can show your little Omega friends what I did and they will know you wanted it!”
“No, please, I'm sorry, Kristján.”

But all pleading and crying was only making it worse. She heard fabric tear and her dress was gone. Her exposed body shook from panic and her sobs until he let his hands glide upwards - almost tenderly - over the curve of her spine in front of him. He grabbed a handful of her hair and yanked her head back. She screamed but stopped begging. It wasn't helping her anyway.

Reba was kneeling on her bed with her back pressed against his heaving chest now. She could feel his heavy breath on her left ear. Left was where the mark would be. Her heart was beating so fast it felt like there was a little bird trapped inside her chest desperately trying to escape its prison.

“You alone brought this upon you,” he whispered and lowered his mouth to the crook of her neck. Reba tried one last time to flee. His arms wrapped themselves around her struggling body, holding her still when he licked over the spot of the Claiming Bite as if testing her taste.

It was disgusting. Her stomach turned at the thought that he would bond with her like this. She was in her underwear, unable to move away from him, and stinking with the sour smell of fear. He was still dressed to the nines, maybe a bit roughed up but still dignified, kneeling behind her and pressing her to him. The air in the bedroom was heavy from aggression, fear, domination, and tears.

And then blood was added to this already nauseating mixture. Reba's scream was voiceless when Kristján tore her skin with his teeth. He bit hard and deep. Deeper than necessary to prove his dominance and potency as an Alpha. Reba knew it was too late to fight but her body still tried to wince away from the throbbing, burning pain on her shoulder. Her chest suddenly felt tight and she couldn't breathe.

Kristján's grip didn't loosen around her torso. He didn't pull his teeth back, no, he forced them deeper into her flesh. Nobody would ever doubt her bonding status now, she thought and sobbed once before her fight stopped and she grew limp in his arms only seconds before Reba lost conscience.

An hour later, she woke in a mess of bloody sheets. Her face was buried in her pillows. Luckily, because when she tried to move her left arm a sharp pain like a stab with an old rusty knife made her scream out loud. The pillows muffled it enough to give her the peace to cry into them without fearing to be heard by her mate.

Suddenly the pain didn't matter anymore. Reba ran to the toilet and threw up. This couldn't be her life. She would wake in a few minutes to the sound of her alarm clock. It would be 6am and she would still be at Finewood Academy. Why was this happening to her? What had she ever done to deserve this torment, this evil caricature of a life?

Reba looked at the bite mark on her shoulder in the mirror. It burned like hell and it was covered in dry or still damp blood. At least it wasn't bleeding heavily anymore. In none of her oh-so-clever books this pain was mentioned. All liars. Reba's chest felt like it was stuck in a vice. No matter how much she loathed Kristján after what he'd done to her, the vice would probably loosen as soon as he was close to her.

Hopefully, she thought rubbing over the spot right in the middle of her chest where the pressure created the most pain. Running away might literally break her heart. She wondered if he felt the vice too. She hoped it. She hoped he felt nausea and pressure, this internal tugging and constant ripping of her guts. Reba's thoughts were turning bitterer and darker the longer she stared at the angry red mark that graced her milky white skin now.

After carefully washing it and imagining various ways to end the bond (preferably through the "tragic" death of her mate) she had dressed herself and cursed loudly. No matter what she wore, she
could still see the edges of his bite mark peeking out from under the collar. *I will give you a mark none of your clothes will be able to hide.* Well, he was no Alpha to make idle threats, Reba thought and tried almost all her clothes to find at least one item that could prove him wrong, all while the vice seemed to pulse in her chest and more than once took her the air to breathe.

“Stop fighting it. It will get easier that way,” she heard behind her and the vice loosen a bit. Kristján’s eyes didn’t show an ounce of pity, guilt or the slightest sign of an apology to her when she turned towards the mirror where she could see him by the door. She had to look away in disgust, never lifted her gaze from her feet while she could still see him in the mirror of the wardrobe.

“Is that an order?” Reba asked and fought hard to keep her newly developed hate towards him out of her voice.

“If it must be one to make you follow it, yes,” he growled and came closer, resting his hands on her hips as he stood directly behind her. The contact made her shudder, gave her goosebumps, and let a fuzzy feeling replace the vice in her chest. Her eyes snapped up to look at him. How dare he touch her after what he’d done to her earlier? He almost looked proud of himself, she thought and could’ve sworn to see a smirk tug on the corners of his mouth.

“Why shouldn't I. It was just what you wanted. I would've been content waiting until your next Heat, not wanting to mess up your cycle. Every insomnia, mood swings or change in nutrition you experience now is what you wanted. I just followed your wish after you told everyone what a delight this "mixture of pain and pleasure" had been.”

Reba suppressed a gag at that. This has never been what she wanted. She wanted a loving and caring Alpha who treated her like an equal.

“But we're not,” Kristján said coolly, “I'm your owner.”

“Can you read my mind?” Her voice was screeching even in her own ears. Kristján kissed her right next to the sensitive bite mark and hummed affirmatively. Reba pushed his hands away and stepped towards the windows. She wanted to bring at least some distance between them. The vice was closing more and more with every step she made.

“Why can you read my mind?” she hissed and wrapped her arms around her middle. Rather hers than his.

“Side effect of the bond between us. It's not like I understand everything. It's more like an internal mirror,” he explained and sat down on her bed. It was still covered in her blood, tears and even felt a bit damp from her cold sweat. Stories about soul bonding and "the one true mate" came into Reba's mind but she loathed the idea that he could be her soulmate after what he'd done to her.

“And why can't I mirror your "internals"?” she snarled careful not to arouse his anger while boiling on the inside herself. One bleeding wound was enough for a day.

“Because you don't want to, because you don't open up to it. And I'm sure you don't want to know what's going on inside my head,” he said and almost sounded tired. If anything, he was bored.

“Let me guess, that's disobedience and requires punishment?” Reba whispered and shivered involuntarily at the thought. The purring from his chest that followed was like a warm blanket. She wanted to refuse, tell him to shut up and leave her alone but her body betrayed her.

“Just for the record, Reba, I don't like punishing you and I had imagined our bonding to go
differently as well,” he rasped darkly and closed the distance between them again. She leaned into his touch. A little spark of herself (and not her biology) in her brain was still refusing the comfort but it died down quickly when Kristján started undressing her. The vice was gone and the fuzzy feeling was back.

With hooded eyes, she turned around to him and sought his lips with hers. The kiss was long and slow and fulfilling. As if every previous one had been nothing but practice. Her chest burst with the feeling of content and comfort when he pulled her flush against his body. His hands roaming over her curves. The deep, praising moans vibrating against her lips were sending her mind to rapture. Not a single thought was wasted to resistance when he pushed her towards the bed. Her hands working on the buttons of his dress-shirt and eventually his pants. All without once breaking the kiss. Kristján’s hands tugged at her messy bun until he had it loosely and could sink his fingers into this ocean of black curls.

He was down to his boxers, she only wearing her fresh underwear but not for long. She was wet even without the use of his purring for this cause. When he slid his fingers inside her she was already leaking with slick. Reba's body worked its own agenda. The bond almost seemed to whisper into her ear that this was the most wonderful and the only right thing to do. Her hands pulled him on top of her until he caught her wrists in his free hand and brought them over her head. Their kiss was sloppy but still felt better than any they had shared before.

In hindsight Reba was sure it was the bond that wanted to make him more attractive to her, telling her that he was the only Alpha she would and could ever desire, her mate and protector, her one and only. In this moment, she hadn't been able to convince her brain to work again. Hormones and instincts blocking out every rational thought and potential doubt of the rightfulness of his actions.

When he was finally inside her Reba sighed highly. What had made her so angry before was now eventually detected. The "itch" she usually only felt during her Heat. The itch that could only be reached by him. The itch that had built up inside her since waking up in her messed-up bed. And now, right there, in her dried blood he scratched it with every kiss he planted on her flushed skin, every suck on her hard, needy nipples and every hard thrust she begged him for. When he knotted her and her pussy thirstily squeezed out every drop of cum out of his cock, every fiber of their bodies hummed together in absolute harmony. The clock on her nightstand showed midnight shortly before she fell asleep with his knot still hooking them together, her head on his chest, and his arms wrapped around her protectively.

The next morning the vice was back and a nauseating self-loathing came with it. Reba was sore between her legs (maybe he had been a bit too rough when she’d begged him to fuck her harder) and her shoulder still hurt but at least the burning was gone.

Reba walked into the bathroom and caught sight of her in the mirror on the way to the shower. Something white caught her eye. After realizing what it was, she closed her eyes almost in defeat. Kristján had put an aseptic gauze on the mark after she'd fallen asleep on his chest last night.

“Well, at least he doesn't want me to die of an infection,” Reba sighed and peeled the tape off carefully. The mark was at the right place but he had bitten so deep that it was bigger than normal or maybe it just appeared like it because her shoulder was – like her – very small and the bite was swollen.

The mark should be the best thing apart from having a child in her life but it was just a reminder of how wrong her relationship with Kristján was. Reba was stuck with him as her mate forever.

“Until death do us part,” she hissed and turned on the shower. She carefully washed the rest of the dried blood off her skin, the sweat, and semen and proof of his manipulation last night.
She found all she needed for proper caring for her bite mark in her bathroom cabinet and knew Kristján must be home. The vice was squeezing but not as much as it probably would if he was too far away, meaning at work.

She didn't want to meet him today, or ever again to be honest. But she knew she couldn't avoid him. He was her bonded mate and she would enter Heat in –she checked the clock on her nightstand– about 17 hours.

Reba refused preparing herself. She didn't eat the food her body craved for after the stress of the Claiming Bite and the nearing Heat. Reba also didn't build her nest, although she had to stop herself consciously twice when she noticed herself arranging pillows and blankets in the appropriate order. No, she swore to herself that she would never engage in this Heat that had been practically forced upon her.

The closer her time came, the more fidgety she got. She had braided and unbraided her hair a hundred times before the first cramps hit her and she groaned loudly. As if that had been his cue Kristján entered her room. He was dressed to perfection like always while she looked like an old hag with her hair in uncountable little more-or-less unraveled braids, dark circles under her eyes, a wide, unflattering shirt, and soaked-through black panties.

“Get out,” she spat at him and another cramp hit her with full force. This would be her first Heat with an Alpha attending to her, fucking her through it how it should be, but it was him and Reba wouldn't let him have her as easy as before, she swore it to herself.

He seemed completely unimpressed by her sharp command and put a little box with yellow pills on her nightstand before he started to undress himself. The air was scented from her slick and the Omega pheromones that came with it. She practically reeked of fertility and the animalistic desire to be bred.

It turned him on within a mere minute. Before he had finished undressing he was already hard for her, and twitching with anticipation. Reba watched him like a hawk with dilated pupils and sweat covered brows. The cramps got worse now that the bond was there between them, prompting her to finally spread her legs and have him inseminate her like nature dictated. At least she would have a baby to take care of after this Heat, she thought but Kristján shook his head no.

“Open your mouth,” he ordered and her body reacted without her own will. He shook out one of the pills and carefully lay it onto her tongue.

“Swallow it.” She did. It was frightening how he could control her with something as simple as his voice.

“What -” Another cramp knocked the air out of her lungs before she could finish her question. “What was that?”

“Lift your arms.” She did. He took off her shirt. She wasn't wearing a bra because of her sensitive breasts. “Birth control.”

All color left Reba's face at once. “But … why?”

“Lay down.” She did. And she never received an answer.

At the sight of his bonded Omega, seeping with slick and smelling indescribably arousing, Kristján starting leaking precum. He tore off her panties and took a deep breath. The best perfume on an Omega was arousal, all already bonded Alphas in his circles said and they had been so right.
He kissed a trail from her right earlobe over her collar bone and jugular notch to her left breast. It was heavy in his large hand and her nipple already hard, begging to be sucked. Reba cried out when he flicked his tongue over the sensitive peak.

“Fuck me, Kristján,” she sighed, completely overwhelmed by want and animalistic need for him. She felt empty without him. Her biological reactions were stronger than her will, disgust, and anger towards him. She should’ve been furious that he gave her birth control when all she ever wanted was a baby.

He growled deeply with her flesh between her lips and positioned himself between her spread legs. When he buried his cock to the hilt in her cunt it was with one hard thrust that made her sob and curled her fists around the covers under her palms. She was hot and slick around him, her inner walls tightening around him to show him how welcomed he was inside her.

“Harder, please,” she begged with eyes that seemed to be only consisting of black pupils with a tiny grey ring around them. It was beautiful. Kristján followed her plea only too willingly. He loved fucking her hard and fast knowing she could take it and enjoyed it just as much as he did. He hit her sweet spot with every single thrust, sending her over the edge three times and fucking her through every one of her orgasms before he developed his knot for the first time this day. He growled when he came in her, triggering her forth orgasm.

She cried out in pleasure and rolled her eyes back into her head, arching her back, and using her legs to draw him even deeper inside her although the knot is already locking them together tightly. She could feel his cock twitch and shooting out one spurt of cum right after the other. Her cunt clenched out every possible drop from his cock, milking him dry until she felt her skin cool down again and her brain clear a bit from the fog of desire.

He rolled them both over like he always did with her on top of him, her cheek resting on his chest and her thighs on both sides of his hips. They slept in short intervals. Reba turned fidgety when the knot was gone again and woke him with her mouth or her little hands around his cock, working to get him hard again. He commanded her to take one of the yellow pills every time she wanted him to fuck her. She did because her body needed his touch, his kiss, his fuck more than it needed oxygen.

She particularly seemed to enjoy having him fuck her from behind. Especially, when he licked over her still fresh mark and gracing over it with his teeth gently. She almost came the instant he did it the first time. Her tight pussy clenching around him and her light gasps, lustful mewls, and high pitched screams filling the heavy air in her bedroom.

The intervals lasted longer and longer until her Heat broke on the third day. The bed spread was dirty and covered in slick and cum. Her whole body was covered in his semen. It was seeping out of her swollen cunt in a thin stream. Kristján woke her up after she was almost completely down from her Heat again and ordered her to take the last of at least 15 birth control pills down. Reba wanted to say no and curse at him but her body was too weak for her rebellious mind. It was easier to follow his command, so she took the pill and wanted to get up and take a shower. His scent all over her was making her dizzy and she needed water and food to get back the nutrients she had lost the last three days.

He watched her from the messy, damp bed. Her legs were like jelly as she made her way to the bathroom. His seed was still leaking out of her in a constant stream. She even had some in her hair. Must’ve happened when he fucked her doggy style facing the door and flipping her over to watch her mouth fall open and her face lose all sign of control when he knotted her. Kristján left her room with a smug smile, collecting his clothes on his way to the door and preparing a quick breakfast for her before taking a shower herself and sleeping for the rest of the day. Who would’ve known that
fucking three days non-stop could be so exhausting.

Reba on the other hand couldn't sleep. Her bed was completely covered in his cum. Her whole room smelled too much of him, although she loved his scent. She needed to get it out of her brain. With a wrinkled nose, she collected the dirty bedding and pillows and put them all into the washing machine. She ate what

Kristján had prepared for her before returning into her bedroom. On the way there, she could see her Alpha sleeping peacefully in his bed, having done his work and being satisfied himself. Reba could hardly sit down from his hard fucking but she remembered asking for it, often and loudly. She also remembered all the things she'd done with her mouth so she had to brush her teeth three times before getting a slight feeling of cleanness again. Her laundry was done when she was done with cleaning her bedroom of every sign of the events that had taken place in there the last three days and nights. She could at least pretend it didn't happen if she ignored the feeling between her thighs and the almost elysian humming of the bond in her chest.

But she disgusted every memory of what should have been the highlight of her life until now: Her first Heat with her Alpha. She couldn't moan when it came to the act itself. Kristján had known every little twist to turn her on even more and make her come countless times. There should've been a baby growing inside her womb instead she was empty, and hate and self-loathing boiled up in her again, making the vice return faster than expected.

But maybe Kristján would be a better man to her now that they were a real couple that had shared a Heat with each other, right? Right?
Note that I do not speak or write Icelandic. The few sentences in this chapter were done (I have to admit to my utmost shame) with google translator but they seem alright from my feeling for languages ... if that makes any sense. Enjoy!

After they had spent her Heat together everything seemed to stay exactly the same as it had been before. Except that he fucked her more often and more intense it seemed. Reba mused that that actually wasn't the case but that it just appeared like it thanks to their bond. Her Claiming Mark had healed very good and formed a scar that a few of her winter clothes could hide but she didn't feel the desire to.

The mark was there to be seen, just as his scent on her was there to be smelled. She would also never get the idea of using perfume to mask his scent, so why hide the bite mark? The bond hummed in harmony like a masterfully played harp when she traced a finger over the white scar tissue, when he kissed it before he knotted her and it lulled her into sleep when she lay on his sweat covered chest. It also hummed when they were in the same room or at least not separated by a door.

Reba spent more of her time downstairs on the couch while Kristján worked in his home office, leaving the door wide open. They never talked about it but it actually seemed that he felt the same tugs and pressure as she did when they weren't together or the door was closed.

So, he even left the door open when he was on the phone with business associates. He worked international, spoke Spanish, French and something she thought was German but later corrected herself to Danish. Reba liked hearing the way his voice changed when he spoke other languages. Especially, Danish. It was such a raw language and she could easily imagine him sounding like a Viking Alpha setting sail to unknown shores, raiding the enemy's villages and claiming whatever he wanted to be his.

"Your name is Icelandic, right?" she asked one evening during dinner after thinking about it for two days. He nodded and put a slice of the meatloaf they ate into his mouth. "Can you speak Icelandic?"

"Svolítið," he answered with a full mouth and translated after swallowing his bite, "a bit. Why?"

Reba's eyes were as big as saucers. The word sounded so foreign but also so ... right coming from his lips. This dead language that nobody but historians needed anymore after Iceland had been abandoned 75 years ago like so many other smaller countries after the last great war.

"Say something else," she whispered in awe, her meal she worked on for two hours completely forgotten.

"Þú ert minn."

Reba tried to say it too but failed miserably. It painted a small smile on his face and he repeated the small sentence until she managed it too.

"What did I say?" she asked with bright eyes. For the first time, they were living and bound together
she felt like he wanted to have a conversation with her. He was patient and calm.

“It means "You are mine."
She repeated the words again, almost like an enchantment, after she knew their meaning now. “Og nú borða.”

Reba raised her eyebrows questioningly. Kristján took his knife and fork and nodded towards her plate. “I shall eat?”

He nodded, pleased with how quick she learned. They ate in silence. He kissed her goodnight when he excused himself into his office.

“Important business needed his undivided attention,” he said and so Reba was doomed to sleeping alone … again. Even when he fucked her and she fell asleep on his chest, he would always leave her alone in the middle of the night. Sometimes she woke from the sudden loss of warmth in her bed, sometimes she only recognized that the sheets were already cold in the morning.

“I will have to get back into my real office tomorrow. I can't fully work from home,” he informed her four weeks after her Heat over dinner. Reba tried to hide her disappointment behind a glass of water but her chest already grew tight by the mere thought of being separated from him. First he forced that bond on her and now he didn't want to spent time with her, she thought and picked at her food. She couldn't have made her discontent more obvious, not even by voicing it.

“I can't work from home, Reba, stop sulking like a child. I have to earn money to provide for you,” Kristján said sternly and the vice in her chest closed again. They had been so easy together. Everyone minding their own business, he in his office the whole day and she either in her bedroom reading something or in the kitchen preparing a light lunch for him and the usual dinner. Now it was all in ruins again and she felt miserably.

“I think, I'm not hungry anymore,” she whispered, getting up from the table and feeling nausea slowly rising from her stomach. Reba heard him sigh irritated behind her but didn't pay any attention. She just wanted to go back into her room and close the door to make tomorrow's separation not as drastic with some kind of a pre-separation to let her body grow accustomed to it over night.

Luckily, he understood her plan and was more than okay with it because he stayed in his bedroom as well. In the morning, he didn't speak much to her, only kissed her goodbye after an almost sleepless night due to the vice in their chests.

Reba had imagined it to be worse. It was still trying to choke her from the inside but after a while she felt it more like a deep droning vibrating than a vice closing around her lungs and heart.

“Of course, when Alphas went out to hunt the Omegas couldn't stay home almost dying in the stone age,” Reba told herself but it still hurt like hell when Kristján had to leave every morning.

It was yet another month until Reba was out of her mind bored. The vice constantly reminded her that her mate wasn't with her and all the books in her shelf were old but sadly boring friends to her by now. They didn't have new stories to tell and the TV wasn't much of a help either. She didn't want to hear about tax raises and which celebrity had thrown his mobile at who.

Reba wandered through the entire apartment searching for something to do. Usually, she would occupy her mind with watching the family on the other side of the street but the kids had school, the Alpha was at work (like hers) and the Omega was either lounging on the couch, watching TV, or on
the phone talking to friends if she wasn't preparing dinner for her family.

Her next Heat would be in less than two weeks and Reba decided to prepare herself this time. She ate more to gain a little more weight, so she had more reserves to live off during her Heat.

And Reba arranged her nest. Placing every pillow, she found in her room where it had to be, smiling contently while she could follow her nature fully undisturbed and confident in every flick of her hand because she had done it so many times before. She rolled up two of the four blankets and created two half-moon shapes with them on the top end and the bottom end of her mattress to feel enveloped in them. Reba found another blanket in the back of her wardrobe and sighed contently when she snuggled into her ready and comfortable nest. Here she would start a family with him.

At that thought she scrunched her nose but she actually had no reason to moan lately. Kristján had been … okay. He wasn't rude just absent; even when he was home. He had to work a lot and she came second or third?

She couldn't really tell. He also had his sports every second day. He would only eat a light dinner then and excuse himself to the gym directly afterwards. So, Reba was alone even more. Yet, she thought and let her hand glide over the fine bed sheets, she wouldn't be alone with a baby or two in nine months. Maybe with a baby at home, Kristján would be more here and with her as well. She couldn't wait being a mother and feeling life growing inside her like it was already doing in Vivian and Julia.

But right now, she was still alone and making her nest had only taken up so much time of her day and with a perfect nest this task was completed. So, she strolled alone and even more bored through her bedroom, Kristján's bedroom, his massive dressing room with his intimidating collection of ties and matching socks for each and every of his custom-made suits, and his office where she tried to read some of the documents that littered his desk but she had sucked at Spanish in school and Danish had not been offered at Finewood. From the English and French documents, she could read something about energy stations and land he intended to buy abroad. But it all meant nothing to her.

After an hour Reba stood before the terrace door with a churning feeling in her guts. She was alone and she simply couldn't take these four walls any longer. They literally bored her to death. Three months now. It was just the terrace. Not even outside the apartment. Just the terrace, she thought.

But Kristján had told her not to. But he wasn't here. So … why not use the opportunity and take a deep breath of fresh air? She felt like a prisoner and what could happen to her? She wasn't in Heat and every other Alpha could smell that she was bound to Kristján. His scent lingered on her thanks to their regular fucking and knotting. She just wanted to go outside once. And she did.

The door was heavier than expected and Reba shortly thought it might have been locked. One second later though it slid to the left and a fresh, warm breeze hit Reba in the face. It was August and the city suffered under a heat wave. At least that's what Reba picked up when Kristján was watching the news and weather forecast in the evenings.

Reba looked over her shoulder to the elevator. There was no sign of any movement there. She would have to try it now before he could come home from work and catch her breaking one of his rules.

She placed one naked foot on the stone outside and pulled it back hissing. The stone was hot like an oven. Reba hurried over to the wardrobe next to the elevator and put on any kind of shoes she found there. It was the pair of heels she'd worn to the first Omega meeting. Reba walked a bit wobbly on them after not wearing heels for almost three months but at least she wouldn't burn her feet on the hot stone plates outside. She walked to the banister and leaned over it just a bit to really see how far away the ground really was from the 107th floor. Very far! Hot wind raked through her hair and
brought the smell of asphalt, sweat of hundreds of people and perfumed deodorants, and cars with it.

Reba closed her eyes and let the different smells and the fresh air surround her like bubbles in a hot, comfortable bath. She leaned heavily against the banister and let go with her hands, spreading her arms to relish the feeling of freedom a bit more. Reba felt weightless and free. For the first time, ever since she was with Kristján. Breaking his rules felt good, way too good to go unnoticed.

Reba had lost track of the time she had spent on the terrace and missed the sound of the elevator doors opening. Kristján instantly knew that something was not as it should be. No smell of almost finished dinner lingered in the air. Instead there was the same hot stink in his living room as outside on the street. His face dropped when he saw the open glass door and Reba leaning over the banister like a suicidal swan straight from a Tchaikovsky ballet.

“I told you to never go out there!” he hissed furious and flustered Reba as he grabbed her hand and pulled her inside again not caring that she lost one of her shoes outside, “you deliberately disobeyed me.”

“No, please, Kristján. I just wanted some fresh air. I'm sorry!” Reba tried to explain, begging with a thin voice, and had a flashback to how he had dragged her upstairs after the first Omega meeting and bound her forcefully in her bedroom. She tried to yank her hand away but his hold only tightened. The vice was almost crushing her insides.

“This demands punishment!” When he entered her room the first thing he saw was her perfectly made nest for her next Heat. Reba sensed his thought even before it made its way through his own brain.

“Please don't destroy my nest,” she whimpered highly.

“You didn't obey my clear orders. You brought this punishment on you.” Kristján let go of her hand and strode towards her bed. Reba tried to stop him by ripping him back by his arm but he simply pushed her back so hard that she fell on the floor. He didn't care a bit, smelling of anger and aggression again, and poisoning the air with the bitter scent of it.

Reba was mortified as she saw her mate not only bring everything in disorder, throwing blankets on the grey carpet floor and pillows in the completely wrong place on her bed, but starting to collect her beddings and turning towards the door. He wasn't just destroying her nest, he was taking it from her. She couldn't let this happen. This was the nest where he would (have to) mate her and breed her until she was pregnant in less than a fortnight. She was up on her feet within a heartbeat, clutching onto the edge of the bundle he was carrying before he could reach the door.

“Please, Kristján. I swear, I will behave but please don't take my nest,” she begged with distress in her shaky voice. He met her with a merciless, cold glare.

“Let go, right now,” he whispered, flicking his eyes down to her desperate grip on her beddings a second. She couldn't bring herself to follow his order; the fear that he would simply take it from her was too great. He yanked the blankets from her hold and let out an angry breath through his flared nostrils. Kristján pushed her back when she tried to snatch at least a pillow from her nest. She landed on her shoulder and crawled into the corner of her room.

Reba hurt, body and soul, as she watched him turn away again. In his cool blue eyes wasn't even the faintest sign of compassion for her.

“No, please!” she tried one last time, in vain. He was gone without another word or glance closing the door behind him with a loud noise.
Reba sat in the corner, running a soothing hand over her hurting shoulder and pulling her knees to her thudding chest. She cried. Her bed was empty and looked almost offensive. Something pink under it caught her eye and a spark of hope lit her dark mood. One pillow was still left. It must've fallen from the bed when Kristján had ripped it bare. Reba crawled over to the small pillow and snatched it away from the dark place under the bed before returning to her little save place in the corner of the mutilated room. It was still filled with the scent of his anger and her fear, a nauseating mixture Reba had grown accustomed to since she was with him.

She pulled the pillow tightly to her chest and buried her nose in it; trying to comfort her rapidly beating heart and shaky breaths with rocking her body back and forth a bit. Reba hummed an old gospel Mrs. Gold had taught her when she was four and had needed to perform for the financiers and other supporters of Finewood Academy, among them the most important had been a minister of the Church, hence the song.

Reba had always liked the melody and hummed it often unintended when doing her homework or reading late in the evening. Vivian had hated it so much they had sometimes yelled at each other before she'd simply left the room and stayed in her lap dogs' room for the night instead.

Now it created a sense of comfort and hope that it would all be better sometime in the future. She needed this hope and … lie to make it through her days. Reba hugged the pillow tightly to her chest and hummed for hours avoiding to look at the empty mattress and praying that he wouldn't come back and take her last pillow as well.

A few hours later, she couldn't sit on the floor anymore. Her back hurt and she was thirsty and hungry. Yet, her fear of Kristján had left her sit immobile in the corner. Reba hid her pillow in the wardrobe in case he would check in her room while she sneaked down into the kitchen. She was just on her way to the stairs when she saw Kristján standing in the kitchen, looking up at her on the gallery.

His face was more relaxed but still enough to make Reba want to hide away in her room again. He wasn't vibrating with anger anymore so maybe she could risk coming downstairs and get an apple and a bottle of water before going back to hugging her pillow.

“Dinner will be ready in a couple of minutes.”

He was right, the air smelled of dinner but Reba was reluctant to eat with him. Her stomach growled and gave her hunger away. But Kristján had made her feel unloved and unwanted again, had taken her perfect nest, her safety, and place to start a family from her because she had been on the terrace. What the hell was so special about this stupid terrace? It was practically just a big balcony and the banister high enough for her small body to make accidental falling to death completely impossible.

“Would you like to eat on the gallery?” he asked with a pinch of irritation in his voice and Reba realized that she hadn't moved a single muscle since she noticed him. She simply didn't want to eat with him, otherwise she didn't care where she ate. Silently, she descended the stairs and came closer cautiously, eyeing him carefully for every sign he might snap again. He was too close to knives to make her feel at ease being any closer than three yards.

Of course, Kristján noticed her hyperalertness and let out a long groan. His shoulders were tense and for the last hours his chest and head had ached like hell. At least his headache could've been treated with pain killers. The bond affected him too but Reba couldn't see him act any way like it would. He was still distant or, like today, absolutely dangerous to be around.

“Living room or dinner table?” he asked tiredly and leaned against the kitchen counter behind him. Reba didn't answer, not even shrugged. She was hurt, her vice threatened to suffocate her and he
didn't seem to care how bad she felt.

“Good, if you don't care, dinner table,” he growled deeply and walked over into the dining room to prepare the table.

In the meantime, Reba snatched a bottle of water from the refrigerator and grabbed an apple and a pear from the fruit basket next to the fully automatic coffee machine none of them used to make coffee with, and walked back into her bedroom before he emerged from the dining room again. She wasn't sure if he would punish her again for not eating with him but she couldn't take being close to him right now. Maybe tomorrow or the day after that or the day after that or…

But Reba was out of luck earlier than she would've liked. Two minutes after sneaking up in her room again and making herself comfortable on the chaise longue with her pillow and a winter coat as a blanket Kristján entered her room without even bothering to knock. He was furious again.

“Do you think this is a game?” he hissed and walked to her with fast steps.

“Please, leave me alone, Kristján!”

“Do you think I make dinner for you just to have you hide in here again like a sulking, spoiled child?”

He grabbed her by the arm that was already black and blue from him dragging her upstairs this afternoon. She cried out in pain from her hurting shoulder and the bruises. It actually had an impact on him. Kristján's angry face softened a bit and he let go at once, witnessing her crawling in the corner of the room behind the chaise longue, holding her arm and staring up at him with wide eyes. The pause in which they both just looked at each other was stretching longer and longer when none of them moved or even blinked.

“Where does it hurt?” he eventually asked calm. Reba's eyes flicked up to her shoulder. Enough of an answer for him. Kristján closed the distance between them and knelt in front of her. Reba wanted to crawl further away from him but the wall behind her didn't give way.

He carefully lifted her arms and watched her face intently for any sign of pain. As soon as she hurt he stopped.

“Don't move,” he ordered softly. She followed his order and was the obedient Omega he always wanted her to be. His warm fingers curled around the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head laying the focus on not touching her injured shoulder. Next he worked on the strap of her bra lowering her arm again. Kristján couldn't avoid hurting her a bit but stopped and checked her face until the pain disappeared again before continuing.

As soon as her shoulder was bare, he rubbed his hands together to warm them before laying them on her skin. It was almost a tender moment between them. If only Reba wouldn't sit cowered in the corner because she was afraid he might hurt her again. Kristján seemed to be searching for the pain. He found it when Reba suddenly cried out. Instantly, he pulled his hands away and got up. Kristján looked down at her thoughtfully.

“I'll be back in a second. Don't move.”

He left her room and returned before Reba even realized what he had just been doing. He had tended to her injury, or was still doing it. Kristján knelt down again with balm in his hand. It was stinking terribly. Covering her nose and mouth, she turned her head away.

“It helps. I use it when I pull a muscle at sports,” he explained in a sober tone and rubbed the balm
onto his hands to warm it up too before touching Reba. She watched him with a wary look on her pale face. He was close to her in a totally different way than all those times before. Kristján seemed to be sucked into his work on her shoulder to provide her a minute or two to savor the new kind of attention he was giving her.

Reba watched his concentrated face. It was tinted with something that could almost be something like a compassionate expression but Reba was almost sure by now that this Alpha in front of her couldn't feel compassion or guilt. Otherwise he wouldn't treat her like he did, right?

“Ég er Því miður,” he murmured quietly as he rubbed the balm into her skin. Reba didn't ask for a translation, swallowing thickly against the need to vomit from the stench of the lotion.

If she would've asked, he wouldn't have answered her anyway. He had apologized in Icelandic because he knew she wouldn't understand him. Like this he still had the language barrier to keep him from appearing weak through saying sorry even though he did.

When he was done, he washed the rest of the balm from his hands in her en-suite.

“Dinner is still ready and waiting for you downstairs,” Reba heard him say as she walked over to the wardrobe to pick out a tank top to wear. “Unless you would rather eat in your little sanctuary here.”

She stopped her search when she heard his voice, sounding so tired and passive as if he was deep in thought while he glanced at her with a poignant look. Her sanctuary?

She looked around and her eyes stopped at the still empty, mocking bed and cast them down to the grey floor. This wasn't a sanctuary, this was prison. She felt just as empty as the bed, like she lost a bit of herself every day she was bound to him. One day there would be nothing left of her. Today he had taken a big part of her, leaving a gaping, throbbing wound that would never heal only become scarred.

Without saying one word – as he liked her to be, given that he almost never talked to her – she put on a white tank top and went downstairs into the dining room. She sat down on the table and waited patiently for him to sit down as well, to put a piece of the lasagna he'd made on her plate.

As always they didn't talk while having dinner. Something she welcomed because it meant being done with this farce faster. And Reba had tried talking to him, starting conversation often enough and it had only ended up with her being met with snarled comments, stern looks, or a cold shoulder paired with disregard.

After taking her nest as punishment for going on the terrace, she was done with trying to please him and trying to find something in him that might connect them apart from their "unclean" bond and their address. From now on, Reba swore to herself, her only actions would be directed to not give him cause to punish her again.

Kristján had won. She was giving up on trying to have a relationship with him. He could have his little, obedient, blank Omega if he wanted her like this. Reba only clung onto the hope that she would soon be pregnant and have someone to share her thoughts with without having to fear punishment or other consequences. But until then it would still be a long way.

When she was done with dinner, Reba wanted to go to bed when she remembered she had no bed. It was all gone. Reba contemplated asking him to return her beddings but she didn't. Kristján would probably use her request as some kind of a bargain for sex and she was so not in the mood. Reba was sure that not even his purring could change that tonight.
She got up from the table and walked into her bedroom. The chaise longue reeked after the muscle balm, that actually seemed to help her shoulder, so she couldn't lay there for the night either, the floor was too hard, she still avoided bath tubs like the plague, so her only option was using her little pillow as some kind of a mental lifeline and sleep in her forcefully stripped bed.

Reba felt so tiny in it. Having lain in her perfect, hugely satisfying nest this afternoon, it now seemed as cold and hostile as the North Pole. The only thing that was missing now where polar bears, she thought and frowned when she heard a knock on the door. Since when did polar bears knock?

Kristján entered with his arms full of the bedding he'd taken from her. How merciful that he returned it to her. Would he also build her nest up again? No? Of course not, because he couldn't fucking do it!, her internal voice hissed and the vice closed tightly like a slap on her fingers for being bratty.

But it didn't stop her. Not Kristján and not the bond could keep her from thinking her own thoughts and at least form her own opinions! Even if voicing them was out of question.

He scanned the scene that he was presented with. She was curled up in the center of the mattress and clutched onto a tiny, pink pillow he must've overlooked in his fiery rage a few hours ago. She looked so unnaturally small in her empty bed. Without a word, Kristján lay down the pillows and blankets on the foot of her bed and left again.

Reba started building her bed – not her nest – the second he was out of her bedroom. She fell asleep soon after, resisting the urge to bury her face in the pillows surrounding her again as they all smelled of him where she wanted to rid him from her bedroom and her life as much as never before.

Less than two weeks, she thought drunk from sleep, only two more weeks and she would be with child. No longer alone with this unreadable, unlovable man.
Praise

The second Omega meeting was a week later. Kristján bought her a new dress in the same rich dark blue as the one she'd wore the last time and that he'd shredded to pieces before placing the Claiming Mark on her shoulder.

Her new dress was tight fitting and showed off her shoulder as if constantly pointing a stage light on the proof of her bonding status. It was almost embarrassing but she wouldn't voice any critic at his choice. She feared what else he might take away from her if she acted up.

He repeated his threat of the last meeting.

“Behave,” he growled into her left ear and kissed the slowly healing scar on her shoulder. It sent a shiver down her spine and made her involuntarily hitch her breath before nodding slightly. To calm her nerves, she grabbed herself a glass of champagne and realized after gulping it down in a handful of swallows that all the other Omegas had orange juice or water in their glasses. Some were obviously pregnant, carrying their bellies with pride, some with two or more babies under their hearts, while Reba was still empty. She downed another glass of champagne when she felt tears slowly burn up in her eyes. Even with her Claiming Mark she was still an outsider here.

“Behave,” she told herself and put on her cold mask she'd cultivated around Kristján and that seemed to find his approval for once.

She scanned the ocean of neatly made updos and shiny faces in front of her. There was only one person she wanted to see. The one person she never felt like an outsider or weird around. The one person that never judged her or called her down.

Surrounded by Julia who was heavily showing by now (must be twins or triplets she was carrying) and Kimberley who was also sporting a little baby belly, Reba found Scarlett. She had her back turned towards her. But it must be her, Reba thought and for the first time in days felt something like a smile tug on the corners of her mouth. Julia and Kimberley recognized Reba as she approached and lifted their eyebrows seeing her glass of champagne and her obvious Claiming Mark on her shoulder.

Bound but not pregnant? Stuff for speculations and rumors Vivian would have given her left arm to see but she wasn't there as it seemed. At least Reba hadn't seen her while she had scanned the crowd for Scarlett. When Reba reached the group, her smile was as wide as the Golden Gate Bridge. Julia and Kimberley nodded towards her as a quick hello and Scarlett turned around curiously.

Reba stopped right where she was. A feeling of sadness and anger rose inside her when Reba saw the clear liquid in her best friend's glass. So, she, too. Her smile had disappeared within an instant of realizing that she was, indeed, the only Omega without child in this room.

“You look good,” Reba could bring herself to say and kept her eyes glued on Scarlett's glass of water. She laughed happily and laid her hand on her not yet so swollen belly. Kimberley and Julia turned away giving the two friends some privacy in the crowded room. Scarlett didn't seem to see Reba's pale cheeks or hear her shallow breaths just to keep from crying.

“I'm pregnant.”

“Isn't that what "good" means when speaking about an Omega?” Reba sneered with a sharp tone and decided that this would be her last glass of champagne if it made her bitchy around her best friend.

“Well, yeah. I'm so happy, Reba.” Scarlett closed the distance between them, unimpressed by Reba's
snapping, and lay her free hand on hers. “I have to admit that I lied the last time we saw each other. You see, Henry and I weren't using birth control. It simply didn't work. We both don't know why.” There was something like shame in her eyes, something that Reba knew all too well by now. “But in my second Heat, it worked.”

“I'm very happy for you,” Reba lied and drank the rest of her champagne in one go. Maybe another one wasn't the worst idea. Just to use the alcohol to numb the throbbing pain in her chest as she listened to her friend's happy, blissful rambling.

“But the doctor said, it's just one baby. But I'm sure we will have more after this one. I can't wait to be a mother and Henry is head over heels since we found out. I'm telling you, there is nothing better than expecting your Alpha's child. They turn into fluffy little kittens as soon as they know. I'm actually surprised he isn't here right now, stroking my belly like he does almost all the time.”

“Where is Vivian?” Reba asked when she couldn't take it any longer. Kristján would never be a "fluffy little kitten". Maybe he would stop being to absurdly moody … or maybe it would get even worse once there was a child he could boss around and control from dawn 'til dusk.

Scarlett looked around as if she hadn't noticed Vivian's absence up until now.

“I don't know. Maybe Julia and Kimberley know more.” She waved them both over to Reba and her and repeated the question. The two friends scanned Reba from her obscenely presented bite mark to her now empty champagne glass while they held onto their orange juices.

“We have no idea. She didn't tell us,” Kimberley sighed, worry tinting her voice, “She didn't seem any different when I met her two weeks ago. We were shopping stuff for our babies.”

As if to emphasize that she was really pregnant she rubbed her belly. Reba wanted to scream at her that they all knew she was carrying and that it wasn't something uncommon, especially, not when ALL the others here were with child too. Well, all but her.

“Maybe she thinks she's too good for us with her media mogul as an Alpha. I remember her swooning about who she had met through him,” Kimberley moaned irritated and Reba grabbed another glass of champagne from the tray of a waiter passing the little group. She ignored the looks she received even from Omegas she had never seen before. Scarlett was giving her one of her concerned looks and Kimberley simply lifted one of her black eyebrows at her.

Julia was the one finally voicing what they all thought, “So, um, no baby for you yet?”

“No.”

“And, why?” she pressed on. She knew she just wanted to have gossip stuff but she wasn't going to give it to her. Saying one wrong word had already caused her pain. She wouldn't make the same mistake a second time and risk her privileges of coming here and meet people at least once a cycle. These meetings were the only time she was allowed to leave the apartment. It was to be saved and cherished under all circumstances.

“I'm afraid, I have to go now. Kristján and I have something planned for tomorrow and need to go home early today. It was a pleasure seeing you all again. Until next time.”

Her smile was frozen on her face the whole time. She could see that she was still a horrible liar but none of them questioned her as she left the group heading towards the room were the Alphas would stay during the meeting. The smell of expensive alcohol and rare cigars filled the air and seemed to suck her closer in with the smell of so many potent Alphas the closer she came.
Reba stayed by the door and searched the room for Kristján. A group of tall men she recognized from her auction stood a bit on the right side of the tall, masculine seeming room. The walls were paneled with reddish brown wood that smelled of smoke already, dark green leather couches provided possibilities to sit down and a wide bar was built on the left wall, constantly occupied waiters serving drinks to the almost alcohol-immune Alphas. To make an Alpha drunk you needed the double amount of what would kill a Beta and the triple amount for an Omega. But they weren't supposed to drink anyway because it could interfere with their fertility. But Reba had needed it and the numbing effect it had on the nervous system.

She stayed where she was, not wanting to interrupt Kristján while he listened to Kimberley's Alpha talk about changes in economics over the last five years. It didn't take him too long to notice her though. Kristján excused himself and walked over to her with a frown; not an irritated one more a worried one.

“What is it, Reba?” he asked lowly and touched her upper arms, running his hands up and down over her skin to calm her. He sensed her inner turmoil through their bond. It was throbbing, almost painfully.

“Can we please go home?” Reba whispered to avoid other Alphas hearing them.

“We've only been here for a few minutes.”

She didn't say anything about being the only one not being pregnant and feeling like an outsider and failure among her friends and other Omegas. Instead she just swallowed against her tears and looked down to her feet, nodding slightly. If he wanted to stay, she would simply ask if she could wait in the car until he wanted to go home as well. She would do anything to avoid being the one black sheep surrounded by dozens of white, pregnant, happy ones.

“How long do you want to stay?” she asked with a steady voice despite the lump forming in her throat.

Kristján checked his watch and looked over his shoulder to the other Alphas.

“Nothing I couldn't also hear in the gym as well,” he mused quietly and turned to Reba again, “have you said goodbye to your friends?”

“Yes.”

“What else did you say; why are we leaving so soon again?”

“I said, we were having plans for tomorrow and needed to go home early tonight,” she whispered, hoping that he wouldn't punish her for her self-serving lie. He only nodded and snapped his fingers at one of the waiters. He ordered their coats to be brought immediately and nodded goodbye to the Alphas he'd been having a conversation with before pushing Reba with a hand on the small of her back into the entrance hall.

“Why do you want to go?”

“Because they asked me why I'm not pregnant yet,” she answered truthfully and earned herself another silent nod and a brooding look from him. She could see it even though her head was still hanging low. The bond pulsed in her chest like a separate heart.

The drive home was silent apart from him tapping along on his smart phone and her staring outside, watching the warm summer rain fall and create big puddles on the streets and sidewalks. In the apartment Reba just wanted to go to bed and sleep for the rest of the time until her Heat. Toeing off
her shoes, she mumbled a "goodnight" but was stopped when his hand was suddenly on hers when she wanted to leave.

Her heart started pounding when she feared new punishment for her previous lie. But when she turned around there was no sign of anger in his face. He couldn't be such a good actor, right? Oh, please, she prayed internally.

“You behaved very well today,” he cooed and the deep rumble of his praising voice sent shivers up and down her spine. His hands travelled up her arms and his right hand ghosted tenderly over her left shoulder making her shudder involuntarily. “I think you deserved yourself a treat today.”

Reba closed her eyes, her body reveling in the gentle attention his hands were giving her now. He pulled the pins out of her hair and let his fingers glide through her curls before he started massaging her scalp. A deep sigh escaped her lips when he continued to run his hands through her hair.

“You looked beautiful tonight,” Kristján whispered. Reba could feel his breath ghost over her cheek and neck. He was so close.

She was used to his touch by now, even though usually it wasn't connected with such tender words or appreciation, and she pretty much waited for his purring to make her weak in the knees like always. But he wasn't purring today. He didn't need to. Reba could feel herself getting wet just because of the way he stroked his hands over her body and the way his voice sounded; like a velvet blanket in her ears.

Reba leaned into his touch and stepped closer towards him. She lifted her hands towards his shoulders and eased off the jacket he was wearing. Oh, she loved his broad shoulders more than anything. They spoke of his strength and his ability to keep her and her children safe like he should as her Alpha. He copied her motion, pulling off her coat and planting a soft kiss on her mark. She sighed highlx into his ear next to her mouth.

“Would you like to have a treat, Reba?”

“Yes,” she breathed huskily with closed eyes. She could feel his hands glide down her sides and sweep her off her feet. Her arms closed around his shoulders as he carried her upstairs. She felt like a princess from a fairy tale but her prince, although now behaving like a prince, was a beast most times.

But not right now. Now he was better than every single Disney-prince combined in one human being, at least that's what her bond was whispering into her ear with each and every of her racing heartbeats.

He laid her down softly on her bed and hovered over her for a moment, watching her flushed face and the little beads of sweat forming on her forehead and over her upper lip. He kissed them away tasting the salt of them. She returned the kiss almost frantically. Her bond was humming again. She had been so afraid that she would've made another mistake today and would face a new punishment so close before her next Heat but this … this was like a dream.

Kristján was tender over her, kissing her like he actually loved her and wanted to make her feel loved. If this feeling was her "treat" she would always be after it. Tomorrow he would probably be distant again but tonight he wasn't. He was here and he was kissing her deeply, moaning against her mouth and licking tenderly over her bottom lip to request entry. She was more than willing to give it to him and moved her lips against his.

The skirt of Reba's dress had hitched up as he ground his hips against hers; his hard cock already
apparent in his dress-pants, her legs opening to give him better access to her throbbing core. The bond sang highly in her chest, driving her senses into hypersensitivity. Every stroke of his hand, every little moan that escaped him, and the feeling of his body moving over hers was like a new symphony, rocking through her every fiber.

She sighed breathlessly when Kristján slid his hands over her bare legs and found the little wet spot in her underwear. Reba wanted to get him naked and her too. She started tugging on his dress-shirt almost aggressively until he stopped her and broke their kiss with a painful hiss. Kristján caught her right hand and pulled it away from his shoulder. Reba watched him with a frown and started worrying a bit when he sat up straight between her legs. He pulled off his shirt himself and revealed what had caused the pain.

“What happened?” Reba whispered with her eyes fixed on the patch on his left shoulder. Kristján's lips curled up into a smirk, not yet a smile but on its way there. He peeled it off carefully, grimacing slightly at the sting of the tape sticking to his skin. He threw the used patch on the floor and rolled his shoulder as if getting familiar with having the white gauze removed again.

Her sex driven brain didn't come up with the question how long he already had it on. Reba sat up straight before him to get a better look of his shoulder. Her brows were furrowed in confusion.

XV-V-MMXV was tattooed on the same spot she wore her Claiming Mark, on her left shoulder. It took her mind a few seconds to finally come to a conclusion and recognize the meaning of the Roman numbers from 5th Grade. 15th May 2015, the day they bound themselves to each other. Her breath caught in her lungs for a moment. This was his "mark", she thought and traced the still reddish skin under and directly around the black ink.

Reba closed the small distance between them, pressing her still covered body against his and was completely fixated on the letters on her mate's shoulder. Kristján buried his face in the crook of her neck and started sucking on her mark. Reba let out a breathless scream and dug her nails into his back, sensing his hard muscles work under his hot skin. The sound of her zipper being lowered only reached her through a thick layer of arousal that flooded her mind and veins. She clutched onto Kristján when he pulled her dress even higher than it already had hitched by itself. She lifted her arms to assist him and was rewarded with a passionate kiss that left her breathless and wanting for more.

His cock twitched in his pants demanding freedom and attention. With fiddling hands, she was willing to give him both while he worked on the clasp of her bra. Kristján was too impatient for such delicate work and growled deeply once before ripping the fine white lace and setting her breast free. Reba rubbed his throbbing hot length and felt slick run down her thighs despite still wearing her panties. They were off just as fast as her bra. The ripped pieces of clothing landed next to the discarded patch on the floor.

Kristján fucked her from behind this night. Lightly biting her mark, he thrust into her slick cunt and rubbed her clit. He brought her to climax three times this night. At the last and most intense one when he knotted her.

The feeling of hot cum filling her womb was what finally pushed her over the edge. Her whole body shuddered with every rope of milky cum that he was so willing to give her, coating her inner walls. They collapsed panting and satisfied on the mess of blankets and pillows that would be their nest in less than a week during her Heat.

Kristján held her from behind; planting tender kisses on the back of her neck and shoulder, holding her close and maneuvering their bodies in a position that she could fall asleep without too much of
his weight resting of her body and without the knot pulling uncomfortably on her when they were lying in a wrong angle.

Reba fell asleep with the feeling of complete bliss. He cared for her in a way she'd never known from him. Her treat left her wanting for more of the same kind. She loved him like this. Reba wanted him to be like this every day and every night. She fell asleep with a smile on her face that only lasted until she woke up the following morning.

The next morning, she groaned heavily, sitting up. God, she hated drinking because it only ever really showed its least desirable effect on the next morning. Her bed was empty and cold. So, he'd fucked her into a coma and then had left her again. As always. Only one morning she wanted to wake up in his arms with him still around or maybe even still asleep so she could catch a glimpse of him in his most vulnerable state. But it seemed before that she would become President of the Moon or something.

Her legs felt like jelly when she got up and washed the dried semen from between her sore thighs. Her ass hurt and her hips were bruised. She would look like this after her next Heat too, and even worse, Reba thought but held on to the hope that she would be pregnant by then and everything would turn to the bright side eventually.

When she was dressed, and walked downstairs, Kristján was in the kitchen, stirring his morning tea and seemingly buried deeply in his thoughts. She greeted him twice before he snapped out of his intense thinking and greeted her back.

“What is this?” she asked and sat down on the breakfast table, looking down at the little baby blue pills on the edge of her plate. He turned his head towards her but had to approach to see what she was talking about. He stood directly behind her and looked over her shoulder to see what she meant.

“Heat suppressions.”

What?! She wasn't going to take Heat suppressions. Reba demonstratively pushed her plate away from her and crossed her arms over her chest.

“What?” Kristján asked still right behind her, irritation staining his voice. His hand closed around the back of her chair and his blood already started boiling inside his veins. She was disobedient again and he hated it.

“I will not take Heat suppressions. They will only mess with my cycle and I'm close to my next Heat.” Her voice was stern and her face matched her tone. “Why should I even take them?”

She would not take these pills and risk some kind of damage to her body that wasn't necessary. Why should she even take Heat suppressions when she had an Alpha who could tend to her? If he didn't want a baby (which was also strictly against what she wanted) he could give her birth control again like the last time but not even letting her go into Heat was bullshit!

“I don't have time to tend to your next Heat. Work is demanding my undivided attention at the moment.”

Reba could feel her jaw drop at that explanation and this matter-of-factly tone he used for it. She glared daggers at the pill in front of her.

“If you aren't willing to tend to the Heats of your mate, you should've gotten yourself a Beta and not an Omega!” she practically shouted at him. Her Heat was holy to her, letting her forget the fear she
was feeling whenever he was breathing as heavily as he was doing now. She wouldn't let him mess
with her hormones.

She was perfect the way she was right now and Reba would never let him manipulate her body like
this. He had wanted her, now he got her and as much as she had her duties, he had his.

“Because it's expected of me.”

“And it's expected of me to be pregnant with your children,” she hissed furiously, shaking from
anger in the pit of her stomach.

“Let me phrase it like this,” Reba heard behind her and felt his mouth right next to her ear only a
second later, setting her into alarm when he spoke again. “If you don't take them yourself, I will push
them down your throat, Reba.”

She swallowed thickly, believing every single word of the threat. Slowly she reached for the pill.
Maybe she could find a way to trick him but not with this one, not with him being so close and so
angry as he was right now. Reba could feel his aggression vibrate from his body and the bitter smell
of it filled the air in her lungs again. It forced her body to do what she was meant to do: obey her
mate and satisfy him with that.

“Good girl,” he praised her and kissed the crown of her head before leaving for work like every
morning.

There would be no baby waiting for her after her next Heat. Or rather her "next" Heat wouldn't be a
Heat. It would be nothing.

She took the pills. Every single day like he ordered and oversaw. Kristján still slept with her but
where at the beginning some tenderness directed towards her mark had been enough, he needed
more and more purring to get her wet with each passing week. Yet, he never stopped. If he had to
rub her and purr until he almost lost his voice, so be it. Reba felt worse with every new pill she
forced down her throat.

She slowly lost interest in everything. The pills took her the energy to even think for more than five
minutes in a row. The only time she's left her bed was when she prepared dinner and swallowed it
down without really tasting it. Kristján didn't seem to notice the change in her demeanor or he didn't
care. Maybe even approved of it?

Anyway, Reba felt herself detach from life more and more. It was all a blur; getting up in the
morning to swallow the Heat suppressions in front of Kristján so he was sure she actually did it,
going back to bed, doozing a few hours somewhere between being awake and falling asleep, making
dinner, eating dinner, getting back to bed, waiting for Kristján to fuck her, getting fucked, sleeping.

She had felt like throwing up the entire first day when her Heat had been scheduled but had stayed
"cool". Kristján had forbidden her to go to the next Omega meeting, now really with the
argumentation that she hadn't finished her cycle yet. Reba had almost thrown a vase at him out of
pure, white rage and hatred boiling up inside her like a geyser. But she had remained calm as a
marble column and prepared dinner as usual.

After agonizing six months, Reba finally had enough. She had no self left, it felt. The books in her
shelf all seemed to mock her with their wit, charm, knowledge, and wisdom. When she caught
herself turning each and every one with the wrong side to the front, so she couldn't read the titles
anymore, she had finally stopped.
“I will not take them anymore,” Reba stated the next morning when Kristján placed the pill on her plate.

“Excuse me?” There was warning in his voice. It must've seemed like rebellion rising-up against his regime again. The last six months she had been just what he'd wanted and still he had found reason to shout at her even when it wasn't her fault. Reba had remembered his rule for apologies (eye contact and clear speech) and mastered her "I am very sorry, Kristján"s to perfection.

“I will no longer take Heat suppressions,” she repeated and kept her empty gaze directed into some for away nothingness she felt slowly creep closer to swallow the last spark of her mind.

Those pills had caused her to pretty much shrug disinterested when her birthday had been. Kristján had given her a obscenely high-priced, silver and diamond wristwatch she never wore because if she knew the time she would realize how little she did every day.

“You know what awaits you when you are disobedient,” he growled. Reba nodded willing to endure every pain and punishment, emotionally and physically if only that meant feeling something!

“Well then.” He snatched the pill back from her plate and leaned over to kiss the crown of her head as if she was a child.

“I hope you enjoy your Cold Heat as I have work to do,” Kristján murmured into her hair and escorted her into her room. She knew, he would lock her in after he was sure he had removed everything she might use to hurt herself with during her sexual frenzy. When he was done, Reba was lying in her bed facing away from the windows. She listened to his steps in her room and his light humming as if he was enjoying himself immensely.

She knew that it was unnatural for a healthy, young Omega to skip two Heats and with a third one right in front of her, she couldn't have continued. She also knew it would be hell where she had sent herself to. But her whole life was hell, what would a few days of physical suffering change?
Cold Heat

Chapter Notes

*Sigh* as for public "demand" here you have the next chapter BUT I won't upload a chapter per day!!! It was just coincidence that I already had this one finished (before even starting on the 7th) and that it's pretty short. Be patient, for fuck's sake! I'm not a robot (Although that would be pretty cool, right?)

WARNING: This chapter contains a suicide attempt. If you are uncomfortable with it, don't read it! I won't take any responsibility for whatever it will trigger in you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Reba felt like dying. This wasn't her first Cold Heat and it was definitely not her first one without an Alpha to tend to her needs and cravings, but after missing two Heats she felt like her insides were burning, being ripped out of her body, and set on fire right in front of her eyes.

She was sweating non-stop and her panties were soaked through within mere seconds after putting them on. Masturbation had helped best at times like these but now it was like every orgasm only reminded her how empty she was without Kristján to take care of her. This throbbing need, this maddening itch she couldn't scratch, was driving her insane.

The first day she'd bitten her lips and tongue until she tasted blood to keep from screaming his name. The second day she had still muffled it with one of her sweat soaked pillows but on the third day she had given up and cried and screamed Kristján's name until her voice gave up.

Her fingernails were broken and covered in blood from her unsuccessful attempts to break down the door. Her shoulder was bruised and the muscles of her arms were sore. Her pain receptors had shut off as soon as Heat had set in completely leaving her in an invincible state of mind.

Six whole days of madness left her body dehydrated, tired as hell and desperate for any kind of contact. She had regained her reason on the morning of day seven. Never in her life had she endured such a long and massive Heat. Her mind and body were drained from all strength and willpower. Her bed was covered in dried slick and she smelled like she hadn't showered in years.

Reba cowered in the corner of her shower, letting the water hit her head and run down her limp, sore body, warming and loosening up tense muscles and helping them relax again. She hugged her legs tightly to her chest and sobbed. Reba couldn't take it any longer. Leaving her alone in a Cold Heat he himself had pushed her into was abusive and cruel.

Reba knew she had to get up when the water turned cold, her body too weak to accommodate to the sudden temperature change. But she really couldn't bring herself to move. Even thinking about it hurt and she'd suffered enough these past days.

She had no idea how much time had passed when she heard his steps coming closer. She didn't look up. Reba wanted to scream and shout at him, scratch out his fucking eyes and rip off his balls for what he'd done to her but she knew he was stronger, especially now with her body lacking vitamins, fluids and essential nutrients. She wouldn't even come as far as touching him before she would collapse into his arms.
“You called for me?” he asked standing by the bathroom door.

And now he was mocking her to top it all. Just the way he stood there by the door, all tall and well-groomed towering her with that smug look on his face without even moving a single facial muscle made Reba want to throw up but her stomach was empty and she was too weak.

“Go away,” she whispered, shivering, and closed her eyes defeated when he came closer and tested the temperature of the water. Ice cold by now.

Kristján turned it off and knelt down next to her heavily shaking, little form. He seemed to radiate heat and Reba needed every fiber of self-control inside her not to snuggle into his chest like a kitten. She'd rather freeze to death then willingly come crawling into his arms.

Reba had tried being the Omega he wanted but it had almost destroyed her. She was done pretending to be what he wanted her to be and longed to return to what she was born and raised to be. She was done with 'being seen, not heard' or masking her likes and dislikes because they might collide with his, and she was definitely done with his stupid 'I'm Alpha, you're Omega, and therefore I know and can do everything better than you do'. She was so done with everything.

His palm on her cheek was warm and tender. A sigh escaped her before she could suppress it. He moved it over her freezing skin on her back and arms. His soft stroking was almost too much to bare.

Reba avoided meeting his gaze. If it was mocking, she wouldn't be able to take it. If it was anything but mocking, she couldn't take it either. She wanted him to vanish, to go back to where he'd been when she'd physically ached for him.

Kristján wrapped a warm, fluffy towel around her and pulled her out of the corner to dry her off properly. The fact that in their current position Reba was pressed into his chest with his arms wrapped around her was doing nothing for her inner rebellion.

Her body ached for his touch, the tender attention he was giving her right now. Reba knew he would stop touching her soon and then she would crave it again, having it ripped from her once again way too early for her taste.

“You don't want me to leave you,” he cooed and started purring right into her ear.

She shivered at that being torn between wanting him closer, wanting him to never stop purring to her, and pushing him away and spitting into his face. A small whimper escaped her lips when he pulled her up to her feet together with him and eventually carried her feeble body inside his bedroom. Her alpha-starved brain went straight into alert mode and made her hypersensitive when Kristján laid her down on his dry and cozy bed.

“What-” are you doing?

She wasn't strong enough to utter more than this single word of her question. Her body betrayed her, seeking his closeness when he'd let go of her again.

“I'll get you something to eat.”

Kristján's voice was calm and soft. He didn't speak, he whispered as if he knew how sensitive she was right now. He left her for no longer than a minute it seemed before he returned with a bottle of nutrient water, a cup of steaming hot chocolate and a sliced pear. Nothing too heavy on her empty stomach and yet filled with enough sugars and nutrients to build her up again so that she could soon eat real food. Kristján blew the hot chocolate so that she wouldn't burn her tongue when drinking it.
“I want you to finish the water first. It's most important you get back every drop of water you've lost over the last couple of days. When you've finished everything, you should sleep a bit. As soon as you have some of your strength back, we'll have dinner.”

Reba wanted to say so many nasty things to him right now and tell him that being nice to her now wouldn't make up for what he'd done.

“I'm not trying to make up for anything, Reba. I just don't want you to die. I paid too much for you to let that happen.”

She hated it when he knew exactly what she was thinking. Nonetheless she snuggled into his embrace when she'd finished the food and felt tiredness creep into every fiber of her body. She'd stopped shaking after drinking the hot chocolate and nibbled her slices of the sweet, juicy pear. After she fell asleep and Kristján was sure she wouldn't wake when he'd get up, he organized some food for her.

Half an hour later Reba woke and found the bed empty. It smelled of him but not enough. In her half sleep she wandered into his en-suite and dug into his dirty clothes stack, picking out Kristján's sport clothes because they smelled most intensely. There was no shame only instinct. She dragged them with her into his bed and almost nodded off the instant her head connected with the pillow again.

The next time she woke, it was from Kristján's hand on her shoulder. “Dinner is ready.”

She growled lowly and dug deeper in his pillows and dirty clothes.

“C'mon, dinner is ready and waiting for you. You have to eat.”

Reba shoved his hands away growling more dangerously at him, daring him to not disturb her now that she finally was surrounded by his scent and the warmth of his bed. She heard a deep chuckle and he pulled away the blanket under heavy protest.

Kristján allowed her to put on a shirt she had pulled out of his dirty clothes stack and gave her one of his boxers to wear at the table.

“What if I just eat in bed?” she moaned tired. He shook his head and held out an inviting hand, an amused smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. He looked like nothing had happened, as if everything was perfectly fine. It wasn't!

“I know, but you still need to eat.” His voice was tainted with tiredness and something that reminded her of ... guilt? But nothing that would change her mind about him.

“Stop reading my thoughts!” she hissed angrily and stood up. She deliberately ignored his hand. With shaky legs and weak knees Reba walked down the stairs and followed her nose.

There were two dishes on the coffee table in front of the couch. The TV was talking silently and bathing the room in a blue light as the news ran over the screen. Nothing as boring as hearing about the misery of others, she thought bitterly and plopped down on the couch.

“Mind if we keep the TV on?” He could stop trying to sound interested in her opinion again. It was unbelievable. She shrugged disinterested and took one of the plates from the table onto her cross-legged lap. Reba ignored him as she wolfed down the pasta he'd made for her. He watched her with an arched eyebrow. She kept on ignoring him. The food in front of her was the most important thing in her little world right now.

“Do you want to stay in my room or do you have too much animosity against me to follow your
biology?”

“You make it sound like I have a choice,” she murmured, shoving her full fork back into her mouth.

“That's what a question implies. Having the power of choice.”

“I lost my power of choice when I stepped through your door for the first time.”

“Well, if you're willing to submit so freely, I'm happy to make every future choice for you,” he said lowly and eyed her over his shoulder.

Reba had already given herself up. No more fight left in her. If he wanted to have a pet, he'd finally found it. He purred her into mood that night. Fucked her slow and tender when the slick ran down her slit, mindful of her soreness. But the fact that he had left her to suffer during her Heat and now took what he wanted from her again made Reba want to jump out a window when he fell asleep under her.

When his knot had swelled down again, she climbed off him and walked back into her own bedroom. Disgusted and aching, she picked out a fresh pillow and blanket and tried to sleep in her chaise longue.

From her spot Reba watched the family in the other building. The children were in bed at this time of day. The parents sat on the couch, the Omega snuggling into the arms of her Alpha looking completely content. Reba hated her. Her and her stupid, fucking, perfect life. Hadn't she deserved the same? Had she done something unforgiving in another life that justified her suffering like this now? She watched them until they went to bed but couldn't find sleep herself that night.

At 8am she heard Kristján enter her room but didn't turn her head to acknowledge him.

“I will be gone for most of the day. I will bring take-out for dinner. Any special wishes?” he asked and was pulling his tie tighter. Kristján waited a moment if she would say something but Reba remained silent.

“Great, so I'll get to choose,” he snorted sarcastic. He had what he wanted and now he still seemed unsatisfied by her. She had given up her power of choice yesterday. He was getting old if he'd already forgotten again, she thought sneering internally but remained still and silent.

Reba listened how he left the apartment and only then stood up again. Her whole body was aching. She knew that Kristján kept his pain meds after injuring him at sport in his bathroom cabinet. Reba dragged her feet over the floor as she walked into the room, vibrating with the Alpha's scent. It was hugging her tenderly, surrounding her like a warm blanket. She loathed it.

When she found more than his pain meds, she had an idea, smiling for the first time in months.

Reba looked down to the white sleeping pills in her open palm. 34. She had counted them three times while the bathtub ran full with water. She might have other reasons than her mother had had but the method remained the same. When Kristján would come back, it would already be over. The only thing she needed to do was open her mouth and swallow the pills.

Reba took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She had expected to be afraid but her heartbeat was calm and steady, her mind at peace with her decision because it was hers alone. Kristján had nothing
to say in this. Reba wondered if this was how her mother had felt when she'd decided it was time to end her life.

She opened her mouth wide but couldn't fit all of them in at once. She chewed them to be able to swallow them. The paste was thick in her mouth and tasted like chalk. Reba's eyes watered at the last swallow and she moved over to the sink trying to get the taste out of her mouth.

It was done. She had killed herself. It was only a matter of time until her body would know it too. Right then she heard steps in her room. Fast and loud.

“Spit it out! Spit it out!” Kristján ordered when he grabbed her and moved her over to the toilet. Reba didn't know how he possibly had found out about her plan but it was too late. She smiled over her victory over him and his grasp on the back of her neck tightened until it hurt. He could hurt her now as much as he wanted. It was over.

“Oh no, it's not,” he hissed and forced her mouth open and his fingers past her teeth. Her gagging reflex brought the pill paste up her throat again and she spit it into the toilet collapsing in front of it when Kristján let go of her neck. Her body shook with the contractions of her stomach bringing up everything she'd forced down so carefully. Reba saw it disappear down the drain as he flushed.

She couldn't believe it. She had been dead. The pills had only needed a bit of time to work and she would've been gone. Hot tears burned behind her eyes. Her blood was rushing in her ears so loud she couldn't hear Kristján talk to her.

“Why couldn't you just let me die?” she whispered, still starting into the toilet with her throat burning from vomiting. He pulled Reba into his arms and wrapped her in his heavy coat. She cried against his chest, hating and loving it simultaneously.

Kristján wasn't purring. He wasn't calm enough himself to purr her out of her distress. But what he could and did do, was soothing her with his hands running up and down her spine and humming softly into her ear. Reba felt his heart pound in his chest almost as if he was scared. He smelled of adrenaline and sweat.

“You will see a doctor first thing tomorrow,” Kristján said calmly, almost too calm to be sincere. It created an absurd contrast to the pounding underneath Reba's cheek.

“I hate you,” she whispered against his chest.

“I know.” There was no anger in his voice only acknowledgement and the realization that he had almost lost her, his Omega, his mate.

Chapter End Notes

So, now that you got what you wanted, a quick question.
Of course I will update (after my own schedule, not yours!) and this story and website is, obviously, not profit orientated.
But I am just curious because of the praise I received for my writing this far:
Would you ...
a) ever pay for something I write?
b) buy a book where the main theme is A/B/O Dynamics and/or
c) pay real money for a book that I write with this topic in the main focus?

As I said, it's really just to satisfy my curiosity. There is no book planned at the moment and I'm not sure if that would even be legally possible as the whole A/B/O thing grounds in the Supernatural fandom... although we are very far away from it already. Please write the answer in the comments under this chapter or send me a mail over to my tumblr page http://chiltonme.tumblr.com/ask
Thanks to a couple of comments I received for my last chapter, now here an additional disclaimer:
No, I am not the writer of "Born to be Bred"!
Yes, I know the story and I love it too.
No, I do not plagiarize the work.
Yes, there are similarities due to the "genre" both stories are set in.

You ask yourself why I feel the need to write this? Well, an anonymous reader accused me of plagiarism which I find is a disgusting accusation especially when I as a reader of exactly that story know it well enough to plug this "even your Heat suppressions have the same colour"-feathers! As I pointed out similarities between said "original" and another story of the same writer I was called immature and unfriendly because I was degrading a "work that out performed mine". I sincerely hope this anonymous reader is reading this here right now although he/she informed me "that I had just lost a reader" which I find sad but won't give me sleepless nights to be honest. And I'm not sorry if I sound like a bitch right now. But calling me immature and unfriendly while I have been extremely friendly while being accused of plagiarism has pretty much been one drop too much!

So, that's why I thought it necessary to make a few things clear here. Oh, and one very important thing that I think the bunny in Bambi should've taught all of us: "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all!"

If you don't like my story, stop reading it. That's how easy it is and if you don't write something and let others read it I think you should duck your head especially low, ANON!

So, that was that, and now I wish you a lot of fun with my rather long chapter.

The next morning Reba woke in Kristján's arms for the first time outside her Heat. She lay in his bed surrounded by his scent and the warmth of the slowly rising sun over the ocean. Reba pushed against his chest to get at least a tiny bit of distance between them.

“Don't,” Kristján mumbled and pulled her close again. Reba knew there was no use in fighting him.

“I will call my sister and ask if she has time today to check on you.”

“Didn't know you had a sister,” Reba whispered.

“She's Beta and one of the best Omega doctors in Flint.”

Reba only nodded and let him caress her how he saw fit. She was relieved he didn't went anywhere near going too far while doing it. He stuck to holding her tightly and stroking her back up and down until the sun was completely up.

Reba walked in a trance, buried deep in her dark and gloomy thoughts. She had been since she woke, not eating breakfast or even reacting when he said something. Reba felt empty and lifeless. When they arrived at the private practice of Kristján's sister around noon, she didn't see the clean,
calm interior there or hear her name being called when she was being sent into the examination room. A tall Beta woman sent Kristján outside – and he actually obeyed – when she finally woke from her trance.

“Hello, my name is Dr. Elva Ness. I'm your sister-in-law. And I will see what brought you here today.”

“Open the door, he's sitting outside,” Reba whispered and studied the Beta in front of her. She had the same bright blue eyes as her brother and they shared a certain air of authority surrounding their tall postures and straight faces.

“Why did my brother brought you here?” she asked calmly and motioned to a simple plastic chair next to her desk to sit on.

Reba eyed her suspiciously. She didn't know this woman. Her face seemed nice and trustworthy … somehow familiar. Probably just the family similarities with Kristján, Reba guessed and remained silent but followed her silent command.

“You know, you can talk openly with me. Nothing you say in here will ever leave this practice.”

But not this room, she noticed. By now Reba listened very closely to the people surrounding her. He would know everything she said within a matter of minutes.

“Are you afraid of him? Did he ever hurt you?” Elva kept on pressing.

Well, not really physically. She still remained silent.

“I'm afraid, I can't help you if you don't talk to me.”

“He'll only punish me again,” Reba sighed defeated and looked down to her hands on her lap. Elva softly touched her shoulder, making Reba look up into her painfully familiar eyes.

“I promise you, I won't ever let him punish you again.” Reba wanted to trust her words, wanted them to be true, finally have someone to turn to.

Tears started rolling down Reba's cheeks when she started telling her doctor everything from how unfriendly their life started out to the Heat suppressions and the Cold Heat only days ago. Elva listened patiently, nodded from time to time and held Reba's hands when she started shaking uncontrollably, nearing the brink of shattering.

“I will talk to your Alpha and discuss the best way of therapy with him. After that I will come back in. Okay?”

Reba sniffed a "yes" and buried her wet face in her hands as her body kept shaking with violent sobs. Elva left the room and found her brother pacing the floor like a tiger in a tiny cage.

“So?” he asked even before she'd closed the door behind her.

“Are you fucking nuts?” Elva hissed when she stood right in front of him.

“Excuse me?”

“I'm serious. Are you fucking out of your mind, treating her like this? You wouldn't have been able to endure half of what you've put her through, you cruel mons-”

Kristján raised his hand to silence Elva. He clenched his teeth until it hurt.
“You know, if you weren’t my sister-,” he gritted out.

“I would’ve already reported you as an abusive Alpha to the authorities,” she interrupted him and he huffed a half amused laughter, convinced that Elva was joking but her strong Beta features remained serious and his smile faltered.

“You can't be serious. I never hit her or anything. She's fine.”

“Fine?” Elva almost screamed, “She's not fine! She's broken, Kristján! You broke her. You broke her like our father broke your mother.”

Kristján clenched his teeth again at that comparison but didn't say anything at it.

“She needs comfort and the feeling of unconditional safety, you moron! Not what you did to her.”

“It's not like I didn't tend to her or that I didn't provide for her,” he tried to defend himself. Kristján was at a lost post here and he knew it. But he didn't want to acknowledge it just yet.

“Well, I'm pretty sure she wouldn't have tried to kill herself yesterday if you would've been a bit friendlier. She told me what you did to her only after I promised her you wouldn't punish her again.” She shook her head in absolute disappointment. “You took her nest from her. I mean, you didn’t just destroy the first nest she’d built for you two, no, you destroyed it! You took away the only thing that brought her comfort in a new environment with a grumpy stranger who bet her over the head with stupid rules and fear.”

Kristján looked down to the white tile floor, slowly feeling shame creep up his spine and neck.

“You isolated her from her friends and other Omegas with the stupid argument, that she hadn't finished her cycle yet. And, why hadn't she? Because you pumped her full with Heat suppressions.”

Elva held her arms akimbo and shook her head a second time.

“Didn't know menopause meds were newly given to 18-year-olds and I'm a very frequently visited Omega doctor with close contact to scientists around the world precisely on this field. They were designed to be taken only over the cause of the Heat to soften the symptoms of massive menopause Heat. You made her take them daily over 6 months, Kristján. I don't think, you know what you did to her. You might have made her infertile.”

His head shot up with plain panic flashing up in his eyes.

“Don't play with hormones if you don't know how to handle them!” she scolded her brother and saw him hide his face behind his hands when the possibility of having Reba robbed off her fertility sunk in. Kristján leaned against the wall next to the door and sank down to the floor.

“That's not what I wanted,” he whispered and helplessly looked up to Elva's face.

“Well, I wonder what you wanted if not torment and destroy your Omega in less than a year. You might have paid for her but she's still a human being. She's supposed to be your other half and mother of your children which is questionable ever to happen, thanks to your stupidity.”

“Can you help her?” he asked almost too silent to be heard.

Elva let out a deep breath thinking about her answer long and hard.

“I can try a mild hormone therapy but she doesn't even smell like an Omega anymore, Kristján. I
can't promise anything.”

“Oh my God,” he whispered, burying his face in his hands again.

“She needs you.”

“She hates me.”

“And not without reason. Show her affection, show her you care and don't just order her around, give her comfort and, most of all, let her make her own decisions. Don't call her down for saying ... something, anything really. I shouldn't be telling you this because it should go without saying. Treat her like a mate and not like a dog - no, you don't even treat a dog the way you treated her!”

“Yes, I understand, Elva. I've been a giant asshole and I should be in prison.”

She sighed deeply and held out her hand to help him up again.

“Hold your Alpha-ness back until she's remotely comfortable around you again. First she has to trust you than you can start thinking about starting a family with her.”

“If she's even able to conceive now.”

“Yeah, IF she's able,” Elva murmured and let out another heavy sigh, “she told me she has two siblings, one of them an Omega. Why haven't you brought them together yet?”

“I have no idea where they are.”

“As if you of all people couldn't find an Omega,” she snapped at him and lifted an eyebrow. Never in her life had she seen her older brother so upset but he'd deserved every single second of it.

“C'mon, I'm going to give her the next pills in a long row of pills. But this time under medical observation.”

Elva walked back into the examination room where Reba still sat on the plastic chair, quietly sobbing.

“Hey, I'm going to give you something to make you feel better and then you can go home again.”

Elva walked over to a glass cabinet and pulled out a medical sample. She sat back down next to Reba and held out a pill.

“Does he still want me?” Kristján stood by the door and could hardly hear her whisper.

“He does.”

He heard her sobbing and felt a painful pang in his chest, knowing she had rather chosen to kill herself than to stay with him, and now she was sent back home with him. It must've all seem like a spiral deeper into hell for her.

“If you don't want to I won't force you to come home with me,” Kristján murmured, his voice sounded foreign in his own ears, talking completely against his own nature but willing to endure separation if that helped her recover more quickly.

Elva looked over her shoulder to him and couldn't really believe her ears. He was on a good way but abandoning her was only getting her body chemicals more out of tune.
“There's nowhere else I could go.”

“Please take the pill, Rebecca,” Elva ordered, softly stroking up and down the Omega's upper arm to soothe her emotional turmoil a bit through the physical contact. Reba looked down to the little pink, round pill in the Beta's hand and furrowed her brow.

“What is this?”

It neither looked like birth control nor like Heat suppressions. Maybe it was another sort. Reba briefly wondered why she'd even bothered to ask. She would have to take it anyway, no matter what.

“A mild fertility drug to get your hormones back into swing.” She didn't add the "hopefully" at the end of the sentence not wanting to scare her any further. Reba nodded and swallowed the pill. Her stomach still was sore from her suicide attempt a day prior so it hurt a little.

“I would like to see you once a week minimum to see how the new therapy goes. You'll have to take one pill a day. Preferably at the same time as the day before but one or two hours later shouldn't be a problem. Just don't skip one or two days.”

Elva handed her a small box with seven pills in it. Reba took them with wary look. More pills to manipulate and influence her, she thought and sighed. Kristján thanked his sister and wanted to gently put his hand in the small of Reba's back as they walked towards the exit door of the private practice but she winced away, not daring to look up into his face before she scurried over to the black wood door.

This was not the woman he had found in Finewood Academy so many months ago. Kristján had done an awful job as an Alpha. He could be really proud of himself stepping into the footsteps of his father. Good job, Kristján!

When the elevator in their building stopped on their floor, Kristján walked into the apartment with a deep sigh, loosening his dark blue scarf and throwing it on the kitchen counter to his right. They hadn't exchanged a single word on the ride back home. Reba held onto the pill box Elva had given to her almost painfully. Kristján would take care that she took them but would let her have control over it just like his sister had ordered. He stopped in his tracks when he realized he hadn't heard Reba's steps on the polished marble floor behind him.

As he turned around, she was still standing inside the elevator and looked at him uneasily.

“What's wrong?” he asked cautiously.

“I want to go outside.”

“We just came home.” Kristján shut is eyes for a second and took a deep breath.

“Where do you want to go?” he asked a second later. Let her make her own decisions.

Reba was silent for a moment and chewed her lower lip.

“The beach,” she answered so lowly that Kristján almost couldn't understand her. He furrowed his brow but nodded.
“I'm going to change into something warmer and I'd advise you to do the same.” *Show her you care and don't just order her around.* He was trying to follow his sister's advice. “Then we can drive down to the beach.”

Reba didn't move a muscle. “I want to go now.”

She wanted to test her new boundaries and see if he would punish her again. By now she didn't care what he did to her. Somewhere deep inside she almost hoped that when angering him enough, he would snap and kill her with his bare hands. Maybe throw her off the terrace or simply strangle her?

Kristján's hands curled into tight fists but he walked back into the elevator calmly.

“As you wish.”

Within 15 minutes they were out of the tightness of the city and the skyscrapers lay behind them. Reba looked outside the window, nervously wringing her hands with anticipation. She would finally see the beach, the ocean, hear real waves and smell salt in the air. She had such high hopes. Reba dreamed of seeing the beach since she was a little girl and had read about the fierce Alpha Vikings traveling over stormy seas to discover new countries and today a dream would come true.

A light gasp escaped her when they turned around a corner and suddenly there it was. Right in front of her. Glistening in the setting sun, a few ice blocks swimming in them indicating what a cold February it was. The driver stopped at a few stairs leading down to the actual sand beach.

A freezing, merciless wind hit Reba in the face when she exited the car. But she didn't care. The sound of waves quietly rushing against each other and the rocks in the bay filled her mind and soul. This was what she'd always wanted. Reba walked down to the waterline, leaving her car door wide open. Nothing else mattered for her; only the ice blocks peacefully clicking against one another and almost dancing on the moving water.

“It's pretty cold,” Kristján hinted behind her, still standing by the car but she didn't feel the coldness and stinging wind. Reba kept her eyes on the waves as she frantically pulled off her shoes. She wanted to feel the water and the coldness on her skin. It meant feeling something other than pain and forlornness.

“Reba, don't!” He closed his eyes and cursed under his breath. *Show her you care and don't just order her around.* It hadn't been meant as a command and Reba wouldn't have listened to him anyway. She was finally where she'd always wanted to be and nobody would stop her now.

“Please, it's too cold!”

Kristján stood by the stone stairs and pulled his light coat tighter around him. He was freezing and he didn't like the idea of his Omega being more than an inch away from him but the beach was empty, especially now in February. He sighed. And nobody would be interested in her because she didn't even smell like an Omega anymore.

Reba screeched piercingly high when a wave hit her naked feet. It was an alarming sound for Kristján but the loud and happy laugh after it calmed him again. He had never heard her laugh out of pure joy before. Had he known how beautiful it sounded, maybe he would have put more effort in making her as happy as she was right now with the water up to the middle of her shin.

She played with the waves, ran away from them before they could catch her like a carefree child. Reba's eyes were glued to the brownish, ice cold water, and chased it when the water retrieved again. Kristján watched her like a hawk as he slowly walked down the stone stairs to her level. He
shook his head as he watched the sorrow and heaviness lift from her shoulders within mere seconds of being on a cold, windy, empty beach. He could've made her happy so easily, he realized.

Reba was out of breath soon after starting her chasing game with the sea. Kristján waited next her discarded shoes. He stepped from one foot to the other trying to warm himself a bit. If he was already freezing, he couldn't imagine she wasn't feeling anything of the coldness. And he was right. When Reba finally had enough her feet and lips were blue, she shivered but smiled as she caught her breath. He helped her put on her shoes and wanted to go back to the waiting car when Reba protested, “I want to see the sunset.”

So he returned to his spot, perfectly placing his feet into the footprints in the wet sand. Reba stood before him, facing the other way and shivering from the cold. Maybe she would wince away again but he did it anyway; Kristján stepped directly behind her and opened his coat to wrap it and his arms around her. Reba didn't wince. She was almost hypnotized by the orange sky at the horizon.

The warmth of the Alpha behind her was intoxicating after the cold water and biting wind. She leaned back against him and savored the contact. Her mind was at ease and her body always craved his touch ever since he had helped her into her coat right after the auction. And after all he had done to her, after every mean word or merciless glare, she still wanted to be close to him.

“We can come back here whenever you want,” Kristján whispered into Reba's hair.

She sighed contently and nodded. “That would be nice.”

They repeated it every evening the following week after dinner (to which Reba found one of the new pills every day) until the steady rhythm of the waves lost its exclusiveness and appeal to Reba. It was still nice but the coldness and the wind seemed to matter more and more with every repetition. One evening, they sat on a bench up on the promenade and watched the sun slowly sink, Reba turned her head towards Kristján who had his arm loosely draped over the back of the bench behind her. He watched the sunset too.

Reba thought about the massive change that had happened in the last days and turned angry. He had talked to her, made her breakfast and ate it with her, had held her whenever he could and let go if she couldn't bare the closeness to him anymore. He hadn't said one irritated or nasty word to her although she had tried, God knows, she'd tried to piss him off. But Kristján had been like a Buddah, closing his eyes, taking a deep breath and waiting for her to come down from her rage mountain and taking her in his arms when she realized he wouldn't start screaming at her.

“Why couldn't you be like this right from the beginning?” she hissed and felt angry tears rimming her eyes, “why did you have to make me feel like worthless shit before you showed me this side of you?”

Kristján turned his head towards her and she couldn't say it for sure but it seemed he looked guilty for the first time. He remained silent but she wasn't having it.

“I want an answer, Kristján.”

He pulled his arm around her back and fiddled with his watch, looking down at it when he started to talk, »I have no idea. I really don't know why I thought it necessary to call you down for everything you did. When … when I went to the auction, I already knew that I would leave it with you by my side. Maybe I should've put more thought into what I would do as soon as you were mine."
“Yes, you should have,” Reba growled and wiped away a stray tear from her cheek.

“I'm only 36, Reba, I never had one significant relationship in my entire life. I don't have the experience when it comes to things such as love or a relationship.”

“This between us isn't love and this will never be love.” Her voice was strong and left no room for interpretation. She could never love the man who had her almost killed herself because she couldn't bare living with him as her mate any longer. Kristján's face looked younger when he turned to look at her once more. It was the complete opposite of hers.

His eyes almost seemed hurt by her statement and his cheeks appeared to be a bit paler. What did he expect, she asked herself sharply, that she would come crawling into his bed and let him have his will again just because he let her see the beach for a week? No. What he had broken in her could never be fixed ever again.

“So because you are inexperienced I had to suffer and still have to?”

“I'm trying to make it up to you.” Kristján really tried his best to be a good man for and to her but she didn't seem to see that.

“You can't make it up to me, Kristján. Everything you've done, every single mean thing, every snarl, every glare and every wrong purr, all this will always stand between us.”

“Then why are you still here?” he asked louder than intended and his head snapped to her. There was helplessness and anger in his eyes. He blinked once and only the anger remained. “If you will hate me for the rest of your life than why stay with the man you loathe so much?”

“Because you forced a bond on me and I can't get away from you.” Reba was furious from one second to the other. She stood up and paced the concrete pavement between the wall facing the beach and the bench.

“I did not force the bond on you.”

“Of course you did! What else would you call holding me immobile while I'm begging you to stop and you ramming your teeth in me?« Reba had to fight hard not to scream at him. Her pacing got faster. She needed something to let off steam and hitting him was definitely not an appropriate alternative when he started to smell of anger again. One blow from him and she would likely blackout before her head even hit the ground.

“You wanted it!” he countered, “why else would you tell your "friends"--” He even made the sarcastic air quotes. “--that we were already bound to each other?”

“Because everyone else was and they were all swooning about their perfect lives with their loving, devoted Alphas who read them every fucking wish from their eyes! I felt lonely, unloved, and neglected by you. And by the second meeting everyone was pregnant while I wasn't and now I never will be! You made me an outsider of my own kin!”

Angry tears rolled down her cheeks and she turned away from him, muffling a heartbreaking sob with her hands. It felt good to tell him all of this, to have it off her chest for once. It didn't matter if he actually understood how miserable he had made her feel being the only one who couldn't engage in conversation with her friends.

“Would you really have wanted me to manhandle you as soon as we were in the car and bred you like some kind of a brood mare?”
“Yes, because that's what you were suppose to do with an Omega! Breed and have children!” she screamed angrily. Thick tears streamed down her cheeks and dropped onto the concrete under her feet.

“Listen, Reba,” Kristján said calmly after seeing what he'd done, “I told you, I was not very experienced and you are the first person I'm having a serious relationship with – no matter how wrong it feels right now – and I can only promise you that I'm trying my best to make you feel loved and cared for. I never thought you really saw it all like this.”

“How else was I supposed to have seen this? You bought me for a fortune only to be an asshole to me, force a bond on me because I said the wrong thing, you put me on birth control without my consent and then you drugged me with Heat suppressions. Please, tell me how else I should've interpreted all of this?”

“What about the home I gave you, the clothes you wear, the food you eat? I provided for you. Whatever you wanted, you got it from me.”

She sniveled and watched the waves hit the beach in a steady rhythm. It was making her calmer again before she retorted, “I wanted you. I wanted company without snarled comments. I wanted conversation without patronizing. I wanted a bond with my consent. I wanted to get to know you before you bound with me.”

“That's exactly what I wanted, Reba.” He sounded tired and when Reba turned around again she saw him sitting hunched over on the bench, burying his face in his hands.

“You never gave me a chance to get to know you. I don't even know you now. A bit over a week ago, you told me out of the blue you had a sister although you had plenty of time in the last 10 months.” She was turning angry again. “You want to have control over everything because otherwise you feel powerless and weak. I've been controlled over my entire life. People have ordered when to eat, when to sleep, when to shower. I was used to control, Kristján, but they treated me with respect and acknowledged that I was an individual. You wanted a toy, so you got yourself one but you grew tired of me very early like a spoiled child! Your mother must be very proud of her bright and flawless son!”

It was like she'd hit a button. Within a split second Kristján was on his feet; hot, red anger making his breath heavy.

“I am your Alpha. We are bound to each other and right now I am extremely patient with you. Don't you dare call me a bad Alpha when my intentions have been nothing but the best! Yes, I am volatile and skittish and I'm trying my best to change that for you but you're not making it very easy for me when all I do is run against walls.”

The conversation was over with that. Kristján walked to the waiting car and barked at her from inside that if she didn't want to walk back home, she'd better get in the backseat at once. Reba contemplated risking it and seeing what he would do if she didn't obey, but he was angry enough as it was. She didn't need to add oil into the flame.

At home, he locked himself in his office and only left it way after midnight to go to bed. Reba was still watching TV in the living room and looked at him over her shoulder. She wished him a good night but was only met with disregard. He was still seething and that didn't change for the next two weeks.

When Reba had almost grown accustomed to being completely ignored by him and slowly feeling herself detach from reality again in favor of her own mind, Kristján talked to her again.
It wasn't an apology but it was damn close, “I know, I've made huge mistakes and I'm not sure we will ever really manage to be a normal couple but I think our bond is worth at least trying to make it work. No matter if forced or wanted, we are all the other will ever have as a mate.”

Reba lay down the spoon she’d just used to stir the soup, wiped her hands clean on a kitchen cloth and walked into Kristján's open arms. She’d missed the physical contact and the sound of his voice more than she was willing to admit to herself. Even if she didn't want to acknowledge it just yet, he was right and they really were everything they had for each other. He would always be her Alpha and she would always be his Omega.

“Dinner is ready in 5 minutes,” she mumbled into his chest and took a deep breath. She had also missed his scent. It still managed to give her a sense of home and safety. She wondered what he smelled when he took a deep breath. Reba knew she had lost her scent somewhere between her Cold Heat and her suicide attempt. It wasn't even there faintly, no, it was just gone.

“Then you should let go of me so I can set the table,” she heard him say and relished the vibration of his voice in his chest. She shook her head. Two weeks of treating her like she was air and he wanted to get away again? No way. She closed her arms tighter around him, listened to his steady heartbeat and calm rhythm of his breathing.
Four weeks after starting the hormone therapy nothing had changed. Well, Kristján had. A lot. Even before the "fight" on the beach. Now he was considerate, kind, gentle and all in all everything she had always wanted him to be. But Reba couldn't shake off the feeling that it was all just a well put together show for his younger sister who actually seemed very nice and sincere.

Nobody changed that easy! It was all just too much of a difference to what Reba had gotten to know before she'd tried to kill herself.

On their scheduled medical meetings Elva even managed to make Reba smile when she was with her once a week, sometimes more often when the good doctor ordered so. Mostly, when Reba seemed down during their scheduled meetings. Then they didn't meet for medical reasons; just so Reba had someone to talk to and get away from being alone or with Kristján.

Reba found out that Elva was actually just Kristján's half-sister, sharing the same Alpha father but not the same mother. Any further questions in that direction were usually ignored or only answered unsatisfyingly. It was almost as if she wasn't allowed to learn something about Kristján's parents. Reba remembered how his mood had changed on the beach after she had mentioned his mother. Maybe there was some tragedy hidden behind the walls of silence and tight smiles. Perhaps, she would break these walls down in time, or maybe they were too thick to be destroyed.

"Have you visited friends from academy lately?" Elva asked after a heated discussion why blueberries were called blueberries and not purpleberries, even though they left purple stains and not blue ones. It had been one of those topics that came up when Reba was trying to sneak out an answer about their parents but Elva had kept her mouth shut. The smile on Reba's face faded as she shook her head no as an answer to her sister-in-law's question.

"Why not? You're a funny, friendly person. I'm sure you had tons of friends at Finewood."

"Actually, just one," she confessed, smiling faintly and then told Elva everything about Scarlett; how they had met on Scarlett's first day and how they had "bonded" over a book she had read, sitting in a corner and trying not to attracted anyone's attention.

"Maybe you should visit her."

Maybe...

"Maybe you should," Kristján said the same evening after Reba had reported of her day with his sister during dinner. He had had a very important meeting with business associates (millions of Dollars and thousands of jobs were at risk, his own urgent words) and so they had had a meeting alone, just the two women and the doctor's office.

"You would just let me go into another Alpha's house?" Reba furrowed her brows suspiciously.

"Well, I know Henry because he is one of my business associates so I trust him … to a certain extent. And, sad but true,-- His eyes turned guilty and sad and Reba knew exactly what he wanted to say next as he scanned her body at the dinner table, so she did it, "I don't smell like an Omega anymore, so he wouldn't be attracted to me while having a functioning Omega as a mate."
“Yes. That and he wouldn't want to piss me off because I'm practically his boss.” He tried making that sound like the main reason but they both knew better.

She had lost her appetite. Reba excused herself and walked inside her bedroom to curl up in bed. He followed her only minutes later and sat down on the edge of her bed. With a feather light hand, he stroked a few strands out of her face.

“What do you want?” He had started asking this question a few weeks ago when he wasn't sure if she wanted his comfort or not. Today, Reba wanted it so she scooped over and allowed him to lay down next to her. She cuddled closer before he was even done with toeing off his shoes.

“You really think I should visit her? I was such a bitch when I last saw her.”

“She's your friend. You shared a lot with each other. I'm sure, she will forgive you,” Kristján tried to soothe her, “but I won't force you to go to her. If you don't want to, you don't have to.”

Two weeks of ponderingly chewing her lower lip, Reba had decided to go and try to fix the bond between her and Scarlett. After all they were best friends and maybe she could help her occupy her mind with something else than her missing scent and the fact that she had to take useless fertility drugs, at least until now they didn't seem to work.

“I want to visit her.”

“Who?” Kristján asked hunched over a few documents in Spanish. Probably from his business associates from South America she mused.

“Scarlett, I would like to visit her.”

He checked his watch. “It's pretty late already but alright.”

Kristján already reached for the phone to call ahead when she stopped him. “No, I meant tomorrow.”

He put the phone back and turned around to her. “At what time? I have a meeting with one of my head engineers from Argentina tomorrow and after that a social thing I have to go to.”

“Oh, do you want me to come with you? To the social thing, I mean.”

He shook his head with a deep sigh. “No, I would rather not go myself.”

Reba noticed he was pinching the bridge of his nose again. He seemed to have headaches constantly lately, or not just lately but always?

“Maybe you should go and see a doctor for that,” she suggested gesturing to his hurting head. He immediately stopped the pinching and crossed his arms over his chest.

“It's just stress from work. Already went to a doctor. He told me to take a holiday.” Kristján snorted as if holidays were the most stupid thing in the world. Reba didn't tell him that a little holiday might not be the worst for him, for them actually.

“So, when would you be free tomorrow?”

“Shortly after waking up and briefly before going to sleep again?”

Her mouth formed a silent "oh" and she looked down to her feet. “Well, I guess another day then. I'll
make dinner.”

She turned to leave when Kristján called her back.

“You don't need me to go and see a friend, Reba. I will give you money for a taxi and you can go by
yourself.”

“Alone?” she almost screamed in shock. “You still won't let me place a single foot on the terrace but
you would let me drive through the whole city all alone?”

“It's not "through the whole city". Henry practically lives three blocks down the street. You could
even walk from here … which I would ask you not to do because then I would start worrying that
you could get robbed or run over by a taxi or something.”

His sister would be proud of him. Giving her the power of choice and asking her to do certain things
rather than ordering her around. Well, but it wasn't like he climbed Mount Everest with his hands
cuffed together behind his back. What he did now should have been custom right from the
beginning. Reba still needed to get used to "the new Kristján" as he presented himself now.

“And how much money would you give me?”

“200 Dollar should be enough for the fair and maybe a little guest present.”

“Enough to go and come back again but not enough to get away for good,” Reba thought aloud and
nodded unconsciously. He had heard her strange comment and furrowed his brow.

“If you want more money, you could simply ask.”

“No matter how much?” She almost looked fierce and watched him dig into his pocket and pull out
his wallet.

“How much?” he snickered and counted the 100-Dollar bills in his hands.

“40 million.”

His smirk faltered for a second but he didn't say no, only lifts his eyebrows and put his wallet away
again.

“Well, that would cost me a very interesting call to my financial manager and my lawyer but, okay.”
He sounded honest and almost like this sum meant nothing to him. How could this fortune mean
nothing to him?

“You would give me such a sum, just like it was a handkerchief?” she asked slowly.

“If you want it, yes, Reba. I'm worth billions. I think, you don't even know how much money sits on
my bank account and I'm getting richer every day. I could buy-” He looked at the antique, brownish
globe in the corner of his office. “-well, Australia, I guess.”

Reba stared at him with wide eyes. He wasn't joking. At least he didn't sound like it.

“Then why do you work so much if you're already that insanely rich?” she wanted to know with a
thin voice. Reba had never wasted one thought to his wealth. The only thing important was that it
was there to provide her a carefree life.

“Because what else would I be doing? I would bore myself to death without something I could wake
up to every morning.”
“Well, you didn't seem to mind doing the exact thing with me,” Reba snapped, closed her eyes and spoke before he could react, “I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring it up again. I take the two hundred and would ask you to take a taxi and let me have the car tomorrow. I think, I would feel safer like that.”

He accepted her compromise and handed her the money. She thanked him and went off to make dinner.

The next morning he woke her to say goodbye for the day and wish her a nice time with her friend.

“When will you be back from your thing approximately? Maybe you could drive to Scarlett and we pick up something to eat on our way home,” she suggested, yawning and stretching like a cat in her bed.

“Sounds like a very good idea.” He kissed her on the forehead and left her room.

Reba got ready, taking a shower and standing in front of her wardrobe, thinking hard about what she should wear until something on the chaise longue caught her eye. It was a white, narrow box with a silvery crest on top of it. She had never seen it before and walked over to it cautiously. There was a note on the side table next to it.

For your visit, was written on it in Kristján's flowing handwriting. Reba started smiling, already guessing that he had bought her something to wear. Like he knew full well that she would be hopeless in finding something among her things, she would want to wear for such a special occasion.

Inside the box was a jade-green dress made from soft silk. It was divine in its simplicity and cut, hugging her curves like a second skin and making her look like a goddess. She loved it! Reba would thank him as soon as they saw each other in the evening.

The chauffeur was already waiting for her downstairs when Reba walked outside. She had to hide a triumphant smile when she noticed him staring. She would never let another man but Kristján touch her but she felt desirable when other men looked at her like the chauffeur did just now.

He kept stealing glances of her in the rare view mirror on the drive to a nearby flower shop. Reba picked Scarlett's favorite flowers, snow white orchids, and kneaded her sweaty hands as the driver closed the small distance between the flower shop and her friend's home.

In the apartment in one of the other polished skyscrapers here in Flint, Reba's nervousness was almost too much to bear. When she knocked on the door her heart was beating up into her neck, trying to leap out of her body from excitement, and a churning feeling in her stomach was showing up out of the blue to top it all. Henry opened the door and smiled warmly at her.

“Finally, we get to know each other,” he greeted her and continued, “Scarlett and Kristján talk about you almost the entire day and I never got to talk to you. I actually have the feeling I already know you by heart.”

Reba stared at him with wide eyes. That Scarlett had talked about her had been pretty much obvious as she was her best (and sadly only) friend but Kristján? That was unexpected. She handed him the orchids and thanked him for letting her visit.

“Please, Scarlett was almost heartbroken when you didn't visit her in hospital.”

“Hospital?” she gasped and started worrying.
Henry furrowed his grey eyebrows. “Of course, when she gave birth to Olivia.”

Olivia? As if that was her cue a baby started wailing further inside the big apartment. Of course, Scarlett had been pregnant when she had last seen her at their second Omega meeting. How long ago was that? Six months? No, longer. 7 months and a bit.

The crying got louder when Scarlett approached them with the stirring baby in her arms. Her face was flushed but she looked so happy, Reba would’ve rather left again. The smell of the baby made her chest clench tightly. Like a painful reminder that she still had to get her own one. A metaphorical biological clock Betas had was nothing compared to the physical pain Reba felt right now.

“I have to feed her real quick. How about you sit down in the living room and I'll be with you in a few seconds?”

“Sure,” Reba answered with a shaking voice.

Where was Kristján when she needed him? She was all alone in a strange apartment and she felt like dissolving into tear before she was even there for more than a minute. Reba wanted to smell him or reach for his hand to steady herself. No, she wouldn't have to reach for it. He would've already reached for hers sensing her inner turmoil and need for physical contact.

But he wasn't here and she wanted to spend time with her best friend. Reba followed Henry as he showed her into the warm and cozy living room.

“I'm afraid, I have to leave you alone from now on. Work, if you understand.”

“Of course, Kristján is also always working when he's home.”

The second she said it, she wished she'd just kept her mouth shut. Henry would probably tell him what she'd said and then, well … punishment for talking about private matters would follow, or not? It was nobody's business what he did when he was home or alone with her. She had learned from past mistakes. Henry only laughed as if it was nothing new to him that Kristján would love to move into his office if he hadn’t had someone to come home to every night, meaning Reba.

She took a seat on the light leather couch and smiled when Henry wished her a lot of fun with his two girls before he left her alone. Reba swallowed thickly when she saw Scarlett come closer with her baby in her arms only a few minutes later. She was smiling proudly from ear to ear.

“This is Olivia,” she announced proudly and handed Reba the little baby girl. She still remembered everything she had ever learned during the nursing lessons (or maybe it was just her instincts kicking in). Scarlett sat down next to her and was completely smitten with her daughter while Reba was at the brink of shattering. Her heart was beating as if something was chasing her.

This baby in her arms was so beautiful and just as a baby should be. A few blond hairs already covering her head. Her cheeks were full and rosy, her eyes were closed and she was completely content with everything around her.

“Isn't she adorable?”

Reba nodded silently. Her attention was solely directed to the little baby in her arms. Reba's biology told her she was supposed to keep her warm and safe, and do everything for her to grow up to be a happy child, her happy child. A deep pain hit her like a fist right into the chest. Reba handed Olivia back to her mother and tried not to show how devastated she was, again knowing that she might never have a baby herself.
“Yes, she is beautiful. Just like her mother,” Reba said quietly and faked a smile. Scarlett was way too occupied with her baby to even look at her best friend.

“Would you like to be her godmother? You are my best friend and I would love to be around you more often. And I think Olivia would benefit from being around you too. You could teach her all about history,” Scarlett rambled blissfully and made faces at Olivia when she opened her brown eyes.

Reba wanted to say yes. It was her first instinct to accept her offer but that would mean being around Olivia, obviously. The pain she felt right now would probably never die down again with a child around her that wasn't hers.

In the end Reba sighed and Scarlett finally looked up into her friend's face.

“What's wrong?”

Reba wanted to wave it off but Scarlett had deserved the truth.

“I don't think I can have children anymore, Scarlett. I … I lost my scent due to-” Private matters. “-stuff that happened over the last months.”

“I had already missed you at the third Omega meeting. I had thought you might have something going on with your Alpha.”

“Well, somehow I did,” Reba sniveled but refused to tell her the details, the cruelty Kristján had shown and the ruthlessness she still couldn't really wrap her head around. “I just … I just wanted you to know that if I act strange around Olivia, it's because of that and not because of her or you.”

Scarlett gave her one of her sympathetic looks and nodded, not asking for any details. Reba was so grateful for that and actually came to enjoy spending time with her, although Scarlett seemed to have no other topic to talk about than the birth and Olivia in general.

In the evening, Reba wanted to go home again and they agreed on meeting in a week. Kristján would be okay with it, she thought. He was … good now.

When Reba walked to the waiting car, she already saw Kristján sitting in the back seat. Her stomach sank when she noticed him drumming his fingers irritated against the window. His social thing, it seemed, hadn't gone too well.

Reba considered going back upstairs but the longer she kept him waiting, the worse it would get.

“I'm sorry, have you been waiting long?” she asked with a forced smile that started to feel way too familiar today, and slid into the back seat.

“Drive,” Kristján barked at the driver but didn't answer her question. He was vibrating with anger again and Reba's heart started pounding. Hopefully he wouldn't snap. This reminded her all too much of the ride home from Finewood Academy. She didn't want her torture to start again.

“What's wrong?” he hissed next to her when she couldn't stop a sob from creeping its way up her throat. Reba silently shook her head and kept her eyes fixed on her hands in her lap. She was kneading them again like she'd done on her way to Scarlett earlier today. She heard him sigh loudly and almost winced when he put his hand between her palms to calm her down again.
There, she'd known it. He was pissed, obviously but he still wanted to comfort her. Now that she thought about it, that was exactly what he'd done 11 months ago on their way home. She traced over his knuckles and noticed they were bruised. She furrowed her brows. Had he been in a fight again? He didn't show any signs of receiving a hit. Maybe she was just mistaking.

“What is wrong, Reba?” he repeated, trying to sound calm.

She didn't want to risk telling him he was the reason for her current sobs because he might pull his hand away again feeling accused of something. So, Reba settled for the other thing that had brought her down today: Babies.

“You knew about Olivia, right?”

“Henry talks about nothing else,” he rasped, “did she ask you about being their daughter's godmother?”

She nodded and sniveled silently.

“And your answer?”

“I asked Scarlett to give me a week to decide after telling her what's … wrong with me.”

Kristján's head snapped around to her within a split second. “What did you tell her?”

“I only said that I probably can't have children. Nothing about why or because of whom.”

The air suddenly filled with the smell of boiling anger.

“You don't know if you can't have children, for fuck's sake!” he shouted and started pinching the bridge of his nose with his free hand.

Reba watched him closely although she wanted to cower her head again. Beneath the anger, he looked tired and exhausted. “Headaches again?”

“No, I just think I look smarter when I do that!” Kristján took a deep breath and squeezed her hands in his. “Sorry, I had long day.”

“How was your social thing?” she asked and felt him tense up again. The hold of her hands became uncomfortably tight and his features grew darker.

“Perfect.” Somehow she didn't want to believe that and squeezed his hand on her lap lightly. Only then he eased his own grip and turned his head to her. Reba's sobs had died down again, feeling more worried about her mate than her own problems. All hail to the bond, although replacing one worry with another wasn't exactly the best of ideas.

Kristján kept on pinching the bridge of his nose when he started talking, “It was something quite similar to your "social" thing today. Only that I had to make a straight face while my old friend from university kept on talking about his perfect little Alpha boy and that he would only need an Omega daughter now and he would feel like a God.”

Kristján hissed the last part and sighed heavily. Reba squeezed his hand again. The only comfort she could give him or was willing to give.

“You're not the only one who suffers under somebody else's happiness,” he whispered and the car drove into the garage under their building. Somehow it would've been the right thing to hug him and
let them comfort each other but Reba felt a nauseating pain rise inside her. She wouldn't have to suffer, they wouldn't have to suffer, if he hadn't been such an asshole to her.

“Maybe you deserve this,” she murmured on the elevator ride up. Kristján slowly turned his head towards her. His eyes were ice cold but he didn’t say a word. The silence was his new weapon. He used silence to punish her (and evidently himself, too, but he was willing to do it to make a point).

None of them was hungry this afternoon and evening. Kristján tried distracting himself with work and Reba read the book that Scarlett had given her as a little present. It was a love story which only made Reba cry and throw the damn book in the corner. The sound alarmed him and he checked on her. Reba sat on the couch, her knees up to her chin and her face hidden in the crook of her elbow. She smelled him coming closer, felt his hand warm on her shoulder, and eventually let him pull her into a tender embrace.

“Maybe visiting Scarlett wasn't such a good idea after all,” he whispered but Reba shook her head against his chest.

“No, she's my best friend.”

“But if it only makes you sad-”

“No,” she pulled away with tears streaming down her face, “everything makes me sad! The pills I have to take that seem to have no impact at all, the children I see on the street whenever I have to see Elva, you!”

She shut herself up and pushed against his chest to get free.

“I'm tired,” she claimed before he could say a word, and walked into her bedroom to be alone. He had isolated himself from her so many months and now it was her turn. But she couldn't just go to work or to the gym or something like he had done and still did. She wanted to be alone but still around him so that the vice in her chest wouldn't try to suffocate her all the time. This whole day had been a mess. Her entire life was a great, fucking mess!

While she disappeared inside her little sanctuary, Kristján was left alone with the feeling of utter failure creeping up his spine. He tortured himself with the memories of her attempts to be nice and start conversation with him over and over again in the beginning. He had never been much of a talker and she had been a stranger to him.

If he'd learned anything from his father, than that strangers are always a threat! The only things you tell them are the things they need know to work in your favor. Up until now it had always worked out for Kristján. But now it had endangered and potentially destroyed his chances of parenthood and even the slightest chance of a harmonic relationship with his Omega.

And those nagging headaches were terrorizing him too, leaving him short-tempered and moody. Under which Reba had to suffer again, of course! God, he needed a mental eraser for bad memories or a time machine to get another chance and make this work. But the last time he checked something like that had not been on the market yet and sadly that probably wouldn't change so fast.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry to all Australians but in my world there are a few abandoned countries and only about 50% of our world's population populating the earth, meaning that the overall economic worth of a country drops severely and I needed to emphasize his ridiculous wealth here.
A month later, she had missed her first Heat after starting with her new hormone therapy. Elva hadn't really been able to help her because the only thing her sister-in-law had said had been, “Things like these need time and patience. Bodies aren't machines.”

Reba's had been one once. A clockwork when it had come to her Heats. She didn't mention it, it wouldn't change anything. Kristján hadn't been a great help either. Even though he tried his hardest. Reba had to give him that. He was the perfect gentleman again, made breakfast, even brought it right into her bedroom if she felt like having breakfast in bed, was always there for her when she felt like cuddling (not even work was more important to him anymore) and wordlessly left when she didn't. Yet, at one point he had raised his voice again.

“Get out of bed and do something! Anything! You can't stay in bed forever!” he had yelled after Reba had refused to get out of bed for a week straight.

He'd ripped away her blanket and let it fall to the floor. Memories of how he'd had taken her nest had flooded her brain and she'd dissolved into tears by the sight of the large blanket on the grey carpet floor. Kristján had instantly noticed his mistake and put the blanket back to where it belonged. But he'd still wanted her to stop dwelling in self-pity and sink deeper into depression.

It had worked, somehow. Reba had finally managed to do something productive today. She'd washed her bedding and put on new one while the other one was in the washer. It smelled fresh and like a beginning; a promise to the future. But when she'd wanted to arrange the amounts of pillows and duvets she'd dissolved into tears. Why should someone who would never breed have a nest? Nests were made to keep the Alpha and Omega "safe" during their most vulnerable time. At least in the stone age it had done that. But now? They had buildings to shelter them from wind, rain, snow and ice ... and Reba would never be vulnerable again. Not alone, not with Kristján, or any other person or dynamic. She'd put away all the bedding except for one pillow and one blanket. Even Kristján used more pillows but she didn't need them anymore.

Reba heard noises coming from the living room just as she had put the unneeded blankets and pillows away. One quick glance at the clock on her nightstand and she furrowed her brows. Kristján shouldn't be home for at least another hour. But it must be him. Nobody else had a keycard for their apartment as far as she knew. When she opened the door she smelled food and her stomach awoke.

She'd skipped lunch today trying not to interrupt her work-mode when she'd done her laundry.

“Kristján?” she said loudly and receive a cheerful, “Come down, I brought food!” as an answer. And he had brought tons of food. The whole coffee table in the living room was covered in white plastic food containers and bags.

“Are we expecting guests?”

He sat on the couch and grinned. “No, sit down. I brought you your favorite.”

Canneloni. God, she loved them. Within seconds she sat next to him and relished the first bite of the filled noodles.

“But why so much food?” she eventually asked with her mouth full with juicy meat and rich bechamel sauce.
“I won't be able to eat while I'm on the Hunt.”

Reba almost choked and slapped his hand away violently when he offered her a glass of water to help clear her throat.

“You have to be kidding me.”

“No, I wanted to tell you tonight so you don't ask yourself where I am the next three days. I will take part in tomorrow’s Hunt.”

What?!

“No, you won't. What about my appointment with your sister tomorrow?” Reba said, trying to stay calm while her Alpha told her he planned on raping drugged and forced Omegas like it was nothing. He stopped eating and looked at her with an angry glare. She had almost missed it. Almost. But this time she wouldn't cower under it. The Hunt was the worst thing that could happen to an Omega and her Alpha would not take part in such a degrading and unhuman mass rape!

“You can take a taxi and, yes, I will go to the Hunt.”

“No, you won't! You are my Alpha and I will not allow you to rape Omegas just for fun.”

“I am not raping them,” he snorted and put down his fork. This discussion seemed to need his undivided attention. He could still eat after being done with this ridiculous conversation.

“Yes, you are. Omegas in the Hunt have not consented to anything that happens to them!”

“Oh please, spare me the Omega rights speech, okay? Better them than you, or do you volunteer?”

She had to stand up and get a few steps of distance between them. Reba simply couldn't believe her ears.

“Are you telling me that either you fuck me or you start pumping your seed in every Omega's womb that pops up in front of you? What kind of a man are you?!?” she screamed furious. How could he be such a monster and seem so wonderful only seconds prior? She wanted to spit out the cannelloni he had bought for her while stuffing himself with enough food to survive the fuck-a-thon he had planned for the next three days.

“What kind of a man I am?” He stood up himself now and started screaming at her like she screamed at him. “I am the man who hasn't had any kind of sexual contact with his bonded Omega for more than five fucking long months! And why? Because I'm still waiting for you to "feel like it". I did everything to make you feel loved and cared for. I bring you breakfast if you only as much as snap your fingers at me.”

She wanted to protest that she had never ever snapped her fingers at him but he didn't let her say a single word before continuing, “I'm feeling like a teddy bear that has no needs himself. Have you even once asked me how I feel with all this?”

“All this?!” she screeched, “you fucking asshole had had enough one-sided fun with my body! I was your fuck toy so you can be my goddamn teddy bear!”

“But I'm not.” His face was red, his eyes cold and his chest was heaving under his heavy breath. “I can't live without sex. I am an Alpha. It's in my nature to mate!”

“And it's in my nature to have Heats every 3 months and bare children but you didn't "feel like it"
and made me potentially infertile! You will not mate anyone! You took my right to have children from me and I'm now taking your right to produce children from you."

“You can't just forbid me to go to the Hunt, Reba.”

“Yes, I can. We are bound and you can't go to the Hunt while you're having mate!”

“Nobody needs to know that little detail,” he said his voice suddenly so calm it made a cold shower run down Reba's back.

“That "little detail" is me!” she shouted. Her muscles shook from absolute rage.

“But you won't let me have you! You won't even let me try to purr for you.”

“You used it to manipulate me, Kristján!”

“Well, a little manipulation doesn't seem so misplaced right now. Or are you feeling like spreading your legs for your Alpha lately?”

“No, and who's fault is that?” Reba hissed and gave him the single most hateful glare she ever produced. Kristján suddenly stalked towards her and a deep, familiar rumble from his chest filled the air. Her hand landed sharply on his cheek, meant to leave an angry red mark on his skin, and the purring died down again. For a second none of them could grasp that she had actually slapped him.

“Don't you dare ever trying to purr at me again,” she whispered and rushed up into her bedroom before her tears could fall in front of him.

The next morning Reba was feeling like shit. She had been angry at him a lot but they had never shouted at each other like yesterday. He hadn't tried talking to her again and she hadn't felt like seeing him or being anywhere close to him. Sleep hadn't come easily to her with her mind circling around what Kristján would do today.

She stayed in bed longer than usual to avoid seeing him leave. Maybe she should just leave. If he didn't care about their bond any more, why should she? Maybe now that she was broken, nobody would pester her for her dynamic. She could have a job, perhaps as a nurse in a hospital or in a retirement home. Maybe she could live like a Beta and eventually forget that she had ever been an Omega once.

Reba dragged her feet down the stairs and into the kitchen, preparing herself a cup of hot chocolate for her own internal comfort. She sighed deeply when she glanced at the clock on the microwave. 10:23 am. He had probably just started stalking after an Omega with a rich scent and fertile, leaking cunt, she thought bitterly and sighed again. When he would return, he will reek of them. Reba cursed under her breath. She had to stop thinking about it. It would only make her angry and sad to think about him with other fertile Omegas while she was at home and as dry as a desert.

Suddenly she felt warm hands on her hips and a forehead leaning against the back of her head. She hadn't even heard him approach.

“Good morning,” Kristján rasped lowly, more a rumble than actual words.

“Why aren't you hunting?” she whispered, closing her eyes and relishing the feeling of closeness to him despite all the anger and disappointment she had been feeling only seconds before.
This is my place. You are my mate. I… I don't know what came over me yesterday. I am so sorry, Reba.”

She turned around and looked up into his face. For the first time, he actually looked sorry. But could she actually believe him? What kept him from going to the next Hunt without telling her? Or maybe he would simply start an affair with a willing Beta. Her bitter thoughts kept her from really accepting his apology or recognizing it as sincere and honest.

“Your sister is expecting us in an hour and I want to take a shower and get ready until 11am.”

He didn't try to get a reaction out of her, just let her go and waited for her to get downstairs again ready to go and see his sister. They didn't talk on their drive to the private practice. He didn't touch her because she didn't want him to. They continued being solitary islands in themselves even inside the examination room.

“So, how are you today? I sense something that isn't feeling too good in the air,” Elva said smiling warily into one cheek while letting his eyes wander from Reba in her chair to Kristján standing by the door.

“How did you sleep, Reba?”

“Not good,” she answered, not lifting her eyes from her hands on her lap.

“Why not?” Elva noticed a little shift in the way her brother stood. It looked almost guilty. Something she hadn't seen too often in him although knowing him for 31 years now. This could only mean he had fucked up badly.

“What did he do?” The question was shot like a bullet. He looked at her as if saying "Why does it have to be my fault?" but he knew it was.

“Kristján wanted to go to today's Hunt because I don't want to sleep with him,” Reba explained calmly. It was like she was moving back into her internal walls that she had built over the last year and that were so hard to deconstruct. Kristján was sure after yesterday he had involuntarily built them up a bit stronger again.

Elva's jaw dropped the second she heard that. She looked at him and shook her head. He was unbelievable sometimes. “Do you have problems with your wrist?”

“No.” He furrowed his brow, not really seeing where she was getting at.

“Then jerk off, for god's sake!”

Kristján rolled his eyes. “I am here, am I not?”

“You shouldn't even think about going to the Hunt when your mate is at home and struggling!”

Reba sighed deeply and got up. “I'll wait in the car.”

“No, Reba, please sit down again,” Elva ordered but she shook her head.

“If you want to scream and shout at him, fine. But I already had my share of that yesterday and I would rather wait in the car than listen to it all again.”

And with that she was gone. Kristján had simply stood there doing nothing but watch his unmoving feet on the tile floor.
“Don't you want to follow her?”

“Why? She's right. We came he together because I had my first real fight with my Omega yesterday and didn't go to the Hunt today. But instead of talking about why I am such and insufferable asshole, we wanted to know if anything changed and if you might have an idea what might help us.”

“Nothing changed? You haven't noticed any change in her behavior? She isn't more tired or something lately?”

“No,” he answered and narrowed his eyes at her, “why?”

“Because I started giving her a higher dose three weeks ago.”

“And you didn't see it necessary to inform us. Sure, why would you? In the end you're the doctor here.” His voice was dripping with sarcasm.

“I wanted to see if it might help without informing her and having to tell her now that it didn't work.” Elva sighed and walked over to her medicine cabinet in the corner. “Maybe these one will do the trick. They are new and work with a slightly altered formula. The same instructions as with her previous ones.”

He looked at the pills she handed him. They looked exactly like those she took at the moment.

“Shall I tell her about the meds change or would you rather I keep that to myself like you did?”

Elva narrowed her eyes at him now. “Don't you dare lecture me today after what you did again. It was going so well and you managed to blow it all up again in one evening.”

“Yes, thank you. I almost missed that part,” he sneered and put the meds into his coat pocket.

Elva hurt for him. She knew, he was trying so hard but somehow he always ended up making a giant mess.

“Actually, I'm happy I get to talk to you alone. Have you found her siblings yet or are you even searching for them?”

“I'm on it.”

“You found Reba in less than a day when you wanted her. You're lazy because you think you can do it all by yourself and that she only needs you in her life. What about her friend?”

“Reba doesn't talk about Scarlett or her family when she comes back from them. I have the feeling that she's hurting a little more every time she comes home after visiting them.” Kristján sighed heavily. This was all just terrible.

“Have you ever talked to her about that?”

He shook his head and closed his eyes. He hadn't slept well last night either, constantly thinking what an idiot he was and how "normal" their little fight had actually felt. This is what they should have done instead of him screaming and shouting and her ducking her head between her shoulders while cowering in the corner.

Reba waited in the car and drew little shapes on the breath-clouded windows. The driver stood outside and smoked. His third cigarette since she sat down here. He didn't speak with her which she was very happy about. She was not in the mood for company; the main reason she'd left Kristján and
Elva alone upstairs.

The radio played a nice love song but for Reba it was pure mockery. She had never been a hopeless romantic like Scarlett who created love greater than God himself in her books and short stories. And she had actually found in Henry her Napoleon to her Josephine. Reba fought hard not to hate her friend for her luck and happiness.

Kristján's return woke her from her thoughts. He pulled a round, clear pill box out of his coat pocket and held it out to her.

“I still got enough until our next scheduled meeting,” she said quietly and resumed steaming up the window and drawing squares and triangles with the pad of her little finger.

“These are a different sort. The others obviously didn't help. We're trying these here and see if they work.”

“We? I never saw you swallowing fertility drugs which seem to have no impact at all,” Reba snarled. She could see his tired face in the reflection of the window. He closed his eyes and sighed deeply.

“You will never stop reminding me that this is all my fault, won't you?” he whispered and sounded miserable.

“I don't want you to forget.”

“I will never forget, Reba.”

She turned around to face him and met sorrowful eyes looking down to the pills in his hand. He might feel sorry but he had never apologized to her once, Reba thought and turned her head away again.

“Here,” he offered her the pills once more, “you're old enough to handle your medication yourself. Same instructions as with the previous ones.”

Reba eyed them like a venomous snake. She was so fed up with taking pills. She took them from his hand and rolled them between her palms until the driver finally pulled out of the parking lot. They stayed silent until they were home again.

“Your 20th birthday is in a month. Do you want to have a party?”

“No.” Reba kicked off her shoes and was already on her way back into her bedroom.

“Do you have any wishes?”

She stopped in her tracks half way up the stairs. “Turn back time and let the other Alpha have me.” Reba left, not waiting for an answer or reaction.
They finished the old pills off before starting the new ones. Elva warned that Reba could experience extreme mood swings, a nervous stomach, or extreme tiredness. And Reba really suffered from the nervous stomach. It was almost like morning sickness. Kristján called Elva on the 12th day Reba vomited her heart out and she came down immediately with yet another set of pills.

“I'm sick of it! I don't want to take pills anymore. I'm infertile, okay? No goddamn pill can change that,” Reba cried angrily and buried her face in her hands. Kristján sat next to her on their couch and lay a hand on her back. She leaned against his chest and continued crying there.

“Please, don't make me take more pills,” she sobbed and felt his arms tighten around her. His heart pounded inside his chest under her cheek. He ached from seeing his Omega suffer so much but he couldn't stop fighting just yet. If there was still hope they wouldn't give up. Kristján exchanged a long, meaningful look with Elva who still held the new pills in her hand.

“I just leave them here and you can decide whether you want to continue with a new therapy or not. These ones have no effect on the stomach but share the other side effects like your current ones, Reba. I sincerely hope you will try at least one last time.”

Reba only sobbed louder. She simply couldn't take it anymore. Why would none of them understand that she was tired of running against walls?

“Thank you, Elva,” Kristján sighed and saw her leaving with a nod. He held Reba until her sobs had died down again and only let go when she stirred in his embrace. It must've been an hour or maybe two. He wiped her smudged mascara off her cheeks with his thumb and looked down into her still puffy, red face on his chest.

“We will talk about the new pills tomorrow, alright?”

She nodded and cuddled closer again. Reba closed her eyes when he turned on the TV as background noise. Soon after the evening news, Reba fell asleep in his arms. Kristján buried his nose in her black hair and pulled away again with a disappointed sigh. She still smelled like nothing. It was like holding a doll, a toy and nothing more. But she was so much more and it hurt him to think that those pills there on the coffee table, the ones that looked exactly like all the other useless fertility drugs she had already forced down her throat, might not bring her scent back as well. There was nothing left in this apartment that carried her natural odor. Everything had been washed multiple times over the last almost 6 months. She wasn't present anymore.

Reba had almost no happiness left in her life. The beach didn't seem to make her smile like it used to, the visits at Scarlett's were a double-edged sword. She was happy spending time with her friend but was devastated when she came home and talked about the little Olivia and her newest development. This life her best friend was living should've belonged to her.

Kristján carried Reba into her bedroom long after midnight when he had felt sleep crawl into his own bones as well. She whined and whimpered when he pulled the covers over her. She had taken up at least two blankets and three pillows in her bed. It was progress. Slow but it was there. For him it was a tool to prove his devotion because he kept exactly the same amount of bedding in his bed so it wouldn't make much of a difference if she slept in her room or his, although she never did the latter. Kristján sometimes swapped one of her pillows or a blanket with his own to provide her with his scent. That way she would always feel safe and warm, wrapped in his scent. There was also the silent hope that he would eventually smell her in the pillow he'd swapped but was met with
disappointment week after week.

He stayed the night with her but woke early like he always did. Reba was cuddled into his side and snored lightly. The only time she seemed at peace was when she was asleep. He watched her a little while before getting up, trying not to wake her up.

Reba woke an hour later and whimpered malcontently when she could still smell Kristján, yet was alone again. What she would give to wake in his arms just once with him still sleeping. She groaned as she sat up. Her stomach was rebelling again. She hurried into her en-suite and threw up like so many days before. She was literally sick of the pills.

Reba knelt in front of the toilet, catching her breath and drying her watering eyes with the back of her hands when she felt new hot tears building up behind her eyes. Out of nowhere, Kristján's warm hand lay down on her tense shoulders and Reba could only curl up against him. He soothed her with a deep humming and stroked her back up and down.

“Please, make it stop,” she plead, feeling the burning in her throat and her blood sugar so low she felt like losing consciousness.

“You will never have to take those pills again, Reba, I promise,” he whispered, still soothing her as good as he could. Her body was covered in cold sweat as she nodded, shaking in his embrace. “C’mon, let’s get you downstairs. You have to eat something.”

He pulled Reba up to her feet and brought her into the living room. She curled up on the couch under a wool blanket, more for comfort than for actual warmth, while Kristján prepared her a cup of her beloved hot chocolate. Again, more for comfort than for warmth. Reba thanked him weakly and eyed the new pills on the coffee table in front of her. None of them had touched them since yesterday.

“Better?” Kristján wanted to know with a sorrowful frown. Reba didn't even hear him talk. She sat there with her cup of hot chocolate with her warm blanket cocoon around her. The pills seemed to hypnotize her. She couldn't stop staring at them. You will never take those pills again, he had said but that didn't mean that she wouldn't have to take these pills there.

“If you really don't want to continue with the therapy, you don't have to,” he mumbled but what he really wanted to say was that he wanted her to continue because he couldn't face his defeat. He would rather let her take those pills until she was old and grey before he would willingly stop. He sat down next to her and looked at the pills like she did.

They were a constant reminder that something was wrong with her. She looked alright, apart from her sad eyes, and seemed normal, well, apart from her missing scent.

“When do I have to decide?” she sniveled, her voice so weak that Kristján had almost missed her question.

“I don't know. I have to ask my sister. But I guess the 24h-rule still applies.” He checked his watch. “So, in six hours you'll have to decide if you want the change to be seamless … or if you want it at all.”

He was giving her the choice. But deep down she wanted to have him decide for her this one time. Reba was torn. She wanted to have a baby, she wanted his baby because he was her Alpha, and she would give her left arm if only that would set her into Heat, but she was tired from trying month after month without a single change happening.
Reba knew he wanted a family but he didn't wake up in the middle of the night bathed in cold sweat after dreaming about screaming babies she just couldn't reach to calm them down again, hold them to her chest and simply be a mother to them. And he didn't feel this nauseating emptiness in the pit of his stomach or the craving just to smell his own scent like she did. He simply saw her taking a pill and feel sick, if anything at all.

“I'm just so tired, Kristján,” she whispered, clinging onto the hot mug in her hands. He leaned towards her and circled his arms around her body, pressing his lips against her temple. “I know, Reba.”

Kristján made them both breakfast and called Elva to come over again. Reba asked if she had to be with them, but he had said no. She deserved a little break and what he wanted to talk about with Elva he couldn't do in front of her anyway. As soon as she had said hello to Elva, Reba disappeared in her bedroom, trying to catch some more sleep.

“So, how did you two decide?” Elva asked with a hopeful tone in her voice. Kristján beckoned her to come and sit on the terrace before answering with a deep sigh and a shake of his head. “Not yet. And I think she wants to give up.”

“She has already tried for so long. Maybe it's better to have a little pause. She's still young. She might want to try again in a few years.”

“In a few years? Elva, she's absolutely devastated when she sees a pregnant Omega or Beta on the street or children somewhere… actually she's always devastated. I caught her once in her room while she was staring at a family across the street like a fucking witch trying to curse them for their happiness,” he hissed and tried to keep his voice down as good as he could. His sister gave him a compassionate look and sat down closer to him with her back to the terrace door.

“And what do you want to do now?”

He sighed again and leaned back in his chair. The morning sun was warming his back and face as he put his head back.

“No idea. I called you to help me and not ask me stupid questions, I don't know the answer to either.”

“Well, but I can't help you if I don't know what direction you're planning to go. Do you want children?”

“Yes, of course.” His voice was stern and his look even sterner.

“Do you want them with her? You could get a Beta and have children with her, you know.”

“And what about Reba? She'd be heartbroken if I come home with another woman that would take over her place.”

“So, you want to have children with her and she doesn't want to take the pills anymore,” Elva thought loudly and leaned back in her chair as well, “that's a problem.”

“Thank you, Sherlock Holmes. I would be lost without you by my side,” he snapped and growled in frustration. Silence fell upon them as they both contemplated the situation.

“How are Gracey and Chris?” Kristján asked after a while, trying to occupy his mind with something other than his own messy life.
“They miss their uncle. Especially Gracey. She thinks you have forgotten her because you forgot her 5th birthday last month.”

Kristján groaned deeply when he remembered what that nagging feeling in the back of his head had been back then. “Please tell her how sorry I am. I was busy.”

“I know and she knows. George and I have already made up a story that you were stuck in a snowstorm.”

“Her birthday is in June,” he retorted and growled again just at the mere mention of his brother-in-law’s name. He hated his sister's husband, believing that he wasn't good enough for Elva, and George hated him for being a dominant and rich Alpha. Why Elva had to marry one of those communist revolutionaries that tried to fight for a new, just society without poor people (first and foremost Betas) and insanely rich and powerful people (namely mostly Alphas) was still beyond him. Especially, because George had no problem living off the good money Elva made by tending to "rich Alphas' trophy wives" as George liked to call bonded Omegas.

“And she's only five. So, she still believes her parents. But that's not why you called me to come here instead of having a nice Sunday brunch with my husband and my two children. What do you want to hear from me about your situation?”

“What would you do in my place?” He interlaced his fingers behind his head and felt his familiar headache built up behind his closed eyes.

“I wouldn't be in your place, Kristján.” He groaned and closed his eyes. “But I think I would … well, force her luck upon her, I guess?”

His eyes snapped open. His little sister was much more ruthless than he'd ever expected her to be. Holy Elva seemed to have her free day today. Kristján beckoned her to go on with a silent nod.

“The pills do not taste like anything. You could grind them into a powder and stir it into her morning coffee. She would never have to know if they don't work and if they do, well, what a miracle.”

“I don't drink coffee,” Reba suddenly said behind them, standing in the door frame. She looked pale and like she'd thrown up again. “I expected this from him but not from you, Elva. I thought you were my friend.”

She turned around before anyone could say another word. Kristján was up on his feet within seconds. He followed and grabbed her by the arm before she could reach the stairs. She held the new pills in her hand and had a fierce look in her grey eyes.

“Reba, what are you doing?”

“I will flush them down the toilet. I don't want to take them.”

“Reba…”

“Don’t touch me!” she screamed and yanked her arm out of his grip, “you said, I could decide and I decided. I don't want to have a baby from you and I won't ever have another Alpha's baby thanks to you! I would never want to bring a part of your ruthless, manipulative family into this world!”

She furiously threw the pill box against the nearest wall and ran off into her bedroom, her plan to flush them down forgotten for the physical act of rage. Kristján watched as the pink pills slowly stopped bouncing on the polished marble floor in front of him and took a deep breath.
“I think, it would be better if I left,” he heard Elva say behind him and only nodded. Everything was just a giant mess and where she should've helped him, she'd only made it all worse.

Kristján wasn't sure if Reba knew how deep it cut that she didn't want to have his children, that she didn't even want to try anymore. He acknowledged before everyone else that she was hurt and tired of trying and failing, but didn't he had feelings himself? She of all people should know just how much he hurt with her.

The vice in his chest squeezed harder every time she dissolved into tears and he tried his best to comfort her. Didn't that count as well?
An hour later, she came down again under the force of her growing hunger. Kristján sat on the couch and turned the pill box in his hand. He had picked up each pill and put them back into the round box.

“Flush them down the sink. I won't take them,” Reba hissed on her way to the breakfast table like every morning to see if there was some breakfast ready. There was but not in the usual place. Reba could see through the high windows that everything was prepared to have a nice Sunday brunch together... outside on the terrace. Her hands curled up into tight fists, her nails digging into her palms and creating deep half-moon shapes. Was he mocking her as punishment for her tantrum now?

“No, I planned on calling you down in a minute to have brunch on the terrace.”

On the terrace, it echoed in her head. He was actually allowing her access to his holy terrace. Why, now? Was this some kind of a trick?

“Have you drugged my coffee?” Reba asked with narrowed eyes.

“You don't drink coffee,” he replied tiredly and stood up. He placed the pills back on the coffee table and walked towards the open glass door.

“There is no trick or hidden agenda here, Reba, I just want to have breakfast on the terrace with you.”

Reba eyed him suspiciously. The conversation with his sister today had definitely cost him huge amounts of her already minimal trust in him... again. Just as she was opening up to him more, feeling safe around him, even wanted to be with him whenever she could, he was destroying it like a mad bulldozer. She really hoped he felt the vice and her too if there was any justice in this world!

Reba cautiously followed him outside into the warm morning sun, shining down on them and the beautifully prepared table. At least he had an eye for detail.

“What about the pills?” she asked when they sat down and he prepared himself his tea. He closed his eyes and lay the spoon to the side.

“Can we please forget about that just for the course of one breakfast?” he sighed, “I really just want to be with you without one of us being pissed at the end or dissolving into tears before my tea is even on drinking temperature.”

“You really think I would want to spend a "nice" breakfast with you after you have just plotted how to drug me without my knowledge together with your sister?” she hissed and wanted to get up again when he caught her wrist.

“I had hoped for one calm breakfast. You can continue hating me afterwards, Reba.”

There was something in his eyes she knew all too well from her own reflection since she lived under his roof; desperation. Reba sat down again and watched him like a hawk. This was too new to not be cautious around. She eyed the hot chocolate in front of her with a frown.

“I swear I didn't poison your food,” he murmured, sunken a bit into his chair and sipped his tea, “I don't want to decide over your head anymore. I know you won't believe me but I am able to learn from past mistakes.”
“Like?” Reba was still on guard.

“Like I don't want to make you unhappy when it's not necessary.”

“Not necessary?” she repeated with a high pitched tone and lifted eyebrows.

“Well, sometimes I need to protect you from yourself, Reba!” Kristján shouted tensely, but regretted it straightaway. “Remember what you said to me after coming back from Elva two weeks ago? About letting the other Alpha have you?”

“Of course I do. I'm not stupid, just infertile,” she retorted with a snarl.

“You don't know that,” Kristján sighed, “Well, the other Alpha, Maxim Harron, has killed his Omega, he had bought her from her parents shortly after your auction, two weeks ago after she gave birth to an Omega while he would've rather had an Alpha. Needless to say he killed his "worthless" child together with its mother. His trial is all over the news at the moment. So, I'm not the worst one you could've gotten.«

Reba shook her head. Where were all the Alphas great poets wrote about and song graced in the highest notes?

“Thanks a lot for not trying to kill me,” she sneered and got up. Kristján groaned and leaned back, covering his face with his hands. Why did their conversations always had to end this way?

“Please sit down again. I didn't mean to shoo you away. I told you, I want to spend a calm brunch with you.”

“On your holy terrace,” she added sarcastically.

He groaned again, louder and longer this time. “Okay, what do I have to do to make you sit down and eat with me in peace? You want to argue with me while I, for once, didn't do anything wrong! If you're angry at my sister, I'm fine with it. I'm angry at her too because she is usually the 'correct' one of us. That's why I asked for her advice, for fuck's sake!”

Reba sighed and sat down again. Her shoulders were hunched and her lids heavy. She was too tired to argue if she was honest but it felt like "forgiving" him when she allowed herself to calm down around him.

“It's just odd that you suddenly want to spend time with me. You didn't seem like that in the beginning.”

“God, that was because I didn't know you back then.”

“Well, guess what, it's pretty hard to get to know someone when you refuse to talk to them,” she hissed and felt anger starting to boil up again.

“Guess what, I'm trying to talk to you now but all you do is being a -”

“You better shut your mouth because insulting me isn't bringing you any farther”, she growled and bit into the croissant she took when her stomach started to rumble in agony. She ate with him. That was progress, right?

“So, what do you want to know? We are with each other for 15 months now and we still don't really know each other. You know my school file so you're in an advantage here, which is unfair.”
A comment about life never being fair sprang to Kristján's mind but he just shrugged and sipped his tea. His silent answer caused her to glare hard at him.

“Talk to me, Kristján.”

“What do you want to know?” he retorted with a high voice, “You're right, I know details about you like your favorite food and that you hated eating chocolate until you were seven years old because you thought it was made out of chocolate bunnies.”

“That was in my files?” Reba furrowed her brows and asked herself what else was written on those pages.

“You can read them if you want to.”

Had he "read" her thoughts again or was it his own idea?

“Have you ever had a relationship?” she eventually asked and started her little interview with her Alpha. Maybe she could finally find something "lovable" in him?

“Yes.”

Reba waited a minute if he would say more on his own but was only met with silence.

“It's hard to get to know you when you don't talk, Kristján,” she whined and was almost back to the point of abandoning her efforts of talking to him at all.

“You asked a question and I answered,” he replied and his voice was getting louder again. He could never satisfy her when she didn't give him clear instructions or only asked yes-or-no questions.

“Tell me about your past relationships! Have you been so distant to them too?”

“Actually yes, I have been. But they never minded. They were both very independent women and they were more affairs than real relationships.”

“So, you didn't have a relationship before me,” she translated and caught his lie with a shake of her head.

“Why did you want an Omega?”

“Because I achieved the required age to take part in the auctions and I wasn't with a Beta yet. It is expected of me and I have enough money to support a giant family.”

Her next question was filled with accusations and Reba thought twice before she asked it.

“Why did you give me birth control and Heat suppressions?”

Kristján had held her gaze up until this point. Now he looked away to the side and clenched his jaw.

“I… I don't trust you enough to give you the whole answer. Just that I didn't want to repeat mistakes I have seen in other Alphas relationships.”

Reba couldn't believe her ears. Trust? “You don't trust me? When have I ever betrayed your trust?”

“When you talked about private matters on your first Omega meeting or when you deliberately disobeyed me going out here, knowing full well that I wouldn't be home to stop you. Or maybe when you tried to kill yourself,” he listed angrily and got louder and louder, “You have done very
little to earn my trust while I am there for you whenever you need me.”

“But only after you destroyed me or when you're not too occupied with organizing a Hunt or plot with Elva how you can drug me!” she screamed at him and stood up. Her half eaten croissant in her hand.

She stormed into her room, leaving Kristján alone on the terrace. How dare he talk about not trusting her when he was the devil himself?

She was pacing the floor for an hour before she was calm enough to listen to her still rumbling stomach. One croissant had definitely not been enough for brunch. Reba knew Kristján was somewhere near because the vice was humming, off tune, but still strong enough to tell her he was close. She was just going towards her door when she heard a knock. Her feet stopped immediately. That wasn't Kristján's knock.

“Yes?” she called warily. When the door opened, she wanted to shut it again. Elva was the last person she wanted to see or even be on the same planet as her today.

“What are you doing here? Did you discuss new ways of getting those pills inside me with your fantastic brother?” she hissed hatefully.

“You mean your Alpha? No, I haven't. He called me because you should finally stop hating him 24/7 when he actually tries to be nice to you. I've known Kristján my entire life and since you are with him he has changed.”

“No to the better, I'm sure,” Reba hissed and glared at Elva like a vicious dog.

“I know you have a reason to be pissed at me at the moment and I deserve that! But stop blaming Kristján for everything!”

“But he is the reason everything is so fucking messed up here! I have been happy at Finewood! I had Scarlett and I could voice my opinions without fearing punishment!”

“And you don't get to see her now?” Elva asked with raised eyebrows and crossed her arms over her chest, “And as far as I understood you are voicing your opinions pretty clearly and straight into my brother's face these days. You're a brat!”

Reba's mouth fell open. What the fuck? “Get out of my room!”

“No. You will listen to me because although I am your friend and, I know I didn't act like one today, I still want you to be happy. And I want my brother to be happy too. Stop pushing him away whenever he tries to reach out a hand in your direction! He’s not the monster you like to see in him!”

“He has made me infertile, Elva! I will never have children! He robbed me off my legacy, my purpose!”

“He never intended to do that! He was an idiot but he didn't want to hurt you!”

“Of course he did!” Reba downright screamed at her so loud her lungs hurt and tears burned in her eyes.

“How do you know what's going on inside his head? As far as I understood you two don't talk, you only scream and bitch at each other!”

Reba finally had enough. She wasn't listening to her any longer. Elva was just as much of a monster
as Kristján. Maybe even worse because she had managed to trick her into believing they were friends. Reba shoved her out of her room and slammed the door shuts.

“Talk to him, Reba!” Elva shouted through the door and was answered with a loud bang from inside. Reba had kicked against the door and continued pacing the floor with her chest tightening like the bond was brand new. It was driving her insane that her own biology wanted to force her to be around him and, yes, it felt good when he held her close and was around her, but she couldn't just forget what had happened over months.

Downstairs Elva found her brother leaning against the banister, resting his head on his hands with his eyes closed. His head was ponding like a steam hammer was trapped inside it.

“She's not a brat,” he defended Reba, having heard every single word coming from upstairs.

“Yes, she is,” Elva huffed and stood next to him.

“She's the victim here.”

“No, you two are, Kristján. She, because you have been an idiot, and you, because she wants to be angry at you.”

“Elva, she has every reason to be.” It felt like the right thing to remind Elva that none of this was Reba's fault. At least in his mind. He had fucked up and he tried being a good Alpha for her, even though she blocked him off almost every time he tried to make a step towards her.

“She could make it work and still be angry at you. I have seen you come into my practice. She has not once looked at you when you were there and she never mentioned your name when we were alone. Reba is not opening up to the bond,” Elva growled and shook her head, “God, you must be suffering like hell.”

“Yeah,” he murmured and sighed deeply.

“Does she even know what an effect her constant refusal has on you?”

“Don't think so.” Kristján stood up straight and walked back into the living room. He picked up the new pills and handed them to her. “We won't be needing these anymore.”

“Kristján, are you sure?”

He huffed an unamused laughter. “Yes, I am.”

Once Elva and the pills were gone, Kristján wasn't sure what he was supposed to do now. Talk to her? Try once more to make her talk and listen to him once more?

Maybe not. She was angrier than he had ever sensed her before. Hopefully, that would change as soon as she stopped mentally exterminating his entire family. Tomorrow or maybe the day after he could try again. But confrontation came sooner than expected. Right as he was settling on work for the rest of the day (or week), he heard steps on the gallery and stairs. Reba walked inside the kitchen, grabbed some food from the fridge and headed back upstairs but not without stopping by in his office.

“I never want to see her again,” she hissed, “I never want to take a pill ever again and you can go and find yourself a Beta slut to fuck and breed with, because you will never touch me again for the rest of your life.”
“So, this is it? The bond is nothing but a beauty mark on your neck and a thudding feeling in our chests?” He almost sounded hurt. He was hurt, really hurt.

But Reba only scuffed bitterly, “Don't sound so devastated about it. You get a free pass to fuck whoever you want, just not me.”

With a cocky, faked smile she turned around and left. She loathed that feeling in her chest that wanted to squeeze the life out of her heart. Giving her Alpha, her mate, away had never been part of how she'd wanted her life to go.

“I don't want anyone, Reba, I want you,” he mumbled and hadn't intended her to hear it but she did and returned into the office with wide eyes.

“And what about what I want?” she asked calmly, no trace of cockiness or bitching left in her voice.

“Reba, I will give you whatever your heart desires but I can't turn back time no matter how much I wish I could.” He leaned back in his office chair and pinched the bridge of his nose.

She didn't comment on it. But suddenly her whole body language changed; her shoulders slumped down, the angry grimace she was sporting changed to an exhausted expression. Reba put down the food in her arms and walked closer to his desk.

“Than you can't give me what I want.” She felt tears burn in her eyes again. “Nobody can. And I can't give you what you want. You said, you don't trust me. How could I ever trust you when I never know if you will snap at me again the next second?”

“You would know if you accepted the bond.” He didn't say it as a snarled comment but simply as an answer to her question.

“Do I not need to trust you before opening myself to your influence. Don't I have to make sure that I don't suffer under that even more?”

“Bonds aren't designed to make anyone suffer. Quite the opposite, actually.”

“Well, it doesn't work with us,” she whispered. Because you don't open up to it, he thought but stayed silent. There had been too many accusations today already.

“Could we please act as if we are two totally different people for the rest of the day?” Kristján requested and expected her to get angry again but she nodded after a moment. He stood up and walked towards her like approaching a shy deer.

“I don't want to argue with you, Reba, I promise you I will -”

“Kristján, shut up.”

He lifted his eyebrows in question.

“We're two different people, already forgotten? You can promise me all that stuff tomorrow when we are ourselves again,” Reba whispered and let him pull her into his arms. This whole day had cost her so much energy. The godforsaken bond finally stopped tormenting her. Instead a warm, fuzzy feeling filled her from the inside. Something she could definitely grow accustomed to. If only it could happen more often. The whole arguing and screaming at each other was terrible. And the fuzz with the pills hadn't helped at all. He had held her so many times, had been there when she’d felt sick.

“Where are the pills?” Reba asked against his chest.
“Gone, just like you wanted,” he mumbled into her hair.

She wasn’t sure she wanted them to be gone.

“And what do different people do now?” he mumbled into her hair.

“Going to bed and sleep? And tomorrow we talk about everything,” she whispered. Kristján squeezed her tighter as a positive answer.

Maybe they could try again with the pills. One last try would finally be the long-awaited breakthrough?
Talk

Chapter Notes

If the tale I MADE UP in this chapter reminds any of you of something you know, please note that I made it up myself, in my own room, with nobody but my dog around. There wasn't even the tv while I wrote it!

Anyways, I hope you enjoy the overall direction this story goes. It was planned like this right from the beginning. Just so nobody thinks past critique and accusations have directed me somewhere ...

Reba woke up from a warm hand on her shoulder. She stirred awake and opened her eyes. The smell of hot chocolate mixed with Kristján's scent filled the air. Reba moaned and blinked the sleep from her eyes.

“Good morning,” Kristján rumbled, his deep voice making her own chest vibrate. He sat next to her on the edge of her bed and looked down at her sleepy form.

“Morning,” she yawned and stretched like a cat. The harmonic end of yesterday evening gave her the security to behave normal and not tense up, be on guard and watch her own steps like a hawk. He had spent the night in her bedroom again, holding her when she fell asleep. She wondered shortly if it wouldn't be best to continue their "different person"-act for the sake of mutual comfort.

Reba sat up and reached for the steaming mug on der bedside table.

“I called in "sick" today so we can finally sort things out.”

So there would be no different persons involved in this today. She nodded and sipped her drink carefully. Kristján had deep worry lines on his face, and twisted and turned a folded piece of paper in his hands.

“What is that?” she asked and saw the corners of his mouth twitch upwards.

“Something I would like to give you as soon as you hate me again. So, in a couple of minutes, I guess.”

“You know, you could also try not making me hate you,” Reba mumbled and looked into her mug. She slid deeper into her pillows and pulled her knees closer.

“It will end with you being angry at me, I'm sure, so this is my kind of insurance policy to end this here on a high note.” He sighed deeply. “So, let's start with the questioning, okay?”

Reba nodded slowly. Kristján almost looked like he had to endure physical pain, sitting here and opening-up to his Omega. This shouldn't be so hard for him.

“Why wasn't I allowed on the untouchable terrace? What's even so special about it? And I want an answer that consists of more than one line,” she demanded calmly.

Kristján ran a hand over his face and hunched forward, leaning his elbows on his knees. He didn't
seem to be able to look her into the eyes while talking to her but Reba didn't mind as long as she finally got to know him better.

“I will need to tell you a few more things about me and my family before I can answer that. This apartment, it used to belong to my father before he died two years ago and I inherited it shortly before you came into my life. Elva and I grew up in these walls. This here -“ He looked around in her room. “- was my bedroom once.”

“A pretty big room for a child.”

He nodded. “And way too spacious to actually feel "safe" in it. Anyway, you know that Elva is only my half-sister.”

“Yes, the same Alpha father but different mothers.”

What had all of this to do with the terrace? Suddenly Reba had a bad feeling. Had something happened to his mother?

He sighed deeply. “My mother was an Omega. She was from an Icelandic colony in North Scotland. After the country had been abandoned, some immigrated into the States like my father's parents, while others stayed in Europe and almost built a mini-version of Iceland in the North of Great Britain. My father travelled to the colony to find himself a "pure" Omega bride. Don't get me started on the prejudice my father had against offsprings that resulted from the Hunt … or Americans in general. He was ridiculously proud of his heritage although he couldn't speak one word in his ancestors' language. The few words I know I learned from my mother which my father didn't approve of.”

“Sounds like a really nice man to me,” Reba murmured sarcastically into her mug.

“You have no idea,” he huffed and shot her a quick glance over his shoulder, “So, my father found himself a bride abroad and brought her back here. He claimed and mated her before she even knew his full name. My mother got pregnant and suffered under the strict hand of her mate… much like you did.” The last part was spoken with guilt clearly present in his voice.

“History always repeats itself.”

“Well, I tried not to let it repeat itself in these walls. I wanted to wait until we bound us to each other, maybe one or two Heats more. I wanted us to know each other before I claimed you. I'm so sorry I snapped after that first Omega meeting.”

“I have waited over a year to hear your apology and now you don't even look me into the eye. To quote yourself: An apology mumbled and without eye contact is just another insult.”

Kristján turned to her and looked her straight in the eyes when he repeated his sincere apology.

“And you didn't quote me, you quoted my father,” he growled lowly, “he was as strict as an Alpha can be and my mother was… fragile.”

Kristján had to clear his throat before continuing, “I was three, I think, when I first saw my father hit her. I don't know why or how often he had already done it, but I remember the smell of fear and her blood in the air… and I remember her sobbing while she tried to calm me down again. My father towered over us with a vicious glare in his cold eyes. Later I found out that it was because my mother had found out about my father's affair with his secretary, Delilah, Elva's mother, and her pregnancy, and wanted him to leave her.”
His voice grew heavier the more he said, “When I was four my father was inside his office and talked with Delilah, who was heavily pregnant by that time. She lived with us for a couple of months by then. My mother stayed in my room with me, which I found great as a child, while my father shared the bedroom with Delilah.”

“What an asshole,” Reba said quietly and shook her head.

“It was a sunny day and my mother and me sat outside on the terrace. I was drawing and she stood at the banister looking down.” Kristján's blue eyes turned unfocused as he remembered that day with all the details he had carved into his mind. “She told me to draw an angel for her. I did and handed it to her. She… she kissed me on the forehead, said I should be a good big brother, and be nice to Delilah. I remember, I had to promise her. The next thing I saw, was how she climbed over the banister and let go.”

He had to clear his throat again. Reba gasped lightly. Of course he had flipped out when he'd found her leaning over the banister all those months ago. She wouldn't never done that if she had only known.

“I thought it was a game and wanted to follow her. My father heard the alarm of the car my mother had landed on and decided to check what had happened. He pulled me off the banister in the last moment. Delilah became my step-mother shortly after Elva's birth.”

Kristján sat up a bit straighter and looked over his shoulder once more to check on her reaction. Her eyes were watery and her breathing ragged as if she fought against a lump in her throat.

“That's why I didn't want you to go on the terrace,” he whispered and turned away again. There was rustling behind him and two arms encircled his chest. Her warm body pressed against his when she hugged him tightly.

“Are you happy now? Knowing about my tragic family history?”

“No, I'm not happy. No child should grow up without a mother.”

“I had a mother. Delilah was my step-mother and she was a better one than my own.”

Kristján stood up again and started pacing the floor like a claustrophobic tiger.

“I have spent years being angry at my mother because she left me alone as if I meant nothing to her.”

Reba furrowed her brows. “I'm sure she had her reasons.”

Kristján shot her an unsympathetic glare and crossed his arms over his chest as he continued to pace the floor. He had known that it would irritate him and when he was irritated she usually followed tout de suite. His insurance policy would come in handy sooner than he had expected.

“She left her only child in the care of a man who betrayed and beat her, Reba! She wasn't the only one who suffered under his moods and rules. I remember very lively how I left my home at the age of seventeen with the intention to never come back here again. But I came back that very same night! And why? Because I couldn't leave my step-mother and my little sister alone with him. Would you have left your child with a monster?” he hissed because he couldn't swallow down the old anger that was rising inside him again, thinking about his mother's suicide. What if his father hadn't pulled him back from that banister just in time? She would've let her son follow her into his own death without a second thought.

And, no, Reba wouldn't have left like she had. But she also hadn't known his mother and he neither. No four-year-old knows their parents to the point of judging their decisions.
“I have been at the point where she had been, don’t forget that. I have tried to kill myself because of you.”

“But I haven’t beaten or cheated on you.”

“No, you-” She stopped herself before she could get angry again. He had managed to control himself many times now so she could do it too. And Reba was sick of arguing and screaming her lungs out. Reba was almost 20 years old. Time to behave like an adult every once in a while.

“Thank you for telling me about your mother,” she whispered instead and his utter surprise was written all over his face when she didn’t start yelling at him as expected. This was new and “new” always unsettled him. He couldn’t fight so flight was the better and only option.

“I think, I better go and make breakfast now. You can come down when you want.” And with that he was gone.

Fear, Reba thought when she was alone again. Pure fear had made him snap all those months ago. That didn’t excuse his actions in the slightest but it explained them to a certain degree. Reba would have welcomed it, if he had been open to her straightaway but she understood that you don’t bare your heart to strangers just like that.

Reba was buried deep in her thoughts while she showered and got dressed. By the time she was done, she felt like throwing up from one second to the other and a tight pressure built up behind her eyes. It had started right after she had first thought of him as a victim of his own history; sympathy. The feeling was getting worse when she walked downstairs.

The table was set and there was another steaming hot mug of hot chocolate at her place and his tea waiting on the opposite side. Her stomach was rebelling viciously. Just at the thought of getting something inside her mouth made her feel nauseous. No matter if her beloved comfy-drink or something to eat.

Through the windows she could see him outside leaning against the fatal banister facing the abyss. Reba walked outside with an uneasy feeling now that she knew what had happened here a little over 30 years ago. Maybe it was also the pain behind her eyes and the churning in her stomach that felt like she was still taking those dreadful pills.

Reba walked outside and hugged him from behind leaning her head against his shoulder blades. His heart was drumming under her hands. She closed her eyes and hoped that the feeling inside her would fade with him near her, but it was only getting worse. Maybe she could distract both of them.

“Have you ever been to Iceland?” she asked and swallowed against the nausea rising from her stomach. Kristján turned around and looked her into the eyes. He looked awful. Deep lines on his face, almost a pained look in his blue eyes and dark circles under them that made him appeared ten years older than he actually was.

“Let’s eat.”

“No, please, Kristján. Don’t withdraw from me again. I’m sick of being with you but feel alone at the same time.”

He pushed her back softly, away from him to be able to walk back inside. She wanted to start crying again. Why all this work and then ending up in the same spot as before? She felt like treading water and it was exhausting.

With a deep sigh Kristján sat down and waited for her to do the same before he started sipping his tea
and slicing a croissant.

“ Aren't you hungry?” he asked when she eyed her mug like stinking poison. Reba shook her head no and concentrated on her breathing. He sighed again and leaned back, tiredness clouding him like a thick, heavy perfume.

“I'm not in the mood for talking, Reba. Give me an hour or so alone, please. That way I can come down by myself and don't end up shouting at you again because I don't particularly like doing that.”

She nodded again, unhappy but distracted by her own body reactions at the moment. Kristján furrowed his brows when he realized the change in her behavior. She had never been so... green around the nose when she was submissive.

“Are you okay?” he asked slowly.

She forced herself to smile and nod. He didn't need to know about her nervous stomach and dawning headache right behind her eyes.

“Don't lie to me, Reba, I can feel something is off,” he suddenly pressed on. The feeling in her guts was getting even worse.

“I don't know what's wrong,” she murmured and swallowed thickly. Kristján was getting worried. He stood up and walked around the table to kneel before her chair, laying a hand on her forehead to check her temperature.

“I -”

“No fever,” he interrupted her and frowned, “Did you eat something wrong?”

“Nothing you didn't eat or prepared yourself.”

His frown only deepened after her answer and the nauseating feeling turned into a seriously painful tugging and pulling in her guts. Reba wrapped her arms around her middle and hunched over. The pain remembered her of her Heat-cramps during her Cold Heats but without the lust hovering over the whole torment.

“Maybe Elva can help.”

“No, I don't want her near me!” she whined and hunched over even more. Kristján looked at her with a helpless expression on his face.

“When did it start?” he asked hoping he might find out the course of her current distress like that.

“Right after you told me about your mother.”

Suddenly the painful tugging died down again and Reba looked at Kristján for an explanation. His face was blank, almost surprised. She felt the bond humming pleasantly in her chest and it seemed to get louder and louder.

The bond? The bond!

“Oh my God,” she whispered and he pulled her into his arms before she could actually grasped what was happening here. Warmth spread out inside her chest and feathered out into her legs and arms. The realization that she had finally opened up to their bond without actually deciding to, dawned to her and she wrapped her arms around him in response.
“I have waited so long for this,” he mumbled into her hair, the bond humming in absolute joy by now.

“What about you?”

“Have you always felt like this?”

“Depends on what you felt?” he said, a relieved smile clearly hearable in his deep voice.

“Tugging and pulling in my guts, nausea and headaches.”

“Yes, whenever you were devastated or sad. When you were angry at me it felt like the blood in my veins had turned to lead. When you were crying I felt like my heart was ripped to pieces right in my chest because I couldn't keep you happy and content as it is my duty as your Alpha and mate.”

Reba snuggled closer against his chest, bathing in his warmth and scent. His heart was beating right under her cheek and a little sigh escaped her lips.

“Today a new chapter of our live starts, Reba. There is no turning back from this state we're in now.”

“I don't ever want to turn back to how we were before today,” she breathed between them and let go again to – for the first time – smile happily at him. He laid his hands on her cheeks and stroked his thumbs over her soft skin. The little sign of affection sent a shiver up and down her spine and created goosebumps on her arms.

“No, I have never been to Iceland,” he answered her previous question and watched in awe how her face split in two with a wide smile and a light chuckle.

“Why not?”

“Because there is nothing but rocks and thousands wild horses,” he explained with a lopsided grin. He let go of her and sat down on his chair.

“I would love to see wild horses.” Reba bit her lower lip to keep from smiling like an idiot. She felt like seeing the sun after years of imprisonment underground. Her whole body was flooded with energy and happiness. “Tell me more about it. We never really talked about the empty countries at Finewood Academy.”

“I'm very surprised to hear that. Especially Iceland had had a society system you would've been a huge fan of. Actually every Omega I assume.”

“Why?” Oh, she loved history and hearing it from him would only make it better.

“You really don't know anything about Iceland?”

She shook her head and started sipping her hot chocolate when he started his little history lesson at the breakfast table, “Iceland had the huge advantage to only host two dynamics. There were no Betas on Iceland. And, now the thing I thought someone might have told you, there were much more Omegas than Alphas there.”

“How's that possible?” She furrowed her brows. She had learned that the Omega-genes were recessive and Alpha- and Beta-genes usually dominant. Which is why every Omega only had Omega-genes while Alphas had at least one half Alpha-genes. The other half could be Omega or Beta but they were still Alphas.

“War. Alphas went to war or discovery voyages while the Omegas usually stayed in the safety of the Clans, and their warriors either returned with even more Omegas as price from their raids or not at
all. But the Icelandic Alphas didn't just use the Omegas as breeding mares and housewives, no, they worshiped them.

"Unlike today, Omegas had the right to choose their mates. Daughters of powerful Alphas, Clan leaders or very rich merchants were even fought about. There were tournaments to win them over. Not seldom some of the competitors died during those jousts."

"This sounds like a medieval saga, the only thing missing are fairies and witches."

Kristján smirked. "There were fairies and witches."

"There are no such things as that," Reba laughed but kept listening. All the previous gloominess that had surrounded them disappeared and left them free and blissful.

"Omegas who refused to be claimed and/or mated usually lived together with other Omegas in an independent Clan. They were called Fairies because they could lure an Alpha in the middle of the no-man's-land and drive them insane with their mixed scents so much that they sometimes died from dehydration or starvation because they simply forgot to drink or eat."

"That teaches us that Alphas aren't the best in everything they do," she murmured with a smug smirk. "And the witches?"

"Usually widowed and childless Omegas were cast from society because people thought they had cursed their Alphas in order to conceive a child from the all-mighty God-father." He sighed and liked down into his tea. "Historians believe they were also cast from the Fairy-Clans and so they either somehow managed to survive on their own or were raped and murdered by warriors because they believed that the witch's pact with the gods had made them powerful and they could steal some of their godly power by spilling their blood. Some even mated with them to receive a child and took them from the witch."

Reba's smile had quickly disappeared. "That's barbaric."

"Almost as barbaric as the Hunt," he reminded her and she knew what he meant.

"I guess, we haven't made much progress in society only that there aren't as many Omegas anymore."

"You would've been a beautiful fairy."

Reba almost turned red at that compliment. "And I would've lured you into your death with -" My scent, she wanted to say but stopped herself.

"Some fairies also saved the poor Alphas by letting them mate with them," Kristján said and hoped he could distract her from the dark place her mind was wandering to again, "there's a tale about the youngest son of a Clan leader. His father never saw anything special in him, even hated him because his mother died giving birth to him. He wanted to prove his wit and strength to his father by finding a fairy and coming back with her by his side. His father told him to stay in the safety of his home."

"Did he manage to find the fairies?" Reba asked with that familiar sadness in her eyes again. Would her missing scent always hover over her like a dark cloud, ready to strike a lightning bolt at her when she least expected it?

"He had a hard time finding them in the deep forests but shortly before he wanted to give up he found them. His senses went into overdrive and he collapsed completely overwhelmed by their beauty. When he woke up, he was alone again. The fairies had left him with something to eat and
fresh water.”

Reba wished they were sitting on the couch. She would've loved listening to the tale while snuggling into his chest. In none of her books she had read this story and him telling it to her felt incredible intimate.

“When he wanted to go back to his people one fairy watched him from a hilltop. She had beautiful long blond hair, skin like milk and eyes as blue as the deepest lake in the deep forests. She sat on a tamed black wild horse. Her scent was carried over to him by the wind and he fell in love with her immediately.”

She bit her lip before she could argue with him that the scent hindered Alphas and Omegas to actually fall in love because of the primal reactions in their bodies as Darwin had written in his Theory of the Dynamics but it was a tale and tales were there to be believed in.

“He climbed up to the hilltop but she was gone when he arrived. He could see her blond hair far away between dark trees and dangerous rocks, and he kept on following her. Days and nights he followed her. No hunger or sleep could slow him down. On the 4th day she had mercy with him.

“When he finally caught up with her she was too exhausted to talk. She nursed him for another three days and rewarded him for his persistence with a kiss.”

“Did he return with her to his fathers Clan?”

“No, she had poisoned him with that kiss, a powder on her lips. But he died in bliss. The poison made him fall asleep and gave him wonderful dreams. Yet, he never woke up from them ever again.”

“What's the moral of the story? Don't trust fairies? If your father doesn't love you, just accept it? Don't let strangers kiss you?”

He huffed a laughter and nodded. “All, I guess. Old tales are not like fairy tales. They can be interpreted in any way you want. You could also say that persistence pays off in bliss and a kiss, or that your own chosen way can lead into your death so better listen to your parents.”

Reba watched his face with a thoughtful expression.

“How do you know about that story?”

“My step-mother was also from an old Icelandic family, here in the states. She was the daughter of a historian and loved the old tales.” He smiled dreamily as he remembered the good moments of his childhood. “She used to tell Elva and me those tales as bedtime stories. I guess, I have heard them so many times I know all of them by heart even ten years after Delilah's death.”

Reba smiled at the mental picture of him as a little child snuggled into a warm blanket with bright eyes hanging on every words his step-mother told him about the country of his ancestors.

“Maybe we could travel there... perhaps as my birthday present?” she suggested with a light smile curving up the corners of her lips again.

“Oh, I had already planned something else which I'm sure of you'll love me for but if you'd rather freeze your ass off, so be it.”

Reba's smile faltered a second. A, his tone was something she knew from their first few conversations they had had when she had never been sure if he wanted to prank her with one of his smirks only a second later or if he was serious. B, Reba was certain, after all that had happened and
even though improvement was clearly there, she would never be able to love him. And C, he still didn't really know her so she doubted he would be able to make her the perfect present without asking her beforehand, and they had never talked about her birthday apart from that one time two weeks ago… which had ended with her wish to be another Alpha's Omega.

Now she knew she really was better off with Kristján although he wasn't a "jackpot" himself.

“You will love my present,” Kristján said calmly sensing her inner monologue. “Would you like to have it now as proof? My present would still work on your actual birthday.”

What a question? Of course!

He smiled lightly and pulled that folded piece of paper he had had in his hand in her bedroom earlier out of his pocket and handed it to her. With a drumming heartbeat and shaking hands she unfolded the paper and furrowed her brows when she found a telephone number and address written on it.

“I don't really understand,” she mumbled and looked at him for an explanation.

“It's the address and number of an Omega called Jane Weisz.”

Reba heard herself gasp, almost like she was shocked.

“Jane?” she whispered and couldn't believe it just yet.

“Yes, like in your half-sister Jane.”

Now she was in shock. Did this mean she would get to know her family? Finally get to see if they shared like or dislikes, or even looked like siblings? She would finally have a blood relative she could turn to?

“Reba?” Kristján looked at her slightly worried. She hadn't moved a single muscle up until now. Out of nowhere she rose from her chair, so fast it almost fell back over. She hurried around the table like something was chasing her and hugged him so tightly it almost hurt.

“Thank you so much, Kristján,” she whispered and pressed her lips lightly against the skin next to his mouth, not yet a kiss but on its way there, “I don't think you know how much this means to me.”

“So you like your present?” he asked… just for the record. Reba heard his content smile in his voice. She pulled back and smiled with twinkling eyes. “Yes, I love it.”

“I already invited her to your birthday party. I hope you don't mind.”

“What party? Wait, I don't want a party. And I want to see her now. You said you were free today. We could visit her right now. Can we? Please?”

“Check the address, Reba. She lives in London and unfortunately she and her Alpha don't have time before your birthday. So, we can't just visit her like we can do with Scarlett who, I'm sure, is expecting an invitation to your birthday celebrations. Just be patient, Reba, she won't vanish again like a firefly if you don't catch her in a jar.”

He pulled her closer to sit on his lap and watched her thoughtful face. She was beautiful when she was thinking. Why had he never saw how beautiful she was? Of course, the sadness in her big eyes was missing. He could still beat his head against the next wall for not finding the time or the will to make her happy right from the beginning. Everything would have been different. Maybe she… they
would already have a baby or she'd be pregnant. They still haven't talked about continuing the hormone therapy or not. But, with her current hate on his sister, he would rather eat shards of glass than remind Reba of that giant sword that still hung over their heads when she was so happy and in his arms right now.

“But two weeks is such a long time,” Reba whined after a moment. She realized she sounded like a little, spoiled child, waiting to get its presents and somehow she was one at the moment.

“I have money but I can’t pay the time to go by faster, sweetheart, I'm sorry.”

Sweetheart? Reba looked at him wide-eyed after the endearment slipped over his lips like it was totally normal and like he had called her that a million times before. She kept staring at him for what felt like eternity.

This really was the beginning of a new chapter in their shared life. The opening up to the bond, the kindness and consideration between them, and the sudden endearment that felt so good in her ears.

Reba couldn't find it in her to really forgive him when with every breath she took she was reminded that she was still scentless, but she also couldn't find any traces of the boiling anger she had cultivated over the last months like a rare, precious rose in her chest.

This marked a new beginning. Or maybe only another chapter in her story of suffering?
Two weeks later, Reba nervously wrung her hands and paced the floor in the living room. Her eyes were fixed on the clock on the microwave. 18:55 it read. Only five minutes until her guests would arrive. She had invited Scarlett but refused to let Elva come too. She was still angry at her and that wouldn't change too soon.

An Alpha with a British accent, Jane's Alpha, had called three days ago to confirm his and his Omega's arrival.

“Calm down, Reba. They say they would come so they will,” Kristján growled standing in front of the mirror, growing angry at his tie. It simply wouldn't stay in place. In the end, he balled it into his fist and threw it into the next corner.

“What if they had an accident or they changed their mind?”

He walked over to her, pulled her to his chest and stroked his hand up and down her back to calm her. It worked, like physical contact to him always did.

“They will come.”

“Thank you,” she whispered and closed her eyes with a smile. She could've stayed like this forever. But when the doorbell rang her adrenaline level rose in heady heights again.

“Told you they would come,” Kristján chuckled when Reba started to run around like a headless chicken again. She retrieved his tie, shoved it in his hands, looked around in the living room to make sure every pillow was in place, checked on the pre-prepared food in the kitchen and ran her sweaty palms over her thighs to dry them. Reba took deep breaths when she heard the elevator moving up. Kristján stuffed the purple silk tie into his jacket pocket and walked over to Reba planting a kiss in the crown of her head to give her an extra portion of calmness.

The doors of the elevator opened and her breath hitched. Reba's heart stopped the second she saw her. Brown friendly eyes, but otherwise she looked just like their mother. It was like looking at a picture of her coming to life.

“Hi, little sister,” she greeted her and a wide smile spread on her lips. The "family"-dimple they shared appeared on her right cheek and Reba almost started to sob from her happiness. She leapt forward and hugged her still standing in the elevator with her Alpha.

“Nice to meet you,” Jane laughed into her hair and hugged her back tightly. She couldn't believe that she finally had found her, well, Kristján had found her for her.

“How about we go inside and you can hug each other more there?” her Alpha suggested and the two guests sat down on the couch while Reba occupied the armchair with Kristján standing behind her.

“So, you are my little sister, Rebecca.”

“Reba,” she corrected her, “and you are my older sister.”

“I'm the overlooked middle child,” Jane joked with a wide smile, “This is my mate, Julius Crane.”

“How do you do?” the tall, wide-framed Alpha asked and held out his hand. Jane caught it and shook her head.
“I’m sorry, he isn’t around many bound Omegas.” She leaned closer to Julius. “We don’t touch other Omegas, Darling, especially not with their Alphas present.”

“Apolgies. I work a rather isolated life so I need my Omega to help me with the social stuff.”

“No problem,” Reba smiled and looked up to Kristján. He was watching over her so nothing would ever happen to her with him near.

“What do you do? It’s rather seldom for Alphas to be able to keep social interactions to a minimum,” Kristján asked. Maybe he is searching for a way to incorporate it in his own life so that nobody ever pesters him again, Reba thought and corrected herself, nobody but her.

“Oh, he has social interactions. He’s just like a walrus in a wedding dress. Always out of place but funny to look at.”

Julius rolled his eyes and Reba almost gasped aloud. Even now she would never say something like that about Kristján, especially not with another Alpha present, but they didn't seem to mind.

“I'm the owner of an international multimedia company over in Europe with the base in London. Jane is a very important part of my company. I don't know what I would do without her.”

Reba's smile changed a bit. Kristján never talked about his work with her. Only a few days ago, she had finally found out what he actually made his money with. She had guessed international gun running or elephant import. No really, she had had not the slightest idea.

His father had left him not only with an insanely huge amount of money and the apartment, but also with a giant energy company. He was changing it from nuclear power to environment friendly energy, buying land to build wind power stations or hydro plants on it. She couldn't help him, even if he would let her. Reba had no idea of energy industries.

“How long are you bound now? You're becoming 20 today, right? So, two years?”

Reba nodded. She was afraid of what would come next. Kristján sensed it too and lay a hand on her shoulder.

“Do you have children?” Jane asked and looked around for any sign of a child living here.

“No, we don’t,” Kristján answered for Reba and squeezed her shoulder lightly.

“Oh, I'm sorry, it's just that we have two sons. They currently enjoying their holiday with Julius' sister in Ireland. I would've brought them here if not for that.”

The doorbell rang a second time and Kristján went to let Henry and Scarlett in. They had brought Olivia with them with the quick explanation that their nanny had called in sick last minute.

Reba put on a smile to hide her pain. She would never get over the fact that she couldn't have children. Either they brought them to her or they talked about them.

While Kristján was by the elevator, Jane changed the topic, much to Reba's delight.

“You know we have a brother, right?” he asked with a light smile.

“Yes, Michael. He's Beta but that's all I know.”

“Oh, you really don't know the story behind him and the way our mother had him? Odd, especially because Mathilde, sorry, our mother went to the same school as you did.”
Reba's eyebrows shot up. “Really? No, nobody ever told me that.”

“Well, I guess because they are embarrassed because of what happened.” She leaned forward and almost had a boyish glimmer on her face.

She moved to the edge of the armchair and looked at her with wide eyes.

“Up until 1987 male Betas were also allowed to work in Omega facilities; doctors, teachers, nurses. Mathilde fell in love with one of the doctors shortly before her auction and they started an affair. They spend her last Heat there together and, poof, a baby was on the way.”

“I always wondered why she wasn't bought at the auction.”

“She wasn't even attending. No Alpha would pay for an already pregnant Omega. The academy rather got rid of her before anyone with power heard from it.”

“What about her lover, Michael's father?” Reba wanted to know.

Jane sighed deeply. “He lost his approbation and could never work as a doctor again. He fought to be able to marry Mathilde and be with her and their child but the authorities refused his plea. After Michael's birth, he adopted his son but couldn't keep them from dragging Mathilde to the Hunt. She wasn't allowed to return to her son afterwards.”

“And then she got you.”

“And you after me. By the way, I told Michael about you and that I was visiting you today and he sends greetings. He's very sorry he couldn't come too. He's in Bangladesh at the moment and unfortunately he can't say when he's going to be back in civil areas with internet connection to contact you.”

“What is he doing in Bangladesh?” she asked and furrowed her brows. She wasn't even 100 percent sure she knew where this country was but evidently her brother was there.

“Working for doctors without borders. His father couldn't work as one anymore so he stepped into his footsteps.”

“I didn't know that, or anything about our mother's past, her lover or the reason she was given to the Hunt,” Reba murmured and heard Olivia's whining from the elevator. The deep pang she always felt when her goddaughter was near her almost knocked the air out of her lungs. Her honest smile turned into a forced one when Scarlett came over with a wide grin and a small package in her hands.

“Happy birthday, Reba,” she smiled, hugged her best friend tightly, and handed her the gift, “I hope you like it.”

It was a book by her about – what else – the true, uncorrupted love. Reba thanked her and accepted Henry's birthday wishes as well. He was handing Olivia back to her mother and sat down next to Julius.

She introduced her guests to each other and Scarlett started talking to Jane like she had never done with any other stranger. Her motherhood seemed to have given her the courage she had always lacked at Finewood.

After a while, Reba's cheeks started to hurt from smiling without interruption for what felt like eternity. She couldn't breathe between Scarlett and Jane. They were talking about their children, shared storied of their pregnancies and compared experiences.
“Would you excuse me for a second?” she smiled and got up. Reba hadn’t been part of their conversation, so they didn’t really mind. Kristján felt that something was off when she climbed the stairs but kept listening to what Julius had to say about the current media industry.

Reba was happy to have a second alone. She walked into Kristján’s bedroom because she definitely needed his scent to get rid of that burning feeling inside her chest. With the door closed she sat down on the edge of the bed and took deep breaths. She counted to three and let the air leave her lungs again. By the third deep breath she let out a soft cry and tears filled her eyes.

This was all so unfair! She should be able to talk with them about what it felt like to have a child, to feel it grow inside her and bring it into this world under tears and pain with her Alpha by her side. This was just so UNFAIR!

A high-pitched sob escaped her before she could cover her mouth. Reba looked over to the door, hoping nobody would come up and look for her. She felt like shattering into a billion pieces while they were celebrating her birthday downstairs. Tears were streaming down her face and soon her hand wasn’t enough to muffle her pained cries. Reba grabbed one of Kristján’s pillows and pushed it tightly against her face.

Her chest felt like exploding, her throat burned and her lungs stung from her cries. This was not how she’d imagined her birthday and meeting her sister to go. Reba lay down and kept on crying into the pillow until her sobs died down in the comfortable cloud of Kristján’s scent around her. Tiredness and exhaustion lulled her into a deep slumber.

Downstairs, Kristján felt the painful drumming behind his eyes and the nausea churning in his stomach. She was devastated again ever since Olivia had arrived. He knew the baby wasn’t to blame. If anything, it was Scarlett’s fault or the fault of their nanny.

He wanted to go upstairs and hold her tight but they had guests and where she couldn’t be strong enough to be with them he had to be for her.

When Reba woke hours later, the sun set over the horizon. The apartment was filled with music, old music she liked but had never heard before. But something was missing. Voices.

She sat up and looked at Kristján’s alarm clock on his nightstand after she wrestled herself out of a cocoon of blankets. Kristján’s scent was surrounding her so wonderfully that she really just wanted to snuggle into his bedding and drift back into sleep.

But her heart almost stopped when she saw the time. Reba had slept for four hours! Her guests and Kristján must be really angry now. Stealing away from her own birthday party where she met her sister and brother-in-law for the first time was terrible. God, she was such an awful person!

Reba jumped out of bed and hurried downstairs. The music was loud and filled the air. Kristján was collecting used glasses and dirty dishes from the coffee table, sang to the song and was… alone.

“How is everyone?” Reba asked and hugged herself by the stairs. Kristján turned down the volume of the stereo and walked over to her.

“Gone, an hour ago.”

“Why didn’t you wake me?”

Reba came closer and snaked her arms around him. He didn’t seem angry, so she dared to steal a hug
from him.

“You seemed like you needed some rest. They understood.”

“I'm sorry,” she whispered against his chest and closed her eyes.

“For what?”

“Leaving you alone. This was my birthday party and I sneaked out. I'm sorry. I know you put much work into this.”

“If I could manage to make you happy, even if only for a few seconds it was worth it,” Kristján murmured into her hair. The music changed into something slower and they slowly started swaying together.

“It's still my birthday, right?” Reba asked a few moments later, her eyes still closed in content.

“Sure, until midnight, so you've got an hour left.”

“Would you grant me another wish?”

“I'm not a genie, Reba,” he chuckled and kissed the crown of her head.

“Was that a no?” she asked and looked up into his face. They were so close now that they could feel each other’s breath on their skin.

“I mean, you don't have to ask. If I can, I will do whatever makes you happy. So, what do you want?”

“I want to wake up in your arms in the mornings.”

He nodded but said nothing to it. Reba was getting a bit bolder and her Omega instincts kicked in.

“And I want something else.”

“What?”

They were still swaying together, their first dance but none of them really paid any attention to what their feet were doing.

“I want us to share one bed. I know, you're secretly swapping blankets and pillows from my bed with yours. It would be easier, and go well with my first wish, if we could just sleep in one bed.”

“It's not like I didn't want to share a bed with you, Reba, I just didn't want to force you to be close to me if you don't want to.”

“But I do,” she claimed quickly, “I want to be close to you. You have left me alone often enough in the past 16 months.”

“I know and I regret that deeply,” he sighed and looked away.

Reba closed her eyes again at his tone. She didn't want to fall back into accusation-mode. With a quietly apology she snuggled back against his chest.

“Anything else you want?”
“I don’t know. I let you know if I can think of something else. When are your usual office hours?”

Reba felt him laugh under her cheek and lifted her head again to look into his face.

“I think, I already know something else.”

“That was fast,” Kristján chuckled and their feet stopped moving, “but I'm afraid office hours only start tomorrow at 8. Sorry.”

“Seriously?”

Kristján lifted his eyebrows and leaned his head to the side; a smile tugging on the corner of his mouth. “What do you want?”

“A kiss.”

He was visibly surprised about her request and Reba was too, if she was honest. But he was so close, and she had finally opened up to the bond, and he had shown only his best side this past few weeks, never lost a word about maybe trying with the hormone therapy again, and asking him to kiss her was the right thing to do in her mind.

“Are you sure?”

“No,” she laughed but let her hands wander up around his neck, fixing her eyes on his lips. Reba pulled his face closer to hers and opened her mouth slightly. Kristján dipped his head and kissed her. It was just lips brushing over lips but the tenderness of it made Reba weak in the knees. He had to hold her up to keep her from hitting the marble floor.

“More,” she whispered against his mouth, her heartbeat so fast that her blood was rushing in her ears. Her eyes were hooded, her instincts pushing her farther than her reason would've let her go.

Kristján stroked his thumb over her cheek and kissed her again. He had almost forgotten how soft her lips were and how good it felt to kiss them. He never wanted to stop again. And he wanted more. His body remembered the way hers felt arched under his, her thighs on both sides of his hips, her hard, erect nipples between his lips, her lustful sighs he coaxed out of her by hitting all the right buttons.

They ended the kiss, gasping for air.

“I want you,” Kristján breathed and leaned his forehead against hers. He could sense her tense up and screwed his eyes shut. Of course, she was giving him the pinky and he yearned for the whole arm.

“I'm not ready for that, Kristján. Not yet.”

“Of course, I'm sorry. I guess, I'm just tired,” he lied and faked a smile for her.

“Then we should go to bed.”

Her smile wasn't fake. It was... trusting. She trusted in him and Kristján almost groaned when he saw that. After all he had done and all he had tried to make up for in the last six months, he had almost forgotten that this was exactly what he had been chasing; making her trust in him, creating a base they were both comfortable with, giving her enough security to make her want to be with him.

Reba interlaced her fingers with his and walked over to the staircase up to the bedroom. She excused
herself into her own room just to change into her pajamas.

Kristján would've rather offered her a shirt of his and not let her leave their bedroom for the rest of the night. He was in the process of changing into his sleep attire when Reba returned. She watched him quietly from the door, let her eyes wander over his smooth skin and the muscles moving underneath it.

“You didn't once mention your sister today… or starting hormone therapy again,” she murmured, walking over to the bed and lying down on the left side of the bed, the same side she had slept on a few hours before.

“I figured, you didn't want to think about it on your birthday.”

“Kristján, I'm always thinking about it. Especially today with Olivia around and Jane talking about her family.” Her eyes turned sad again. Kristján sat down next to her and thought for a moment.

“Is there any way I can help you?”

He needed to ask because he didn't know an answer. Helplessness had a disgustingly bitter taste for someone who was used to have control and an answer to everything.

“Call your sister and tell her I agreed on trying one last time with whatever pill she pulls out of the hat. But I don't want you to decide over my head anymore. I'm not made of glass, Kristján, I think I proved that I can actually stomach quite a lot. But this will be the last time. If it doesn't work, we have to face our fate.”

Kristján nodded, completely at a loss of words. Was she giving him a birthday present too today? He would've never thought she would actually try once more, especially with Elva after how they had parted the last time they had seen each other.

“Can I kiss you again?” he asked quietly, his eyes already dropping to her deliciously tender lips.

“Only if you hold me too.”

He kissed that sweet smile on her lips and savored in her little moans that escaped her when he pulled her closer to him. He answered when she dove her fingers into his hair… with a deep purr. Reba pushed him off her.

“It's was a reflex!” Kristján explained quickly, hoping almost desperately that she would believe him. Reba eyed him suspiciously, doubts slowly rising inside her. Maybe he hadn't changed and he was still just after his own pleasure. Maybe he was still a heartless monster and she just didn't see through his well-played act.

“Please, I didn't mean to purr. It was nothing but a physical reaction, a reflex.”

No, she couldn't risk being hurt again. Reba was stronger than she had ever thought herself, but she was also a burnt child in that respect. Once bitten, twice shy. Without a single word, she got up and went to sleep in her own bedroom. Kristján was left alone with that nagging feeling of damage.

One fucking, involuntary body reaction and she fled from him again. That longed-for trust was out of reach again. He thought about trying to talk to her again but knew better than to push on when she had already retreated into her sanctuary. Maybe tomorrow… where she should've finally woken up in his arms. Idiot!
Comfort

They sat in Elva's waiting room for more than 20 minutes by now. It was their 30th visit in total, their 5th after the terrible fight about the Hunt an 1st after the disaster with the new pills and her birthday. Kristján had tried to apologize for accidentally purring at her twice but she had just stayed silent and acted as if he was still a stranger to her. It running against walls would ever become Olympic he would win every medal.

He had invited Elva over three days after Reba's birthday to tell her about their plan to try one last time with the hormone therapy. She and Reba had talked long and hard about what had happened between them and Elva had apologized approximately a million times before Reba had found it in herself to give her another chance. None of them had ever mentioned the fight and the mess with the pills again. Both willing to forget about it for the sake of their friendship.

Kristján was holding Reba's hand on her lap like he always did since she'd let him touch her again more often despite the purring. In the other he held his smart phone, typing on it as good as he could with his non-dominant right hand but he never tried pulling his left hand away. She was at least just as important as his work, Reba thought as she looked down to their intertwined fingers on her lap. She was feeling down again, really low. Her usual Heat should have started about a week ago, and nothing had happened for the second time now.

Kristján had found her crying in her bedroom after coming home in the afternoon. She hadn't wanted to tell him what was wrong until the evening. Reba had come crawling into his bed after midnight and had whispered out the reason of her current turmoil, believing he was fast asleep. He could still hear her surprised little gasp when he'd had opened his eyes and pulled her onto his chest. She had cried an hour until she'd finally fallen asleep.

Today was the first session with Elva after that night and they hoped that she had an answer for them. Reba had already missed two Heats and it seemed the hormone therapy wasn't helping at all.

"I'm sure a change in dose will help," Kristján had told her on the way here but he'd heard the lie in his own words. Reba had just smiled, thankful for the attempt to give her hope but there didn't seem to be any. She hadn't reminded him that he had already promised her that this would be her last try. "A change in dose" would be a new one. Yet, Reba stayed quiet and… hoped. Maybe this time something would actually change.

A heavily pregnant Omega sat opposite of Reba and rubbed her huge belly non-stop as if she wanted to show it off to everyone in the room. She anxiously looked over to the entrance door, obviously waiting for her Alpha to come in too. They were seeing Elva probably for an ultrasound or sonogram checking on the babies growing inside of her. Reba wanted to rip out her heart and shove it back into her face just for having to look at her. The warm hand around hers closed tighter for a moment and drew her attention away from the Omega. Kristján was giving her a sympathetic look as if he knew exactly what went on in her head. He probably did and felt like her.

"I hope we can get in soon," Reba whispered, sliding deeper in the comfortable chair and leaning her head against his shoulder. Kristján mumbled a "me too" into her hair and softly pressed a kiss on the crown of her head.

For every outside-observer they looked like a perfectly normal couple with her seeking comfort in the closeness to him and him having his hand possessively placed on her lap to let everyone know that she belonged to him. But if they would be perfect what would they be doing here?
Finally, the door to the examination room opened and a familiar blond Omega emerged with red, wet cheeks and rapid steps.

“Vivian,” Reba whispered surprised but her former roommate didn't hear her. She was too involved in her own mess to notice Reba. Jackson, her Alpha, followed her outside and Elva right behind him. Vivian practically ran for the door but Jackson stopped her.

“Please, come back inside, Vivian,” Elva said in a calm voice, “we will find another way next time.”

“No, I can't do this any longer!” She turned to her Alpha and sobbed, “I can't lose another one, Jackson. Two is already too much.”

Lose another one?, Reba thought and wanted to get up to comfort her when she realized what Vivian was saying. She had had miscarriages. Two miscarriages. Reba's heart skipped a beat when Vivian dissolved into tears right there in front of her. Kristján stopped her with his hand, slowly shaking his head. This wasn't her call, it was the one of Vivian's Alpha.

This strong and confident Omega Reba had known was gone, died with the children she would never have and for the first time, Reba was somehow happy she couldn't get pregnant. To know something was growing inside her and then losing it out of cruel fate must feel like ripping out her own heart and watch it slowly turn cold and grey in front of her eyes.

Jackson gathered Vivian in his arms and tried to soothe her. Reba couldn’t understand what he said but it caused Vivian to push him away hard and scream at him.

“I don't want to try a third time and lose my baby again! Can't you understand that? I can't have any more dead babies inside me!”

Suddenly she froze and noticed the eyes of everyone in the room on her. Only then she saw Reba sitting there and looking at her with sad eyes. Vivian blinked twice, turned around, and ran out of the private practice without another word. Jackson looked at Elva helplessly but she didn't seem to know what to do either. In the end, he followed Vivian and Elva waved Reba and Kristján inside the examination room.

They were both shocked from what they had just witnessed.

“What's wrong with her?” Reba asked as soon as they were inside and the door closed behind them. Elva looked at her sternly.

“I can't tell you private details of my other patients Reba, not even because you're my friend or sister-in-law.”

“Please, she was my roommate the entire time at Finewood Academy. I shared that room with her since we were 3 years old. She—”

“Reba, she can’t,” Kristján interrupted her and came to her side to provide her the closeness she needed to keep from crying. He felt the deep distress inside her and took her hand in his. Physical contact always helped to calm her down again. Elva watched the way they acted around each other with a close eye and remembered him pacing the floor outside and her cowering in the chair at their first visit.

“I love seeing that you have learned to accept his comfort again, Reba, but I really can't tell you anything about Vivian.”

“You know, we heard what she said outside,” Kristján murmured sitting down on Reba's arm rest,
still holding her left hand in his left and placing the right protective on her right shoulder.

“Could this happen to us too?” Reba asked with a thin voice, ”I mean, if we ever get pregnant.”

Elva sighed heavily. Every Omega’s greatest fear (apart being infertile) was having a miscarriage. Reba wasn't even pregnant and she feared losing the baby already. It was a good sign that she was thinking about having a baby but fear was never very helpful. Especially with the answer Elva had to give her.

“There always comes a certain risk of miscarriage with every pregnancy but it is very low in Omegas.”

“Yet, Vivian has miscarried twice from what we heard.”

Elva glared at her brother. He didn't need to frighten Reba more than she already was but she knew he was just worried too.

“Let's just say that Reba doesn't share the same anatomical problems that Vivian is suffering under.”

“No,” Reba whispered, “mine are hormonal.”

“I can't sleep,” she whispered by the door and hugged her arms tight around her a few hours later close to midnight. He looked around in his bed, finding it completely filled with papers and files he fell asleep over while working on them. She had retired into her bedroom right after coming back home. On the whole way home, she had remained quiet and buried deep in thought. Kristján had tried to speak with her but it was like talking to a wall. He had thought it better to leave her alone. If she wanted his comfort she would come and collect it like she always did. And he had been right.

Reba turned around and walked to her bedroom, silently inviting him over for the first time since his accidental purring on her birthday. She waited in front of the door to see if he would follow. Only a few steps behind.

The view that presented itself to him in her bedroom was almost offensive. One pillow and one blanket for an Omega? That wasn't enough and it spoke of her feelings of hopelessness she must be filled with right now. It looked all so small and so wrong. A bed like this where she'd once built her nest shouldn't be so empty and seem so cold. He hadn't been into her bedroom once after the purring accident, so he couldn't tell when she had discarded the extra bedding she had had in her bed again. Maybe today, after coming home from Elva, maybe since her birthday. He simply couldn't tell and that showed again how little he knew his Omega. Granting space was important but it was a fine line between giving Reba enough freedom and neglecting her again.

“Where is the rest?” he asked with a deep and worried frown. Reba nodded over to her closet.

Kristján didn't press on, just took a pillow for himself from the neatly folded stack of covers and pillows inside and walked over to Reba who was already climbing into bed.

“Why can’t you sleep?” he asked and wrapped his arms around her as they were both tugged under the blanket.

“Vivian,” Reba answered and snuggled into his chest as if she needed his warmth to survive. Kristján stroked his hands up and down her back and rested his chin on top of her head. He hummed soothingly. Something that seemed to work almost as good as his purring had done once upon a time but Reba had made it more than clear that she didn't want his purr even when she was seeking
comfort and safety in his arms. The purring had turned from a way to calm her down or turn her sexually on to a torment for her, bringing back the memories of how ruthlessly he'd used her for his own needs.

“You've heard my sister. She has anatomical problems you don't have.”

“But what if I can't get pregnant or lose our baby because of-” She loosely gestured towards herself. Kristján gathered her in his arms more tightly and tried finding the right words to take away her fear but he couldn't argue that it was questionable if they would ever have children. In the end, he simply held her while she kept on asking herself how Vivian must be feeling right now.

The next morning, she woke in his arms for the first time. Reba wasn't sure she had wished their "first time" to be one day after she had heard about the misery of another Omega. He stirred next to her but was still fast asleep. Reba stood up without waking him and walked over to her chaise longue. She watched the family across the street. The kids got ready for school, the Omega was making breakfast for the family while the Alpha was searching files and shoved them into his suitcase. Again, this should've been hers and Vivian's future. It was like their room at Finewood had been cursed to make their lives a catastrophe.

There was light moaning from her bed as Kristján woke up. He looked around searching for her in the bed and finally found her in her chaise longue.

“Good morning,” he yawned and sat up.

“Morning,” she answered silently and kept looking at the play on the other side of the street.

“Are you feeling better?” She heard him getting up and coming closer. Warm hands laid themselves on her shoulders before he ran his palm up and down her upper arms. He could feel the tenseness in her muscles and hoped he could soothe her a bit with that simple gesture. It didn't work. Reba got up and wrapped her arms around her middle. She walked into her en-suite and was glad when she heard him leave to prepare breakfast and then go to work like every day.

Two days later Reba received a call from Scarlett who was a sobbing mess. Henry had to take the phone from her and repeat what his Omega had said so Reba could understand what was going on.

“We just heard from a friend that Vivian Arbiter has taken her life this afternoon. Jackson found her today drowned in her bathtub, an empty pack of sleeping pills next to her.”

Reba thanked him for the information and telling her when and where the funeral would take place. She was sobbing loudly when Kristján came home a few hours earlier than usual. With the sudden headaches and the feeling of having his heart ripped to pieces he had cancelled all meetings for the rest of the day and rushed home to be with her and do everything to make her feel better again.

“What happened?” he asked breathlessly when he emerged in her bedroom.

She tried forming words but her sobs made talking an impossible task. Reba cried in his arms and listened to his heartbeat and the soothing humming vibrating under her cheek.

“Vivian killed herself,” Reba finally uttered and felt him hug her even closer.

Three days later Kristján had taken a day off to accompany her to Vivian's funeral. Jackson was shattered but kept up his stony facade during the service and at the grave while the coffin was
lowered into the ground.

Reba looked at the other guests through a curtain of tears. Kimberley was there and wept silently holding her mate's hand. Julia was pregnant again and sobbed loudly into her Alpha's shoulder. Henry held Scarlett while she let her tears fall freely. There were a few other couples there Vivian must've got to know after Finewood.

Reba didn't touch her Alpha. She stood next to Kristján but didn't seek his comfort, although he was more than willing to give it. In the church during the service he had held her hand, interlaced their fingers and stroked the back of her hand with his thumbs. Reba had appreciated it but she still felt resistant to trust him again.

After the funeral, the Alphas and Omegas separated from each other. Julia, Kimberley and Scarlett gathered together with the strange Omegas Reba didn't know. She wasn't in the mood for being around them. They would end up talking about children and she was feeling bad enough as it was.

The Alphas walked towards Jackson and offered him their condolences from the depths of their hearts. Reba couldn't stomach that either. She let her eyes wander over the open door of the chapel. Voices and piano music was coming from there. It had a magical attraction on her.

Reba walked into the chapel without saying a word to Kristján who was talking to Jackson at the moment. Inside the little church a choir was practicing. Reba knew the song they were singing and loved it. It was the gospel Mrs. Gold had taught them as children. She briefly wondered if any of the others even remembered it.

Reba sat down in one of the back rows and kept listening silently. She had managed not to think about Vivian up until now. The knowledge of her problems and the way that she had killed herself, the same way her own mother had and how she had tried six and a half months ago herself, lay heavily on Reba's shoulders. She had told Vivian when she had asked her why she had been lying in bed crying like a dog the day she had found out, how Vivian had phrased it back then.

What if Reba hadn't told her of the way her mother had ended her life? Would she still be alive now? What if Kristján wouldn't have been there to make her throw up the deadly dose of pills all those months ago? This would've been her funeral here. Vivian might be the one sitting here and listening to the crystal-clear voices of the choir right and not her. Kristján would be in Jackson's place, receiving condolences while keeping up the facade of control and cool composure.

Reba was too deep in her own thoughts to notice Kristján had come in and was sitting down next to her. He looked down to his hands, they were shaking, she could see it from the corner of her eye. Maybe they should go home and forget this day had ever happened. When she got up after the gospel ended, Kristján followed her outside and they walked over to their waiting car. The other Omegas were still talking and giving each other comfort. False comfort in Reba's eyes. The only comfort that mattered was the one that one's mate was offering, Kristján was offering.

She might not be able to trust him fully but she could take that one thing from him. Kristján waved his hand and the chauffeur started the car. They didn't say a single word, both buried too deep in their own minds to talk until the silence became too unnerving.

“This could've been your funeral, Reba, a few months ago. You would've left me… just like my mother did,” Kristján murmured and looked over to her just for a second.

“Please, shut up,” she whispered, too absorbed in her own feelings to be able to deal with his as well. She couldn't let her mind wander down that path more than she had already done in the church. Reba was certain she would shatter if she did.
“Do you know how high the suicide rate of Alphas who have lost their mates is?” he hissed feeling anger rise in his chest, “83 percent, 100 if they don't have children. Jackson is a walking dead man and no friend or therapist can change that fact. You would've killed me too with your suicide.”

“Kristján, can you please shut up and just hold me?” she whined and looked at him with pleading eyes. He didn't move a muscle.

“Why should I?”

“What? Well, maybe because I buried a friend today and because you're my mate and because it's your job to give me comfort,” she listed and his nostrils started to flare.

“I will bury a friend in a few weeks as well. I just told you about my inner feelings, the imminent death of an Alpha I went to school with, something I'm openly afraid of, and all you want is me acting like a feel-good-pill for you.”

The car pulled into the garage under their building.

“When have you ever done something nice for me?”

The question hit Reba like a fist. What?

The car stopped and, before he opened the door, Kristján lunged out for another blow, “You're an egoist, Reba, and I'm sick letting you use me like you do.”

He exited the car and walked over to the elevator doors. The chauffeur opened the door for her but Reba remained in the backseat. She searched her mind for something she could say against his accusation but didn't find anything. Reba couldn't believe he was right. She wasn't egoistic! Was it egoistic to want comfort for him?

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“We're coming now or what?” Kristján called over from the elevator and snapped her out of her thoughts. She hurried over to him and kept digging deeper in her memory to find something, anything.

“I always make you dinner,” Reba murmured halfway up.

“And I make you breakfast every morning, so we're even on that. You're still an egoist.” He didn't look at her. His eyes were fixed on the brassy metal door in front of him.

When the doors opened, he walked straight into his office, still in his shoes and jacket. He closed the door behind him and Reba even heard the lock click. He had actually locked himself into his office, Reba thought hurting, she had buried a friend today and lost him all in one day? This couldn't be true.

Reba walked upstairs in a trance. She wasn't an egoist. She was an Omega. Omegas could not be egoists. Their whole upcoming and nature was directed to taking care of others and making sure everything was fine. She wasn't saying she was a perfect example for her dynamic, given that she was missing vital parts like her Heat and scent, but she wasn't a monster that only worked for its own benefit.

Reba had given him everything he ever wanted, selflessly, completely under his control until she broke and since then had had enough to sort out with herself to be his to rule over. This wasn't egoistic, it was human. But somehow Reba couldn't shake off the feeling that she had neglected his needs. Especially today and after he had opened up to her. She could've done more, showed him how much she cared and what the bond meant to her even though she had just accepted it.
“For fuck's sake, stop tormenting yourself!” Kristján shouted, bursting through the door, “or are you doing this on purpose to hurt me further?”

“What? No,” she whispered and stood up. Reba walked towards him and wanted to hug him, tell him she was sorry and ask if he would forgive her. She had never meant to be so self-centered and ignore him. The last hours she had tried to find something in her memories with what she could believe him, unsuccessfully.

Reba had never noticed how little she had shown care about him. She couldn't say if it was because she actually didn't care or if her anger had still been too strong to let herself do more for him than just dinner every day.

“Just stop it!”

He banged the door close behind him and left Reba alone again. She cried herself to sleep that night, hoping he would come and stop being angry at her even if just for tonight. She was too afraid to move into his bedroom not wanting to seem egoistic like he accused her to be, just coming to him to take what she wanted and leave him again. She would proof him wrong tomorrow.
Defeat

Reba was up early the next morning, preparing breakfast for the first time ever to show her good will in all of this… and because she didn't want him to keep thinking she was an egoist. She was just done with setting the table when she heard steps on the stairs. He was up earlier than expected.

“Good morning,” she said, smiling warily at him. He was still fastening his lilac tie when he stopped in his tracks.

“You made breakfast,” he simply stated and scanned over the table behind her. His face wasn't showing any emotion. It was almost as if he was a completely different person from yesterday. He was stoic, emotionless and cold, his eyes brooding, just like the day they met. “I don't have time to eat. I have to work early today.”

“But you always have breakfast at home, even if it's just a cup of tea,” Reba countered, her voice almost hurt.

“Not today.” Kristján walked over to the fruit bowl in the kitchen and grabbed an apple for the way. “Don't wait for me tonight. I will be out late.”

“Why?” she wanted to know and felt a chill run down her spine by the sound of his callous voice.

“Because I will stop my life as a monk in your monastery tonight. I told you once before that sex is part of my nature and I can't take this celibacy any longer. You have been egoistic, so have I, and it's my turn again. I will find myself a woman in a bar and come home after I'm done.”

It was like he had cut off all strings that had ever tied them together, no matter how loosely they might had been. He was a stranger again. Reba watched him take one quick sip of his tea and then turn around to leave the apartment. “But-”

“But what?” he snapped and faced her again.

“But you are my mate.”

“We're bound to each other but I'm not your mate, Reba. You don't have a mate.”

Of course, she had a mate! He was her mate and she was his. Even though they didn't have sex, she was still the one who could feel what he felt deep inside.

“You don't love me the way I love you, if at all, and I'm tired of waiting for you to heal enough to at least try to have a normal relationship as much as we could.”

Reba heard something like hurt in his voice and she could clearly feel his exhaustion simmer in the air around him. She slowly sat down on a chair and kneaded her hands on her lap, afraid of what he would answer to her next question.

“Does that mean you want me to leave?” Her voice cracked at the last syllable.

“No, I just accepted my place, and I will stop fighting the unwinnable battle to earn your trust. I'm drained… and I eventually understood that my love is misplaced in you.”

“Love?” she whispered, swallowing against the painful lump forming in her throat.

Kristján sighed and looked down to the red shiny apple in his hands. He had wanted to avoid this
whole conversation by getting up extremely early and leaving her sleeping until he would return after "the deed was done".

“Yes, I love you and I know you are going to argue that Alphas and Omegas can't feel real love for one another because of hormones, pheromones and the bond. I saw your grades in Dynamics and know you love Darwin's works on that topic. But I'm telling you one very important thing about Darwin. He was alone. He had no mate and he lived a lonely and sad life because he refused the idea of another being getting too close to him.” He swallowed hard and refused to look at her while he continued talking, “I almost think it helped that you’ve lost your scent because like that I can be certain that it isn't just a physical reaction to body chemicals.”

“You don’t love me,” Reba whispered, it was more a wish than an actual statement because otherwise it would mean that she really had been an egoist, not caring enough to notice his devotion that had clearly been there the last couple of months.

“I do. I don’t care if you believe me or not, but I do. I love the little things you showed me. The love of history we share, the little glimpses of humor I saw… before you doubted me again. I called you an egoist, yes, but I also acknowledge that you care to a certain degree. Maybe it's just because of your dynamic but I’d like to believe there was something more. You can stop taking the pills that, again, don't seem to work unless you felt any changes that I missed. I think, it's time to stop fighting wind mills and acknowledge our defeat. I'm sorry, I destroyed your life but don't forget that I destroyed mine as well.”

She remained silent, at a complete loss of words. Her heart ached, her throat was burning and she had a hard time breathing with the nauseating lump, making it extra hard. Without another word Kristján left her. He controlled himself until he was in the garage. His anger broke out down there. He screamed long and loud, and threw the apple against the nearest wall. His chauffeur raised his eyebrows but was smarter than to ask his boss what was wrong.

Reba felt his outburst as a pang in her chest and the urgent feeling to get into a save place ripped through her. She hurried into her room and flung herself onto her bed, pulling the covers tightly over her head. It wasn't helping. Reba started crying, feeling like one single, raw nerve.

Was it all her fault? Could they be happy if she only trusted him and accepted his efforts? Was it really too late for them? All she had ever wanted was a loving Alpha and after all that had happened and all the hate and hurting they had lived through, was that it? He told her he loved her and went off to cheat on her?

Her heart felt like he had set it on fire. Reba wanted to call him and ask him to come back home so that they could sort things out properly. If sex was so important to him, maybe she could… let him have her. Her insides cringed at that thought. Could she really "sell" her body to him for fidelity and comfort? Would that make her a prostitute or a functioning Omega? It was in her nature to please her Alpha and it was her duty to make him happy. This didn't mean that she couldn't be happy too.

God, why was it so hard to be with him?

She spent hours in her room, trying to distract herself from her miserable life with the books he had given her. Needless to say, it only made her break out in tears when she asked herself if a few clear words right from the beginning could've changed everything that was darkening their relationship right now.

After Reba had stopped sobbing she had moved into the living room, hoping the TV could direct her thoughts into another direction. It had worked until she heard the elevator open around midnight. She turned around but remained seated. Her eyes were wide with a mix of fear and anxiety.
“Did you…?” Reba couldn't bring herself to finish the sentence. Her heartbeat was drumming in her ears; it was almost deafening. Kristján only looked at her for a moment before he shook his head.

He had found a willing woman in little to no time in a rather small, dirty bar near the docks. It hadn't been a hard pick as there had been only one woman there, and she had already been slightly drunk at 5 pm and more than willing to have a little adventure with a wealthy Alpha this night.

She had lived close by in one of the governmental projects with children playing among drug dealers and junkies on the streets. She had already been half naked when Kristján had finally hit the brakes and had excused himself into the bathroom, already in nothing but his pants as well. She had kissed him and it had felt so awfully wrong. The memory of Reba's soft lips, her sweet taste, was still too vivid in his mind. This woman outside there tasted like cheap whiskey and cigarettes but she was willing to give him what Reba didn't… or couldn't give.

He had splashed cold water in his face and shook his head at his own reflection in the milky, cracked mirror over the sink when his eyes fell onto the tattoo on his left shoulder, the date of their bond. He couldn't do this, not to Reba and not to himself. His own reflection disgusted him so much that he wanted to throw up into the next toilet but he could control himself.

Kristján had never got dressed so quickly in his whole life. And a woman had never insulted him so much in three minutes as this one did. He ignored her because otherwise he would've ended up in a prison cell for tonight for attacking a Beta. He would've hit her, no doubt, and he the last thing he wanted was to become even more like his father than he already had.

Kristján actually walked home the whole way from the projects back into "his" part of town. His feet soon hurt and he realized that the 2000 Dollar for his shoes definitely weren't spent on comfort. He had thought about a solution for their situation but he knew that he would need her help with that. Kristján stood in the elevator when he suddenly felt an ice-cold chill run down his spine.

What if she was already gone when he arrived in their apartment? He had felt her distress the entire day but he couldn't tell how far or near she was. She could already be sitting in a plane to China, or wherever, and he wouldn't know. Their bond had lost this much of its effect on them. It still hummed when they were… had been together but while being separated it wasn't reacting to the distance between them anymore. Which was normal. He had asked Elva when he'd first realized it and the internet had been of great help as well.

He had managed to hide his relief when Reba was still there and even up. It was around midnight. His walk home had taken longer than he had expected. Reba sat on the couch and had turned her head quickly when the elevator doors had opened. Her eyes were red and puffy from crying countless tears over the last hours. He walked over to her, still in his shoes and jacket, and searched for the right words. He couldn't really find them.

“I'm done, Reba,” he sighed and slumped down on the couch next to her. He buried his face in his hands and sighed a second time. “I'm… exhausted.”

Reba couldn't move. She still had to process that he hadn't stuck to his plan. When it finally sank in, she wanted to offer him a deal she had thought long and hard about. She would give herself to him if he promised that he would never use her for solely his own pleasure, and if he would give her just a little more time. She wanted him, although she didn't feel any sexual desire ever since she had lost her scent, and she was still afraid things would return to how they had been in the beginning once she gave him what he wanted.

“I'll go to bed,” Kristján murmured and got up again. Reba caught him by the sleeve and bit her lower lip.
“Why didn’t you?” she asked lowly.

“Didn’t find the right one.”

So, if he would’ve had found one, he would've thrown away every oh-so little good thing they had ever experienced together, Reba thought and let go of him again. She didn't know how close he had already been to fucking another woman only one and a half hours ago. And he didn't want to tell her because she shouldn't know how little had stood between him and something that would've hurt them both so much.

Kristján dragged his feet up the stairs and almost contemplated sleeping in his clothes. He was just too tired and sick of this awful day to care about any wrinkles in the morning and he was damn sure he would fall asleep in a few minutes no matter how uncomfortable the clothes were. But with a deep sigh he decided that two minutes more wouldn't kill him... if he wasn't already dead.

Before Reba he wouldn't have cared a bit about another person's feelings. Well, maybe Elva's. But other than this? If he wanted something, he got it. No matter if it was a car, sex, or even his Omega. Kristján remembered sitting among the other Alphas before the auction had began, thinking that even if she wouldn't like him or being bought in general, he would still have what he wanted and what he needed to enhance his social status.

He walked into his en-suite and changed out of his suit, leaving only his boxers and undershirt on. When he returned, Reba sat on the edge of the bed in a flimsy, little, deep purple sleeping gown that made her look like a night fairy. Kristján had never really seen her in it. This item had been purchased shortly before her Cold Heat and everything that came with it. She nervously fiddled with the lace hem of the short gown and didn't dare to look up at him. Not even when he spoke.

“Don't you have your own bed?” Kristján growled, his voice dark from the weight of the day and his tiredness.

“I would rather stay here.”

“And I want to sleep,” he murmured lifting the blanket she sat on, hoping she would just leave him alone. He was really not in the mood for talking or being around anyone.

“Can we please talk?” Reba asked, sounding almost desperately.

“About what?”

She kept looking down to the hem of her night gown. “Egoism?”

Kristján climbed into bed without answering. He only growled a "Leave me alone, I'm tired" but remained silent otherwise.

Reba got up and walked to the door wanting nothing more than to stay and talk to him but when she turned around once more he was just turning off the lights. Maybe tomorrow, she told herself and walked into her own bedroom. Sleep was out of reach the entire night. Reba shortly asked herself if Kristján could sense that she couldn't sleep and if he felt the same.

The next morning, they were both tired and short-tempered. Not a good base to talk to each other.

But at least he ate breakfast with her, she thought when he left for work. Reba didn't ask if he would try to find himself a Beta again today. It would only hurt to hear a cold-hearted "yes" as an answer.
She spent the day trying to distract herself again. Watching TV was turning dull around mid-day and her books still had nothing new to say. In the end, she wandered through the apartment, not being in the mood to visit Scarlett and Olivia, and got stuck in his bedroom. She simply sat on his bed and hoped he would come home soon. She felt as if a cold fish was swimming its circles inside her stomach when she imagined Kristján with another woman.

Reba made dinner for them after scrubbing the kitchen clean, just to have something to do, but ate alone. She went to bed a lot earlier than usual keeping her door ajar to hear when Kristján would come home. She couldn't tell what he was doing but she was sure, he wasn't having sex. Reba had expected to feel a jolt of pleasure blazing through her body, ending in the pit of her stomach as she'd imagined it would feel when her mate was climaxing. No, the only thing she felt was the same thing like yesterday; uneasiness and a constant churning in her guts.

Reba was right, Kristján wasn't having sex, he wasn't even searching for a woman. He sat in his office until everyone else in the building had gone home and he was sure Reba would already be in bed and hopefully asleep when he came home. He knew, they needed to talk and he was getting more and more on edge the more he separated from her but he wanted to wait until he'd stopped hurting before breaking the topic of their future together again. He would've never thought that he would be the one in his relationship feeling unrequited love.

He arrived home around 1 am and sneaked up inside his bedroom, hoping he wouldn't wake her. That she was still awake and sat upright in her bed as soon as she'd heard the elevator, he didn't know. She listened for the sound of a second person coming with him. Reba had feared he would actually bring a woman with him into her own home… like his father had done, only that Reba didn't have a three-year old son to keep her company. But he was alone and his bed was the only thing he lusted for tonight. Just a quick shower and then a few hours of sleep before he sneaked off to work again.

But Reba had other plans. She wanted to show him he was more than just the Alpha she lived with. He was her mate and mates should keep each other company. It was ridiculous to have them both hurting when being together was what they both wanted. Even if he wanted more than she was able to give him just yet, separating like he did right now was the worst way of dealing with their situation.

And Reba was lonely, so terribly lonely. She got up and sneaked into his room just as she saw him turn off all the lights in his room. She didn't want to wake him, just be close to him, feel his warmth, and hear his deep breaths while he slept next to her.

His room was dark but she could still make out his form. He was lying on his stomach, his head turned away from her. The left side of his bed was empty as if kept free for her to join him. Slowly, she approached the bed and slid inside. Reba bit her lower lip as she contemplated reaching out her hand to feel the muscles under his smooth, warm skin. Or should she simply snuggle into his side no matter if he woke or not?

“What do you want?” Kristján mumbled into his pillow before she had even come to a conclusion. His voice was raspy and uninviting.

“I would like to stay here for tonight,” she whispered and sensed him moving.

“Go into your own room.”

Tears started burning in her eyes when she heard his refusal.

“Please, Kristján,” she choked out, “please, don’t.”
“Don’t what?” he snapped tiredly.

Reba searched for his eyes in the darkness. He was so close, only a thin layer of cold air still separated them from each other.

“Please, don’t give up on me. You’re all I have.”

“What about your friends and family?” He sounded almost offensive, spitting out the words like venom. Why had he even put in the effort to find her sister if she was already disinterested in her?

“You mean my only friend who is only talking about her child, or my one sister who does exactly the same only on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean? Or are you talking about my brother I have yet to speak with for the first time in my life, and who is currently even farther away than Jane?” She was close to tears and couldn't understand how he could let her suffer like this if he really loved her like he claimed he did. “Please, can’t we just forget everything and start again?”

Reba sensed him moving again and had to squint her eyes when he turned on his bedside lamp.

“Start again? Where?” His features were as if made from marble. No emotion showing in them in the dim light of the lamp behind him.

“From the beginning?”

He cracked into an unamused laughter. “We can't simply go back 18 months. Too much happened and we can't simply ignore your missing scent and that it's my fault, Reba.”

“I could,” she tried again and reached out a hand to place it over the point in the middle of his chest where the bond was humming out of tune again. He caught her wrist just in time and shoved her hand away.

“No, you couldn't because as soon as I would start purring again, as it is my nature, you would gather your skirts and run away like the last time.”

“No, I won’t!”

Kristján lifted his eyebrows at her defiant tone.

“Oh, is that so?” he asked darkly, “then let's have a try, shall we?”

And the purring began. At first it was only a quiet rumble rising from his chest, as if not to overwhelm her but when she stayed still in his bed, not even blinking, he turned louder and deeper. She swallowed thickly, but forced herself to stay calm and refused to show her inner cringing when the sound travelled down into the pit of her stomach. It wasn't turning her on, it was frightening her to the core.

Kristján was impressed with her self-control and went even further. He moved closer, guiding her with his body to lie flat on her back underneath him. He hovered over her, changing the tune of his purring to a more seductive one. He refused to let his hope get up too high but he couldn't deny the little sparks of it dancing in his chest. Maybe it really was possible to manage a new beginning. Maybe even tonight?

He moved slowly, never letting up his purring. His head dipped down to place soft, little kisses on her neck and the slightly faded bite mark on her shoulder while his hand ghosted over the thin fabric of her night gown over her breasts and belly. Her breath hitched in her throat but she kept herself from pushing him off her. She would give him what he wanted if that would ensure her his company
and comfort. But Reba couldn't bite back the little, surprised yelp when his hand actually made contact with her breasts.

Kristján kneaded the warm flesh tenderly, still purring and kissing her neck and shoulder, remembering how her hard nipples had felt between his lips and teeth all those months ago. It almost felt like a different life back then.

The yelp made him snap out of his memories and he lifted his head to look into her face. There were tears running down her temples and only now he realized that her heart wasn't hammering in anticipation of what he was going to do but out of pure, animalistic panic. He hadn't smelled her fear while being lost in his own purring.

“No, we can't have a new beginning,” he finally stated and rolled off her. Reba closed her eyes relieved but also frustrated.

“Why not? I'm willing to let you have what you want,” she said, the tears making her voice hoarse.

“Let me have what I want? It shouldn't be like this, Reba.” He sat up straight, facing away from her. “You should want it, too, with me, together. Don't just endure it but feel the desire to have me.”

“I'm sorry that I don't feel desire anymore, Kristján. I can't change that,” she sobbed and sat up herself, “I want to be with you and if that means letting you take me, then so be it. I'm trying to make you happy. I care about you, about us. I mean it when I say, you're all I have.”

“And you're all I have, Reba, but it doesn't work.”

“You're not even willing to try again.”

“Why should I? I only end up in the same place as before over and over again. As your teddy bear and feeling only more frustrated than before.”

“So, almost like I feel about taking the pills from Elva.”

“That's something different,” he growled.

“Yes? Why?”

“Because...” It was like with the pills. She took them and nothing happened. He tried making her happy and nothing happened.

“Have you slept with another woman today?” she suddenly asked, sniffling and wiping away her tears. The question took him a bit by surprise.

“No.” The only sex he had was solo under his shower every morning.

“Why not?” Reba frowned. Of course, she was happy that he had remained faithful to her but, why didn't he? She was sure he'd have a chance with every woman he met. Even without the bond she knew how handsome he was and what effect he must be having on women, regardless their dynamic.

“Because I'm your mate,” Kristján murmured and hunched forward, burying his face in his hands. He was tired and half-hard from purring for her and, again, nothing would happen. He felt like Don Quixote, it was draining him from all of his strength.

“I thought, I don't have a mate,” she muttered behind him and scooped closer. He huffed a laugh and
shook his head in defeat. She got him there.

“I guess, I should've said: Because I still see myself as your mate.”

“I still see you as my mate too.” Reba carefully extended her arm to touch his shoulder. He let her and Reba saw it as a good sign. She moved even closer and pressed her body against his muscular back.

“Will you let me stay?” she breathed against his skin and closed her eyes, nudging her cheek against his shoulder like a cat seeking attention. “I've missed you so much.”

Her hands snaked around his lean middle giving herself purchase to press herself even tighter against his strong back. Kristján let out a heavy breath and leaned his head back against hers.

“Do you still love me?”

He murmured a 'yes' after a few seconds of thinking about it.

“Then why don't you want me to be close to you?”

“I never wanted that,” he murmured tiredly, “I don't really know what I want anymore.”

“Then why don't you just say yes and we can finally go to sleep? We can find out tomorrow.”

She had a point there, at least with the sleeping-part. He turned around and crawled back under his blanket, lifting it up for her so she could snuggle into his side like she wanted to. Reba briefly wondered if she had been egoistic again. She had wanted to be close to him and she had managed it, but was it really against his own will? Kristján turned off the light, gathering her tightly in his arms and kissing the top of her head.

“So, we start new?” she asked, knowing that her head wouldn't shut up until she knew the answer.

“We sleep, Reba, and tomorrow we'll talk.”

“But don't sneak out again, okay?” She lifted her head up so she could look into his face in the darkness of the room. He looked older than he actually was, deep worry lines around and dark circles under his eyes, visible even in the darkness surrounding them. He nodded quietly and pulled her head back onto his chest. He wouldn't sneak out even though he wanted to. Kristján owed her that, right?
Hurt

The next morning none of them wanted to get up so they stayed in bed, both sensing that the other being awake. Reba lay on her side with her back turned towards him. Kristján's arm was draped over her middle, their fingers interlaced with each other, lying over her chest. His warm breath tickled the back of her neck. This was how she had wanted to wake up ever since the beginning, feeling protected and warm in his arms every day.

“Good morning,” she mumbled and felt him stir behind her. Kristján rumbled a response and wanted to pull his arm back again but Reba refused to let go of it.

“Would you please let go of my hand? I want to look into your eyes when we talk about our future.”

He sounded almost angry although it was just his tiredness still sitting in his bones that made his voice raspy and dark. Reba turned in his arms to face him but remained lying safely wrapped in his arms.

“Can we start again?” she whispered, being so close that she could feel his breath on her skin. Kristján studied her face like it was a complicated piece of art he would have to reproduce on his own.

“And what would we change?”

She thought for a moment. “No reproaches for what happened between us. No secrets. No punishments.”

“No more egoism,” he added and Reba nodded quickly. She waited if he would say something else but he remained silent.

“So, we try again?” Her voice was unsure and thin.

“What about the issue of your missing scent and absent Heat?”

It stung to be reminded but she swallowed and answered, “We'll just pretend I have always been like this. I mean, holding it against each other won't change anything so why not just… make the best of it?”

Kristján bit back a sharp response about how there would be nothing good in it to make the best of but he remained silent, again.

He had wanted his mate to be obedient and smart. Reba was the smartest person he knew and as it seemed more mature than he was with his 16 years more life experience. He had wanted a partner to be his real partner, to be someone he could trust more than he sometimes trusted himself. And after all he had done she was still willing to try again, to try and make it work. But the walls he had built up against her again were too thick to simply push them aside like they were made of paper.

“We can try,” he whispered after an agonizingly long minute.

This wasn't the answer she had wanted to hear but she smiled nonetheless because it was much more than she had feared he would be willing to give her.
From this day on they spent their nights together in his bedroom. She crawled into his bed, he would pull her into his arms and they would wake up in each other’s arms in the morning. Shared breakfasts and dinners were nothing new but it was helping to deconstruct Kristján's walls.

One afternoon he even got home a bit earlier and brought everything for an apple pie as dessert. They made dinner and dessert together, even laughed like a completely normal couple but they were still cautious around each other. It all felt so normal though it still wasn't.

Ten days after their somewhat new beginning Reba received a shocking call from Henry. She entered Kristján's office and already felt like she was ripping out his heart and shred it to pieces. He sensed her distress and looked up worried.

“What's wrong, Reba?” Kristján stood up and wanted to go over to her but she raised her hand and he stayed where he was.

Reba took a deep, shaky breath and slowly walked across the room to him. She lay down a hand on his shoulder and pushed him back into his chair softly.

“Henry just called,” she began but was at a loss of words again.

“And what did he want? Is something wrong with Scarlett or Olivia?” He sat up a bit straighter, frowning concerned.

“No, it's… it's Jackson,” she whispered. Her chest squeezed tightly and she knew it was because of his instant mourning. “I'm so sorry, Kristján.”

Reba reached forward and hugged him tightly. His face didn't show any sign of the pain that was spreading through his limbs.

“It's okay. I was expecting it,” he murmured but snaked his arms around her waist to pull her down onto his lap. Reba stroked her hands through his hair and guided his head into the crook of her neck, holding him in a tight, comforting embrace.

Reba wanted to make him stop hurting. She wanted to take away that vice that pressed his chest together and take it all over for him. But she couldn't. The only thing Reba could do was to be there for him and offer him the comfort he found in her tender arms. Her fingers combed tenderly through his hair, calming him down like this as good as she could.

They sat like this for hours until Reba offered to make him his favorite food, warm apple pie, simple but helpful. Afterwards he was a bit more talkative and opened up.

“Thank you,” he murmured and actually managed a small smile in her direction.

“No problem.”

He leaned back in his chair and scanned her almost full plate.

“Aren't you hungry?”

Reba shook her head. His grief was making her feeling nauseous and she'd rather not throw up when he was feeling so down. Kristján seemed to understand her without having to say a word.

They went to bed soon after the evening news. Kristján pulled her even closer than usual, burying his face into her hair and taking deep, calming breaths. She knew he was hurting deeply. Reba felt so helpless. She regretted that she couldn't purr for him. Maybe she could try.
The sound that came out of her throat was something between a hoarse coughing and a whining sound. Kristján tensed up immediately and moved away a bit to look at her, frowning deeply.

“Are you okay? Are you in pain?”

“What? No. I... I wanted to, well, purr for you,” she stammered and swallowed thickly. Oh, she hadn't wanted to mess up.

“Purr? For me?”

Reba nodded and wished for the earth to swallow her in one. This was so embarrassing.

“That’s...” He couldn't find the right word. Considerate? Friendly? Nice? Loving? “Thank you, but I think purring should be scratched from our relationship in a whole. For me and definitely for you.”

“Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?” she whispered and stroked her hands up and down his chest.

Kristján sighed and closed his eyes. He leaned his forehead against hers.

“How did you put it on our way back from the cemetery? "Shut up and just hold me"?”

And she did. Reba scooped up on the mattress a bit and pulled Kristján's head into her chest. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and her legs around his middle. The tension in his body slowly disappeared until he was limp and relaxed in her embrace, and eventually sleeping soundly. His light snoring was like music in her ears. Kristján was calm and peaceful in her arms. After a day that has pulled the rug out from under his feet she had been able to make him feel content again.

A warm fuzzy feeling flooded her veins at that thought. So, this was what a real partnership felt like. How he had felt like all those times when she had needed his comfort and he had given it to her without getting anything but this feeling in return. This was a tragic day but one that again marked a new milestone between them.

Kristján took over the task of arranging Jackson's funeral. He had been an only child so he had nobody but friends left to mourn him... and Vivian. Reba tried to help him with chosing the flower arrangements or decide on what music should be played during the service. He accepted her suggestions but asked her to let him do it alone, for Jackson.

Two days after she had told him about his death, Kristján had told her about his and Jackson's past. They had got to know each other in an elite bording school over in Europe. They had more than once passed their weekends in detention due to their shenanigans and more or less unfunny practical jokes against teachers, tutors, and fellow students.

Reba especially liked the one prank where they had painted all of the horses black so the "elite" equestrians couldn't tell them apart right in front of a very important steeplechase. They had needed two days to get the horses completely clean again. Kristján had taken over the punishment for Jackson who suffered pet hair allergy and asthma. Jackson had started working in the company of Kristján's father but after his death they had had a giant fight about Kristján not wanting to continue with coal-fired power plants (Jackson's department) and changing to environmental friendly energy yields.

They hadn't talked for two years and now Kristján was planning his funeral. Reba didn't even want to imagine what went on in him apart from what she could already feel. She had spent every night hugging him and pulling his head tightly against her chest while lying in bed together. Her heartbeat was calming him and lulled him into sleep quickly. The best medicine for heartbreak and mourning.
Three days after Jackson's suicide and two days before he would join his Omega on the cemetery, Reba waited until Kristján was out of the house to talk with the priest about the service, before she left for her "secret" appointment with Elva.

“How can I help you? We haven't seen each other since you got your new set of pills. I gather you stopped therapy again because you didn't show up for a refill.”

“You're right. It had been a bit busy at home and Kristján and I have finally accepted the bitter truth.” They had, although they had not really lost a word about it. “We are actually fairing pretty well considering that,” she reported with a lopsided, sad smile.

“So, you're not here for a new try?”

“No,” Reba sighed and looked down to her hands on her lap, “Kristján doesn't know I'm here and I would rather he never finds out, to be honest. In the end it would only build up new hopes and when it doesn't work out he's only frustrated and me too. And at the moment he's already devastated enough.”

“Where is my brother if I might ask.” Elva frowned. She would've never believed that this nosy control freak she had as a brother would let his mate disappear for a few hours without asking questions like a cop in a bad film noir.

“He's organizing Jackson Arbiter's funeral.”

Elva's blue eyes turned sad. “Yes, I've heard about his death. It must hit Kristján hard. I mean, they hadn't had much contact the last years but they had been like brothers once.”

“Yes, he told me. He's completely shattered,” Reba murmured and swallowed against the lump in her throat. If she let herself concentrate on his distress she would only break out in tears herself.

“I came here for another reason than the usual one. I think, it's pretty clear now that I will never have children and I accepted that fact as much as an Omega can without falling to pieces, but I want to restore a bit of the good things Kristján and I have shared before everything went downhill.”

“And how exactly can I help you in this?” Elva asked confused.

Reba took a deep breath. It felt so degrading to ask for it but if anyone Elva was the one who could help her with that.

“Is there something like… Viagra or a kind of aphrodisiac for Omegas?”

Elva was visibly surprised when she heard that request. She had to think about it for a second.

“Well, um.” Was there? She didn't know. This was -in her 7 years of practicing as a respected Omega doctor- the first time she was ever asked for something like that. “I will have to do some research on that.”

“Alright, I'll wait,” Reba simply stated and sat back in her chair patiently. Elva shrugged but was impressed by the sternness she found in her sister-in-law. It was almost as if she was a completely different person from the one she had met in February. Elva turned towards her computer screen and typed a bit before letting her eyes scan the screen, typed a bit more and browsed a bit through medical articles which might have already addressed this certain topic.
“There actually seems to be something… other than the classic eastern homeopathy -which is debatable- to phrase it charmingly. A doctor in Sweden seemed to have developed something which might help. Although I have to check if there is any further research on it. I don't want to poison you.”

“I don't care if you poison me or not. I want to feel something towards my mate again,” Reba murmured, looking fiercely.

“Is that really your wish or-”

“Yes, as I said, Kristján doesn't know I'm here. I'm here because I want to have at least that part of my old life back. Yes, Kristján wants it too but he would never bring me here to ask for a sex pill if it was against my own will.” She sighed and looked back down at her hands once more before she cracked a small smile. “It seems you have a worse image of him than I do. He changed a lot in the last months.”

“That's good, I guess.”

“Yes, it is.” Reba nodded. “So, when do you have the pills available?”

She wanted to be home before Kristján got back. Reba didn't want him to think she had secrets from him but, well, she only did it to save him the disappointment should it not work out like she wanted.

The next day Elva had found meds with the same active ingredient as in the pills from the Swede. Kristján was occupied with deciding on a coffin so Reba had enough time to get the little blue pills and be home again before he would've noticed her absence.

She tried the first one right before going to bed. Kristján was still inside his office brooding over his funeral speech for tomorrow's ceremony. Reba didn't really feel any different when she walked down the stairs around 1 am to ask him to finally come to bed but when she hugged him from behind, stroking her hands over his broad chest, her heart almost stopped.

“I like your perfume,” he mumbled tired and finished the last sentence of his speech for the next day. Reba thought for a moment what perfume he meant but then she guessed it must've been an effect of the aphrodisiac agent. Could this little pill she had taken only two hours ago actually bring back some kind of a scent? Seriously? It definitely couldn't be so easy and if he thought it was a perfume than it hadn't touched her "missing scent" problem in the least. He knew how she smelled… or once had.

“Thank you,” she whispered and kissed him under his left ear, “don't you want to come to bed?”

He closed his heavy eyelids and nodded slowly. They climbed the stairs hand in hand. Reba watched Kristján taking off his clothes and waited for the pill to finally work it's magic apart from giving her an artificial scent but she still didn't feel like having sex with her mate. Maybe he would have been to engaged in his own feelings anyway to really enjoy it, to want it, but still. He crawled under the blanket to her like every night. They snuggled up and fell asleep in each other’s arms.

The following day was more of a rush than a structured, planned-out day like she had imagined it would be after all the work Kristján had put into it. They didn't eat together because he let her sleep in, ate, and then woke her while he was under the shower. Reba didn't blame him because she could feel his inner turmoil and stress. She tried soothing him on the drive to the cemetery. He clutched to her hand like it was the only thing that could save him from drowning. They didn't let go of each
other the whole time during the service until it was time for the funeral speech.

Reba stood up and squeezed Kristján's hand before she walked up behind the little lectern to read the speech. It had actually been Kristján's wish to read it, as a last salute to his childhood friend but they both knew his voice would crack at every word so she took the burden off of his shoulder.

“I will read out a speech my mate wrote for the ceremony. I don't know many of you and I never got to know Jackson. But Kristján knew him.” She looked at him and saw him taking a deep, shaky breath. Reba unfolded the thick paper in her hands and cleared her throat, scanning over the words in his familiar handwriting in front of her before reading them out aloud:

“We mourn the death of a lost friend today. He followed his mate, his other half, his life. We are slaves to our bodies and feelings. We all are made to feel with the other half of ourselves, the half we have to find before we are a whole person with two beating hearts. We are made to laugh together, to feel ecstasy together, to love together.” She swallowed thickly and looked over to Kristján sitting in the first row. “- and to suffer together. Jackson lost his other half, the beating heart his own was so dependent on only a few days ago. Now, he followed her. Now, they are together again. Today we do not only say goodbye to a friend —« Reba wiped away a stray tear from her cheek. »— no, we lost a father, a father-in-law, and a grandfather, who never got the chance to become one. We mourn the image of a future that will never become reality.«

She walked back to Kristján, seeking the comfort in his closeness and pressure of his hand around hers. Reba felt the need to wrap her arms around him and just go home again but Kristján was one of the casket bearers so he still had a duty to fulfill before she could flee with him into the safety and the comfort of their apartment.

How things have changed, she thought, remembering seeing the tall windows and high ceilings as a prison at the beginning of the year. Now she couldn't wait to get back there and hold the man who had made her suffer so much as tightly as she could, only to make him stop hurting.

Reba stayed by his side while the coffin was lowered into the grave next to Vivian's. She felt his silent sobs but couldn't, and wouldn't, comfort him in front of all the other Alphas around them. The little she knew about these people in expensive black suits and with their significant others hanging by their arms, she did know that it was vital for Alphas to stay stoic and cold facing loss. Nobody was allowed to look behind their masks, the magnificently crafted facades, behind which they hid their emotions and fears from everyone… until they were alone with the one person that already knew about their most inner feelings, their mates.

Reba also stayed with him because she wanted to avoid talking to Scarlett. Another change which she would've never banked on. Her best friend, or rather her happiness and her fucking perfect family life, has become a constant painful reminder of her own pain and disability.

Kristján stayed long after the last guest had already gone home again. The September wind was not too cold but already enough to make Reba shiver in her black dress and thin coat. But she let him stay as long as he wanted, as he needed, to be ready to leave his friend to rest in peace at last.

Reba tried not to think of what would have been if Kristján wouldn't have been there in February to avert her suicide. This could've been his funeral and in their stead Elva and her family would stand at their graves, mourning the death of unfortunate lovers the destiny had forced to make each other hurt. She softly cleared her throat when the sun was beginning to set and woke him from his trance.

“Shall we go home?”

Kristján nodded and reached for her offering hand. She squeezed his tightly before they walked over
to their waiting car.
Reba kept on giving him comfort when he would let her and until he was "okay" again. Kristján didn't talk much about his feelings. Why should he? He didn't need to let her know how he felt. The good thing about the bond was that the other knew when one needed soothing or comfort, the bad thing was that one suffered with the other. No escape. Much like Kristján had wrote in the funeral speech for Jackson.

A few days after his hurting had finally faded away, Scarlett called and Reba almost feared the worst again. Lately, they only called when someone died due to Henry's connection to the local press. No wonder, he was the PR manager in Kristján's company. But no, this time quite the opposite was the reason for her call. Scarlett wanted to meet with Reba and she sounded like life itself.

Reba almost wanted to refuse her afternoon invitation for the following day. But all of the sudden she realized what she was doing: She wanted to crawl back into her shell and only be around her mate. This was great, considering their past, but it wasn't healthy. Reba told Scarlett that she wasn't sure if Kristján and her had anything planned for tomorrow. That way she could talk with him before deciding.

When he came home Reba was almost done with the dinner.

“What's wrong?” he asked even before he was completely inside the apartment.

“Scarlett invited me over for tomorrow.”

He furrowed his brows and took off his coat and shoes.

“And why are you buzzing with discontent? I had to skip lunch today because you felt like that.”

“Sorry,” she sighed and looked down into the pan in front of her. She could feel him coming closer and he wrapped his arms around her middle.

“You don't have to apologize for feeling bad, Reba. But why exactly are you feeling the way you do?”

Reba sighed again and leaned back against him, closing her eyes and folding her hands over his.

“She will only be talking about Olivia and I will be sitting next to her trying not to break out in tears,” she admitted and felt him squeeze her body tighter to his. “I love her and her little girl but -”

“But you're sick of it after a while.”

“Yes,” she whispered, relieved that he understood her without any further words.

“I don't say you shouldn't meet her again but maybe it would be better if you talk to her about that and if she doesn't understand… well, maybe it would be better to get a bit of distance between you two.”

“Maybe,” Reba mumbled. Maybe Kristján was right. Just the thought of meeting her best friend was giving her the creeps. Reba was pretty sure, she should be happy about seeing her and her goddaughter. But she simply wasn't and it didn't feel wrong in any way. It was just a necessity to keep herself from hurting again.
So, the next day she went to her best friend with the thought in the back of her mind, that if Scarlett would talk nonstop about babies and children, she would propose a pause. Reba couldn't say for how long, but a pause was the best idea Kristján and her had come up with yesterday while lounging on the couch watching a cop movie they both already knew.

And Reba was already greeted by Olivia in her mother's arms with a loud, unhappy crying. Scarlett was stressed out and almost shoved her into the living room with the command to make herself comfortable while she tried to put her baby to sleep. It took Scarlett almost an hour before she returned. Reba had contemplated just leaving again. It clearly didn't seem to be a good time right now.

“I'm telling you, I love her to death but sometimes I could strangle her,” Scarlett hissed when she sat down opposite of Reba and let out an exaggerated breath.

And here we go again, Reba thought and listened patiently as Scarlett moaned and groaned about her hard life as a mother. Not once did she ask how Reba was or if anything on the baby subject had changed for her, if she was happy or how Kristján was after his former best friend's death only two weeks ago. Reba managed to stay calm for two hours, imagining her hands around Scarlett's throat when she let out one of her deep sighs after complaining about something Reba would give her soul for to have. But what really made her angry was that Scarlett was pregnant again and even started complaining about that now. Reba was sure she would want her to become this baby's godmother as well. She couldn't take it a single second longer.

“I think I should go now,” she finally broke her long silence and stood up.

“What? Why? I thought we could talk. I haven't seen you for so long and you haven't said anything.”

Reba huffed a bitter laughter. “Of course not. You're not interested in how I feel or what I'm doing at the moment. You're selfishly complaining about your life while I would kill to have what you have. I liked you better before you became a mother-zombie!”

“A what?” Scarlett screeched and got up as well.

“You heard me. You aren't the same person I knew at Finewood. You are only a mother.”

“You're just jealous!”

It cut deep but that was exactly it. Reba was jealous and she was hurting every second she was with Scarlett and her baby.

“Yes, I am. Good bye, Scarlett.”

And without another word Reba turned on her heal and hurried for the door. On her way she almost crashed into Henry who could feel Scarlett's anger boiling in his own chest.

“What's going on here?”

“Nothing. Good bye, Henry. It was a pleasure having known you.”

Reba prayed that Kristján would be home earlier than usual so that he could hold her and tell her that she had done the right thing, the reasonable thing, the healthy thing.

She had taken the limousine again today and startled the driver when she appeared hours before he had expected her to come down again. Reba didn't give him time to get out and open the door for her. She wasn't an invalid, she could do it herself, and so she did. When she sat down, Reba just
knew Kristján wouldn't be home any time soon. He had said something about an important conference call this afternoon. So why should she drive home where she would only be alone with her thoughts and feelings?

“Home, Mrs. Ness?” the driver asked with his eyes fixed on her in the rearview mirror.

“No, can you just drive around a bit. For an hour or two?”

“Sure, Mrs. Ness.”

Reba still wasn't used to being called Mrs. Ness. Technically she still didn't have a surname as Kristján and she weren't lawfully married unless Kristján had filed their bonding at the authorities without telling her. Which wouldn't be too much of a surprise if he had done it right after placing the Claiming Bite. He hadn't been particularly talkative back then. She simply assumed they were "married" so she didn't argue with the driver about the way he addressed her.

She slid deeper into her seat and leaned her heavy head against the window. It was raining again like every day this week and the streets were full. No wonder, it was rush hour, although apart from the people on the sidewalks who tried to get out of the rain nobody was rushing. The cars around hers stood still, waiting for a traffic light to change colors or other cars to clear an intersection.

They weren't going anywhere soon so the driver had time to look at her again. Reba could feel his brown eyes on her but didn't mind. As long as she wasn't home and had at least something to watch - the pedestrians on the streets- and with the music in the radio not turning too clubby and annoying, she could easily stay stuck in traffic until Kristján would be home. And up until now her driver had never been a pain in the ass, mostly minding his own business. Sometimes so well, that she forgot about his existence completely while she was on her way to Elva or Scarlett.

“Why are you always so sad?” he asked with a thick accent. Reba couldn't exactly say from where he came but somewhere much more southern than Flint. At first, she thought her mind was playing tricks on her but he looked at her as if he waited for an answer, so he must've said something, right?

“Excuse me?”

“Why do you always look so sad? You're rich. What problems do you have that make you look so sad all the time?”

“I have more problems than you can imagine,” she muttered and asked herself a second later if she should really talk with a stranger about that. Was he even a stranger? Seriously. He had been there right from the start when Kristján had brought her home after the auction. He had witnessed their arguments, fights, and even the little tenderness like holding hands, resting her head against Kristján's shoulder, and kisses on foreheads that had happened in this backseat. He was a silent but constant witness of the relationship with her mate.

“What's your name?” She was tired of calling him "the driver", "the chauffeur", or "he" in her mind.

“Sam, Mrs. Ness, Sam Brooke.”

“Hi, Sam.” She could see the wrinkles around his eyes deepen a second and was sure he had smiled at her.

“So, what's your problem, Ma'am?”

“First, you calling me Ma'am.”
He smiled again and the motorcade they were stuck in moved a meter forward, at least it felt like that much.

“Second, you know about my problems, you have witnessed them like a crow sitting on my shoulder.”

“So, you're still not getting a silver lining from your doctor?”

She shook her head and sighed deeply.

“Maybe, all you need to do it stop thinking about it. Helped with my wife. We tried for years, I'm telling you, and once we stopped -pop- twins.”

“Congratulations.” Reba wanted to scream and run away from this whole mess. Now even her chauffeur, no, Sam was giving her life advice.

“But maybe it's not too bad you don’t have kids.”

“What do you mean by that?” Did this mean that she shouldn't have children? What was wrong with her? She would be a great mother… if only she could get pregnant.

“That I'm working the whole day to earn enough money to send them to school, that my mother is telling me I should have never married my wife because she's "not as a wife should be" meaning independent and earning her own money, and that I can't do what I really want because I don't have the time or the money to do so.”

“What would you like to do?”

“Write.” Sam's voice was suddenly younger and sounded excited.

“Have you already written something, I might read?” After having "broken-up" with Scarlett, she wouldn't get something new to read from her in a while so why not see if the man behind the steering wheel had something good to offer.

“Nothing I would ever be able to publish. It's just a hobby when I have to wait for you or Mr. Ness. Really, I shouldn't have said anything. I'm sorry, Mrs. Ness.”

“No, please. I would like to read something if you don't mind. Maybe it's better than you think.”

Sam made an uncertain noise and scanned her face in the rearview mirror. He opened the glove box and pulled out three completely filled notebooks. He handed them to her through the window separating them and regretted it instantly.

“No, please. I don't think you should read it. It's probably really crappy.”

But Reba had already taken a look inside the first notebook, letting her eyes scan the first few paragraphs, and knew it wasn't crappy, not at all.

“I think, it's good. Please, let me have it for a week. I promise, I won't tell anyone or show it to someone if you don't want to. I… I just need a bit distraction from today, please?”

Sam thought for a long moment. Giving away something he had worked on for over a year was hard but she had promised and he had pity with her. He had seldom seen her so animated and it was a nice change from her usual sad and almost depressive behavior.

“Alright then, but only you, okay?”
For the first time today, Reba smiled and started reading straightaway. It really was a good story. Even though it was a bit too… revolutionary? No, futuristic was the word she was searching for. It was a sci-fi story with artificial people serving as servants for all dynamics, even acting as incubators for childless couples. It was clearly inspired by what he had gone through together with his wife. The main plot evolved around a man who falls in love with a woman, but she dies and he's trying to program one of those artificial women to match his lost love, even using DNA samples he finds at home to create an egg cell so they can have a child together.

Reba was so sucked into the story she didn't even realize they were home already. Only when Sam opened her door she snapped back into reality.

"Seems to be a good read this far," he joked but his eyes looked nervous.

"It's amazing," Reba smiled and thanked him again for the distraction.

It had been a good way to somehow forget about the initial pain she had felt after breaking up with her best friend. She thanked him again before going over to the elevator.

Kristján wasn't home yet but she wasn't in the mood for cooking. She ordered dinner from their favorite Chinese place and hid herself away with her new "book" in her old bedroom on her chaise longue until her mate would come home or the food arrived, which ever would come first.

But Reba was so sucked into the writing that she didn't hear Kristján's loud "Reba, I'm home!" coming from downstairs.

"So, I gather it didn't go too well," he asked carefully when he leaned against the doorframe once he had finally found her in her old bedroom. Reba quickly lay the notebook away and sat up straighter.

"From how I felt or...?"

"From the angry call I received from Henry two hours ago who wanted to know what got into you for calling his mate a mother-zombie." He lifted his eyebrows with an almost worried look on his face. "I don't think this was what we had in mind for today."

"She's pregnant again and moaning about it," Reba hissed and crossed her arms over her chest.

"Okay, you had a reason to be angry at her. I never said you didn't. I just-"

The doorbell interrupted him when the food arrived and they both walked into the living room to eat there. It was a nice change to eat "like students", as Kristján put it, sitting on the low couch and balancing spring rolls and chicken sweet-sour on chop sticks. Reba burst out into laughter when he needed six attempts to eat one spring roll. He laughed in return when she suddenly and very unexpectedly grunted while laughing.

"So, I guess your day wasn't too bad if you are still in the mood for laughing," he said with his mouth full.

Reba nodded and gave up eating with the stupid chop sticks. "Do you want a fork, too?"

"God, yes, please."

Half an hour later they were sated and none of them wanted to talk about what had happened between Reba and her best friend earlier. Distraction was very much welcomed and it came in each other’s arms, the monotonous talking of the TV, and for Kristján in his work on his tablet pc.
Reba cuddled into his side and after a while let her eyes wander lazily between the grey autumn sky outside, the boring TV program, and whatever Kristján was doing with the tablet next to her. It looked like calculations. Just the stuff she had hated in school.

She needed more distraction to keep her mind from wandering back to what had happened today and she couldn't excuse herself into her bedroom to read because Kristján would start to worry that something was wrong with her.

“Can we go out this weekend?” Reba asked silently and caught him mid-thought. She had to repeat her question so that he could actually react to it.

“Where do you want to go?” he murmured and put away his tablet.

“The forest. It's fall and in Finewood this was the time we made out annual little forest walk. All the students and most of the personnel.”

He smiled at her idea. “What a sweet, naive, innocent idea.”

Reba tensed up at his patronizing tone.

“You could just say no,” she snapped and wanted to get up. She didn't need him to call her down again for such a simple request. It wouldn't even cost him something, just a bit of his time. Why did he always have to make her feel small and stupid when she suggested something? That was the one thing that still made her blood boil.

Kristján caught her by the sleeve and pulled her back down on the couch. “I never said no and I didn't mean no.”

“Than you really have to work on your "yes, that's a nice idea, sweetheart"," Reba growled and crossed her arms defensive in front of her chest.

“Ask me again.”

“No,” she snapped.

“Please, I promise I'm teachable.” He showed his beautiful mischievous smirk that made him look like a boy with a prank in the back of his head and lifted his eyebrows waiting.

“Like a poodle?” Reba sneered and raised an eyebrow as well. She glanced over to his waiting expression.

“Alright, do you want to go for a walk through the forest this weekend?”

“Yes, that's a nice idea, sweetheart,” he cited her and smiled widely about his learning progress. She couldn't keep the corners of her mouth to stay down and smiled as well before snuggling back into his side.

On Sunday Reba couldn't wait to be finished with breakfast so that they could get into the car and drive to the nearest forest. Reba had given Sam the notebooks back two days earlier when she had taken another drive out to get out of the apartment, if only for an hour or two. She had read the books like a maniac these last days as a welcomed distraction. She handed them to Sam with a note that he should definitely send them to a publisher. She loved the story although it was not her favorite genre.
Today was his day off so she couldn't ask Sam if he had already done something in this direction. Well, maybe tomorrow she thought and put her plate and hot chocolate mug into the sink.

“Shall we?” She could hear the excited smile in her voice in only those two short words.

“It's raining,” Kristján murmured when Reba was putting on her coat.

“Good,” she chirped happily with a bright smile on her face.

“But it's raining. Do you really want to go out for a walk when it's raining?”

His voice sounded like the one of a whiny teenager who tried to talk his way out of doing household chores. Reba pursed her lips and stalked towards him like a cat.

“With that little rain falling down we can be sure that we'll be alone in the woods. The earth will smell wonderfully and I was looking forward to this day so much, Kristján. Please don't chicken out now. You're not made of sugar and you're not the Wicked Witch of the West. You won't melt when water hits your skin.”

“But I could get wet and catch a cold,” Kristján retorted and made a whiny noise when he got up after another look at her stern face, “Alright, alright.”

Reba's smile widened when he finally got dressed and they drove out of the city into the near countryside. They were close to the vast estate belonging to Finewood Academy. She knew these woods, the rain hitting the orange, yellow and red leaves above their heads. It almost felt like coming back home. A few raindrops still made their way down to the ground so Kristján pulled out his big umbrella to shelter them both from the cold drops.

Reba encircled his arms with hers and they soon found a mutual walking rhythm. Now this was perfection, Reba thought and sighed contently as she leaned her head against his shoulder. Kristján kissed the crown of her head as an answer.

She had been right. There was nobody here but them, the woods smelled earthy and fresh, thanks to the rain, and it was such an incredibly normal thing to go out for a walk as a couple.

“What did you want to be when you grew up? Did you always wanted to go into the energy industry?” Reba asked after a while, continuing to lean her head against his shoulder as they walked side by side.

“Oh, hell no,” he huffed and kissed her head again. They should do that more often; going outside and spending time at the fresh air.

“What then?”

Kristján thought for a moment before answering, “It was a tie between magician, fireman and superhero.”

Reba chuckled and shook her head. “And now the serious answer?”

“I am serious.”

“Kristján, come on.”

“Alright,” he laughed, “I wanted to become a historian. Shocking, I know.”

“Actually, no, not shocking at all. With all that knowledge about Iceland you have, I could see you
as a historian,” Reba said lowly and looked up at him.

“I wanted to become an expert for dead societies -Roman, Icelandic, Ancient Egyptian- like Delilah’s father had been.”

“Why didn't you study history if you wanted to?”

“Have an educated guess,” he snorted, not necessarily at her, just at the question.

She wasn't in the mood for guessing so she prompted him to go on with a stern look. She was becoming just as good in that as he was. If she had always been like this or if it had rubbed off on him, he couldn't say. But he liked that change nonetheless.

“My father wasn’t blessed with a second Alpha and somehow Delilah didn't get pregnant after having Elva, so I was sentenced to step into my father's footsteps when I grew up. He sent me to the best economical university and put me under his wing after I graduated. So, no time and no opportunity to follow my "dreams".”

He made a small pause and thought. “Although, I managed to at least get a bit of what I wanted. I could convince Delilah's father to give me a few lessons in Icelandic so that I could read old documents. When you asked me if I could speak it, I had already forgotten about half of what I had ever learned. I read myself back into the material after that day... just in case you would've wanted a little crash course.”

“Are you telling me, you would've taught me your ancestors language if only I would've asked?” She lifted her gaze up to his face just in time to see him nod.

They could've gotten along much earlier if she had only wanted to. Reba sighed and tried finding a new topic to talk about. This one would only remind her once more how bad their communication had been and what pain not knowing how to ask the right questions had cause her.

“Would you have pushed our children in the same direction your father did with you?” Reba whispered after thinking hard about whether or not she should break the baby-topic again. They had never really talked about having children; more about getting her pregnant. And he still didn't know about the aphrodisiac she hid in her old bathroom cabinet, which she hadn't touched after the first unsuccessful attempt.

The arm he had draped around her tensed up a moment.

“I don’t know. I guess I would've, to be honest. I put so much work into turning the company into mine and not my father's that I wouldn't want it to vanish into nothingness with nobody to keep it going after my death.”

Understandable, and it didn't really make any difference because it would never happen unless a miracle happened. But that was not very likely. Now he needed to find himself a protégé to take over his company when he was getting too old to work himself. Which would still take easily 30 years, if not 40. Although Alphas tended to live their lives a bit faster than Omegas and Betas so he could already be dead in 35 years and she would be alone. The thought sent a cold shower down her spine. They needed a different topic!

“Do you hear that?” she asked and stopped in her tracks. Kristján furrowed his brow and listened for what she might mean. The only thing he heard was the rain falling on the leaves around them.

“The silence was my favorite part when going into the forest.”
“Silence always feels like the absence of life,” he murmured. Kristján remembered the strict rules in his boarding school. Talking and making noise was punished until noise had become like the purring had for Reba, a torture. At least when he was working. He always hated people talking in front of his office door so he had built an extra thick wall between his work space and the rest of the company offices. But when he wasn't working, silence unsettled him because it meant that saying something would bring punishment upon him… unless he was with Reba. Silence with her was different.

“You don't understand it, I guess. You haven't spent your entire life under one roof with 300 other children and teenagers.” She slid into a conspiracy whisper. “Silence was a rare piece of paradise when I grew up. When I was younger I wasn't allowed to leave the building on my own out of fear someone might catch me away like a ripe fruit, I could lose my way, or run away in juvenility.” She glanced at him for a millisecond because it was pretty much what he had done to her in his apartment with the one difference that she had been allowed to wander the gardens and estate when she had turned fourteen.

“Well, I wasn't locked in but I went to a boarding school in England so I damn well know how it is to be stuck with hundreds of other kids 24/7.”

“I didn't know that.”

“I don't like thinking about that… especially now with Jackson dead and gone,” he murmured and knew Reba wanted to know more but she didn't press on, feeling that if he wanted to tell her about it, he would on his own. She stopped and stood on her tip toes to plant a soft soothing kiss on his cheek. His small smile was reward enough.

They continued strolling through the lonely forest and Reba continued talking about her time as an older teen at Finewood.

“With all the noise constantly going on in the halls and class rooms I craved a bit of silence. I could always be sure I found it in the woods. As soon as I was old enough to be trusted to be reasonable and stay at the estate even without someone watching me like a hawk, I could wander through the woods on my own. But it was very welcomed when an older student would take one of the smaller kids with them. I was sure I could handle a four year old, you got credits for it, and you didn't have to go to class on Saturday if you had enough credits.”

“Ah, so purely selfish reasons. I knew you were a clever one.”

“Well, you wanted a smart one if I remember correctly,” Reba muttered and felt him tense a bit next to her. No, not again. It was almost feeling like they were getting along, finally without any accusations of past mistakes but sometimes there always slipped something in that reminded them.

“Sorry,” she apologized quietly and Kristján squeezed her to his side for a second, “Well, but I had fun with the children as well so I didn't just do it for getting to sleep in on Saturdays.”

She walked down memory lane for a moment before she continued, “I used to play hide and seek with them, always making sure they wore really bright colors when we did so that I would definitely always find them again. And sometimes I would tell them stories. From time to time I found a way to teach them a bit of history while outside, morph it into a fairytale style that was appropriate for such young children.”

“That's actually a great idea. Maybe when you're bored again you could try writing down some of those stories. I think people and maybe even schools or kindergartens would benefit from that.”

“I'm not a writer. Scarlett is.” Reba's eyes turned sad, thinking about her best friend. No, not even
she was a writer anymore. All she could think about was having one baby with a second on the way. Reba briefly wondered if she would've lost herself in this baby-mania as well if she...

No sense in opening up scarred wounds, she quickly thought.

“"I always asked myself why Omegas were required to know all those things,"" she sighed and leaned her head heavily against his shoulder.

“What do you mean?”

She stopped walking and let out a long sigh.

“I mean that when Omegas have children they... don't really have them.” She saw his confused look and tried finding the right words. “"Well, they get pregnant, they get the babies and when they can walk and talk they go to kindergarten and the Omega has nothing further to do with the child's education. There are teachers, boarding schools, tutors, university professors. Where would an Omega ever get the chance to shine with her knowledge when she have no opportunity to teach her children?"

“With her mate? Do you really think I would be happy with a dull-witted Omega? I couldn't bear someone by my side who had no intellect, who couldn't understand my jokes, or with whom I couldn't have a conversation about history. Seriously, I couldn't. That's why I chose you, why I fell in love with you.”

“The smartest and most obedient Omega,” Reba quietly quoted Mrs. Gold from all those months ago when she had been bought but not yet been in his possession. It almost felt like another life back then.

“It also helped that you are beautiful but, yes, I wanted a mate that understood sarcasm because I'm fluent in it and more than once I had to pay the price of another person's ignorance because they thought I was serious. I wanted to avoid that with the person I would give my heart to eventually.”

Reba managed a small smile. She had to be honest with herself that she had done the same thing Scarlett did at the moment. She had only thought about the babies and not the mates. Kristján gathered her back against his side when the wind picked up and they walked back to the car at the edge of the woods.

“Reba!” Kristján called when he came home the following Monday.

“You're early.” She frowned at his almost alarmed tone.

She hadn’t even started with dinner yet. Reba had been watching a movie about Charles Darwin's life that had been promoted for a while now. She had to admit that Kristján had been right about her big influence having been a lonely bitter man with little to no friends due to his controversial work and... well, insufferable behavior to almost everyone around him.

Reba turned off the TV and walked over to Kristján standing in the open kitchen with the counter between them.

“I got this from Jackson's lawyer today.” He held out a box maybe the size of a shoe box. On top of it was a smaller one wrapped in silver paper and topped with a delicate bow tied around it. Reba hadn't known Jackson but the latter one didn't really seem very Alpha.
“This one is from Vivian,” Kristján’s answered her unspoken question. Reba stopped in her tracks. Why had Vivian sent him something?

“For you.”

Her heart clenched tightly and her throat closed around a semi-hard lump. She had managed to avoid thinking about Vivian as good as she could. Well, her homemade problems in her own relationship had helped her distract her mind from her loss.

“What's in yours?” she asked to win more time. Reba could see that Kristján had already opened it. Probably on his way home or even when he had still been in his office.

He sighed before answering, “An old book he had borrowed when we had been in boarding school. It's a practical joke. When I accused him of having lost it when we were both 16, I guess, he'd said he would only give it back over his dead body.”

Kristján cleared his throat. The lump in her own was becoming harder by the sight of his sad eyes. “And all the documents for his investments. He had left me his entire money and wealth. Pretty useless when you'd rather have the chance to make up for a stupid quarrel with your best friend.”

He had to take a deep breath and held out Reba's package in its silver wrapping, waiting for her to take it. She kneaded her hands nervously. She had no idea why Vivian would send her something like that. Especially, after her death. Or hadn't she sent it? Was it her inheritance and it was a mistake the lawyer had made? What would Vivian leave her after her death? Why would anything go to Reba? Wouldn't she send everything to Julia or Kimberley? They had been her best friends. It would only make sense to let them have what had belonged to her.

“If you don't want to take it you can say no. Nobody would hold it against you,” Kristján said quietly and placed her package on the kitchen counter, giving her the power of choice to open it now or leave it there for however long she would need to build up the courage to do so.

But she couldn't say no. Vivian had put effort into packing whatever Reba would receive in a moment. It would be unfair and disrespectful towards her and the many years they had shared a room to not accept her inheritance.

Reba slowly walked to the kitchen counter and lifted the package. It was light and she could already hear noise coming from the inside. A long-forgotten memory of that exact noise made her heart sink. Reba's fingers moved on their own account. She ripped the package open under the worried eyes of her mate and sobbed loudly when she saw it.

Reba moved back a few steps and stared at the silvery glistening baby's rattle. It had been the only thing Vivian had owned that had belonged to her mother. She had guarded it like gold. If at all, Vivian had always said, she would've only ever given it to her own children and nobody else, not even her mate.

Kristján moved to her side and hugged her closely, running a soothing hand down her back, and humming softly. Reba hadn't even noticed she had dissolved into tears right in the middle of their living room.

“I will put it away,” he murmured in an attempt to calm her down with it but Reba shook her head.

“No, she wanted me to have it. I will not let you throw it away now.”

“I'm not going to throw it away, Reba, I will put it in my safe in my bank, nobody but you and I will ever get their hands on it. I promise. But I don't want a baby's rattle in our home.”
There was desperation and hurt in his voice. Oh god, Reba thought and snaked her arms around his middle. She had been egoistic by denying him his feelings again. She needed to stop that! As an answer, she nodded and Kristján let go to lock away the item that caused them so much pain.

There was a letter attached to it but Reba would read the words of her lost friend when she wasn't feeling the deep sobs shaking her body anymore and she was sure she could take it. That could be tomorrow, in a year or when she was old and grey.

No matter how much she tried, what they did to distract themselves, their inability to have a family of their own would always be like a heavy cloak laying over them. She couldn't get into Heat, she couldn't get pregnant, they would never have children.
Two days after locking the "gift" Vivian had sent her away, Reba wanted to read the letter. She had to read it. Not an hour went by in which she didn't think about it. Reba had tried to kill herself and she hadn't bothered to write anything, not to Vivian, not to Scarlett, not Kristján. She would've just vanished without saying goodbye.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Kristján, I am."

He hadn't tried to convince her otherwise. Kristján brought the letter with him home the following day. Elva had asked her sister-in-law to come in for a check-up, just a normal one, not a word about fertility or aphrodisiac pills was spoken the whole afternoon. They had laughed together but Reba had also talked about her break-up with Scarlett. Elva had only made an undistinguishable mh-sound and changed topic. It was almost as if she tried everything in her power to avoid the baby-topic. And Reba was so glad about it because for once she had a nice afternoon without feeling like she was missing something or something was wrong with her.

Unfortunately, that changed as soon as she came home. Kristján was already there with the letter in his hand.

"Do you want me to leave you alone with it?"

Reba shook her head and sat down on the couch. She twisted and turned the envelope in her hands until she had gathered the courage to open it.

A whiff of Vivian's favorite perfume, that flowery smell Mrs. Gold had sent her to detention for when she had found it in her possession, hit her like a warm summer breeze. Her hands shook when Reba unfolded the page inside.

_Dear Reba,_

_I know we have never been best friends but I think you are the only one who deserves a goodbye. When I saw you in the doctor's waiting room, I knew what I had to do. I don't know why you have been there. Maybe because you are struggling with fulfilling your purpose like I am or maybe you are happily carrying a bunch of babies under your heart. It doesn't matter._

_I haven't been good at showing my gratefulness towards you. We had our quarrels and fights but whenever I needed you, you were there. Not Julia. Not Kimberley. You._

_I thought long and hard about my life and what real friendship really consists of and I realized that gossiping and making fun of others isn't feeling real to me anymore. If I had only thought of you earlier. Maybe talking to you would've spared me a few lonely tears. I guess you would've been there for me like you've been after my first time with an Alpha or when I was too afraid to make a single step out of our room on the day of our auction._

_I'm sorry for all the times I have been a bitch to you. You have never been nasty or unfriendly to me_
although I have given you enough reason to hate me. I'm sorry I can't tell you this in person but I have made my final decision. Life has given me lemons and I simply couldn't make lemonade with them. I hope you will forgive me some day and take the only thing I ever cared about, the only thing that ever really meant something to me.

Please give it to your children like I had wanted to give it to mine. Please let my final act be one that ends with the crystal-clear laughter of happy children and the ringing of my mother's rattle.

I'm so sorry, Reba, and I hope you will be happier than I was.

Vivian Arbiter

Kristján's arms were wrapped around her before her sob had completely left her throat. She had never realized how lonely Vivian had been amongst her so-called friends. Hadn't Jackson been there enough?

Reba snuggled closer into Kristján's chest and took deep calming breaths, filling her lungs with his scent and letting him soothe her with his low humming. He didn't ask for the content of the letter. If she wanted him to know she would either tell him or hand it to him to read it himself which she did as soon as her tears had dried.

Reba decided to visit Vivian's grave the following day. She wanted to tell her old roommate about her problems. Yes, she knew that she was just talking to a stone and cold earth but it felt good to get it off her chest. She also thanked her for the rattle and promised to cherish it like the precious gift it was. She was feeling down on her way back home. Sam had quitted a week earlier after the biggest publisher in America had paid him an insane amount of money for his book and the ones that were already in progress. The new driver was silent and always looked pissed. He was a stranger and so Reba kept her thoughts to herself until she was home again.

When did you want to tell me?” Kristján asked coldly, sitting in the living room.

Reba furrowed her brows in confusion when she toed off her shoes and walked towards him. “What are you talking about?”

Kristján pulled out something that looked like a bill and handed it to her. One line was marked red. Reba swallowed thickly when she saw what he meant. She recognized the complicated name of her aphrodisiac pills.

“That wasn't a perfume I smelled on you a few weeks ago, right?”

She shook her head no, staring down to the sheet of paper in her hands.

“So, if my financial manager hadn't thought it a mistake and contacted me, I would've never found out what pills you are taking again?” he asked and almost sounded hurt.

“I'm not taking them anymore. I tried one and it didn't work. I haven't touched them since then.”

“And you didn't find it necessary to inform me?” Kristján stood up and buried his shaking fists deep in the pockets of his pants. “Didn't we already have this conversation about trust? Why didn't you talk to me about it?”
“I didn't want to build up your hope and then crush it again. Please, Kristján, I didn't want to hurt you.”

He huffed a bitter laugh and shook his head. “Well, that definitely backfired now. Because not telling me did hurt me, having my financial manager telling me this instead of you hurt me, Reba!”

She felt a lump forming in her throat as she apologized over and over again but if fell on deaf ears.

“Why don't you trust me, Reba? What do I have to do to earn your trust completely? I don't need to be protected by you. That's my fucking job as your goddamn Alpha!”

He cursed under his breath for shouting at her. But he was just so angry that she would exclude him from such an important part of her life and in the end his life too. “Listen, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have screamed.”

“No, Kristján, it's okay. You have every right to,” Reba murmured guiltily and looked down to the paper in her hands. Her chest was in a vice again. She should've known something was off when she left the elevator.

“No, it's not.” He let out a deep sigh. “Screaming doesn't help.”

“Yes, it does. Sometimes screaming out your anger is better than having it building up inside you until you snap,” she quoted Elva from earlier when they had talked about how important little fights were to clear the air again.

“Why did you get those pills?” He sank down on the couch and ran a hand over his tired face.

“Well, why do you think?”

“I'm too tired to think, Reba, that's why I'm asking. I'm not a mind reader.”

Reba sat down next to him and thought about taking his hand but decided against it.

“I wanted to feel something,” she whispered and could see him sit straighter from the corners of her eye.

“Does that mean you feel nothing?” Kristján asked and sounded hurt in addition to his tiredness.

“Not that kind, no. I don't have the desire to touch you the way that would help us to take the next step back to a normal life.”

“A normal life is something out of reach for us, Reba. You tried the pills and it hadn't worked. Why spend hundreds of dollars for meds that don't work? I'm rich but I'm sick of spending money on unnecessary things.”

A pang of anger shot through her and Reba stood up. “A chance of feeling again is unnecessary in your eyes?”

“It doesn't help, Reba! It only ends in tears and frustration!”

“And what if it had worked?” she snapped angrily. Reba refused to let him make her feel stupid just for trying!

“Than I would've still be angry at you for not telling me!” he countered and she had to give him that. Yes, she hadn't told him but only to avoid all this anger he was swimming in right now.
Kristján shook his head and took a deep breath. If he kept on shouting at her he would sleep on the couch tonight, he knew it so he shut his mouth about this topic and went on with their usual routine of making dinner together and spending the evening either together on the couch or separate; he in his office, she either on the couch or in her old room reading.

The next day Reba was alone. Kristján had gone for his morning round of jogging and had let her sleep in a bit. She stood in her old bedroom, having moved into Kristján's bedroom completely now made this room nothing but a giant walk-in closet and reading place, and sorted through her still outsourced wardrobe for something she hadn't worn in a while and wanted to give a little revival again when she suddenly heard music coming from downstairs. Mixed in with the professional voice of the singer was another all too familiar one, pitched and stretched like she'd never heard it before.

Reba threw on a maxi sweater which was actually a normal sweater she had snatched from Kristján's clean laundry a week earlier. He had noticed, obviously, but he liked seeing her so comfortable in his own clothes. Reba sneaked downstairs and wanted to burst out into laughter at what she saw but she bit her lip hard.

Kristján was in the kitchen in his sport clothes. His skin glistened with salty sweat, some dripping from his chin or running down his temples or neck. Kristján sang with passion although he missed about every second note.

She hadn't touched the aphrodisiac pills ever since the first try and especially not after their argument yesterday, but something in her started to feel… different. Reba wasn't blind, she knew how sexy her Alpha was but she just didn't feel any desire to give herself to him. Up until now at least. It wasn't like she suddenly swooned and flung herself around his neck, suck on his tongue and graze her teeth over his lower lip. No, there wasn't a blazing fire, just a spark, but a spark nonetheless.

“My clothes look so much better on you than they do on me,” Kristján said loudly and turned down the volume of the music.

“Shall we try the other way around too?”

“What, me in a dress?” he snorted and chuckled darkly, “I would burst every seam.”

“And my dresses are too precious for that.”

“Exactly.”

He climbed up the stairs to her and the thick smell of his sweat lit a new greater spark inside her.

“I'm going to take a shower. Can you prepare breakfast while I wash my sweat off?”

Reba swallowed thickly and nodded. But she had no interest in making breakfast. So, she sneaked into Kristján's en-suit to watch him. He didn't seem to sense her standing by the door. Silently humming the song he had sung downstairs, he took off his sweaty sport clothes and turned on the shower to preheat. Reba let her eyes wander over his glistening, tanned skin. His muscles looked smooth under it but Reba knew they were hard and warm, even hot now after his workout.

She bit her lower lip, trying not to make a noise while she kept on staring at him, seemingly unnoticced.

“I thought only dirty, old men were voyeurs,” Kristján joked after he had spotted her in the mirror over the sink. He was completely naked now, oblivious to his exposed body to her. Of course, why should he? She was his mate and they had already seen, touched, kissed every spot of each other's
bodies. Reba swallowed again and her eyes grew wider. She wanted to flee and bang her head against the wall.

“Do you want to join me?” Kristján asked quickly before she could vanish.

“Um, I don’t really know.”

He slowly walked closer, in his eyes no trace of lust or anything sexual. How could he be naked and not think about sex? She certainly did right now. And it was frightening her.

“Nothing will happen if you don’t want it, sweetheart.”

Oh God, not that endearment and this velvet tone in his voice. Reba could feel her heart beat faster the closer he came. She kneaded her hands nervously. His scent was almost intoxicating, lulling her closer to him.

Was she ready to forget her inner turmoil and finally make the step on her own? Could the spark become a flame under the hot spray of the shower that was already steaming the entire bathroom?

Kristján extended his hand with a patient look on his face. Reba felt like her body was acting on its own account. She felt her arm lift and her fingers interlace with his before he pulled her towards his body.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone wants to moan about how long it had taken me to upload or how "short" this chapter is, I will not be able to upload as regularly as I did before due to my university schedule and social life. So please just be grateful I am still taking the time writing this for you and don’t moan and groan in my direction.
She snapped out of her racing thoughts when his fingers curled around the hem of the sweater. His eyes were giving her a sense of security she had never felt before. No, he wouldn't do anything she didn't want him to do today. She was save with him. The bond in her chest was humming like a whole orchestra of beautiful harps, guiding her to finally lose all doubts and fears she had stored up inside her.

Reba didn't even realize he had her down to her underwear until she felt his warm hands cover her exposed belly and back. Suddenly her primal flight instinct kicked in, the feeling of being chased and the need to run!

She took a step back just when Kristján dipped his head to kiss her.

“I'm sorry,” Reba breathed and saw disappointment flicker up in his eyes but it was soon replaced with a mixture of sadness and frustration. Kristján didn't say a word when she grabbed the sweater of the floor and vanished from the bathroom.

Reba could only breathe again when she was downstairs in the kitchen. She closed her eyes and cursed her own panic. Why was it so hard for her to let go of her fears and simply trust him? Kristján wouldn't have done anything but still...

She was so deep in her own ongoing self-butcher ing that she didn't hear him come into the kitchen after he had finished showering. Only his hands around her waist woke her up with a light gasp.

“What do I need to do?”

“Um, you could set the table. I'll make tea and hot chocolate and all the rest,” she murmured and tried not to sound as miserable as she felt. Reba knew he could sense her mood so there was actually no sense in masking it.

“No, I meant, what do I need to do to make you finally trust me?”

Her breath caught in her throat and Reba slowly turned around in his embrace.

“I am so sorry, Kristján. I… I only need time.”

“How much? It's been 8 months now. I love you. Don't you believe me when I tell you that?” he asked, sounding almost desperately.

“No, I believe you and I— love you, too. She wanted to say it but couldn't. The words just wouldn't leave her mouth. Instead she snuggled into his chest and sighed deeply, “I wish I could just let my instincts guide me. It would all be so much easier than.”
“Yes, it would be,” he agreed whispering and took a deep breath. “Let's eat breakfast and, well, just forget about this worthless try.”

The tone in his voice broke her heart. He set the table silently and that silence didn't change during the breakfast or the entire day really. Kristján had work to do but did it on the couch while "watching" TV with her cuddled into his side. They spent the whole day like this. His free, right hand was draped over her shoulder while he read report after report about the economical state of the different departments of his company.

He sighed more than once out of pure boredom but it had to be done and it kept his mind from the remembering the morning disaster. They had learned to separate their emotions, or rather their current dispute, from their physical closeness because that was really the only thing that worked by now between them. Being close and not talking about quarrels was easier than solving the root of the problem.

But despite him holding her and the feeling of being close to him, Reba's mind wouldn't shut up, no matter how much she tried to concentrate on the TV talking or his calm heartbeat under her cheek. His sighs were impossible to be ignored and he tensed up more and more under her. She felt so stupid for chickening out this morning. His current anger or, well, discomfort from what she was sensing was all her fault.

An especially deep sigh made her look up just in time to see Kristján pinch the bridge of his nose with a pained expression on his face.

“Headaches again?” she asked silently and lifted her head from his chest. Kristján nodded but kept on working nonetheless. He released her from his light embrace when she sat up straighter next to him.

“What are you doing?”

“Economical, boring stuff,” he murmured and flicked his finger over the screen without once lifting his eyes from the tablet in his hands.

Reba thought for a long moment, looking at him and finally coming to the conclusion to stop being a coward. This morning had been a step into the right direction before she had fled again. But not anymore. Reba was done with running away. She stood up and held out her hand for him. Kristján gave it a suspicious side glance.

“I have an idea.”

“I need to work.”

“It's Saturday and you've worked enough,” she chirped and smiled at him. Kristján lifted his eyebrows at her for a second. A few hours ago she'd ran from him again and now?

“Don't you trust me?”

He huffed a laugh and turned off the tablet. “Sure, why not. It's not like you would lure me into no-man's-land.”

Reba interlaced her fingers with his and pulled him with her up the stairs and inside the bedroom.

“What are you doing?” he asked, almost sounding worried when she pulled him over to the bed.

“Help you relax.”
Reba gently pushed him backwards until his calves hit the end of the bed and started working on the buttons of his dress shirt. He caught her hands midway done. Reba looked up into his questioning face.

“Nothing will happen if you don't want it, sweetheart,” she whispered and painted a faint smile on his face with his own words from this morning. He was still unsure of what she had in mind and the drumming headaches were getting worse.

“Do you trust me?”

“Of course, I do.”

“Then take off your shirt and lay down on your stomach.”

Kristján furrowed his brow but did what she said. Lying down made him relax immediately and he let out a soft moan when he closed his eyes. Reba's gaze was fixed on the naked skin in front of her. She let her eyes wander down the little groove of his spine, licking her lips involuntarily when it disappeared inside the waistband of his dark jeans.

Reba climbed onto the bed and straddled his strong thighs. Her warm hands travelled up to his shoulders, curling her fingers around the tense muscles, and starting to massage them. Kristján groaned into the pillow his face was buried in and directed her with “more left” or “a little bit lower” right to the source of his tenseness. It didn't take long until he was a moaning mess under her fingertips.

She couldn't keep herself from smiling. God, she loved pleasing him like this, making him feel better with something as simple as a massage. Why had she never thought about this earlier?

When the last knots in his muscles had disappeared, Kristján had to force himself to stay awake. He could've fallen asleep like this without a second thought. But instead he turned around under her. Reba lifted her pelvis off his thighs but was still straddling him when he lay flat on his back under her. Kristján's hands found the warm, soft flesh of her thighs, and squeezed it appreciatively.

The hem of her big sweater had already hitched up high around her hips, giving him a clear view of the light blue panties she was wearing today. Kristján had to force himself to look away and stop thinking what was only inches away from his cock. Don't ruin it, he thought over and over again, even closing his eyes to keep his mind off the obvious thing in front of him.

When she moved her pelvis over his middle he bit his lower lip. Whatever she was trying, she was making it very hard not to think of sex.

“Open your eyes,” she whispered and rolled her hips against his crotch. The friction was a heavenly torture. He did and wasn't sure if he could believe what he saw in her eyes. Love, devotion, sexual desire.

“What are you doing?” he asked with a raspy voice, massaging her thighs in the same rhythm in which she drew little circles with her pelvis on his lap.

Reba lowered her lips to his and in the moment before they touched she breathed, “Finally following my instincts.”

When their lips met, it was like lightning hitting him. His hands clutched onto her, pulling her closer and moaning into her mouth when her grinding got faster. He could feel himself getting hard under her. Kristján prayed that she wouldn't run away from this again. He wanted her, he loved her.
But suddenly she pulled away and he already feared the worst but she only sat up straighter, reached for the hem of the sweater and pulled it over her head. Reba presenting her mate with a perfect view of her blue bra holding her bosom that ached to be set free. Kristján sat up and buried his face between her full breasts. Out of reflex he took a deep breath expecting to smell her intoxicating, sweet scent he remembered from the last time they had had sex. But he was disappointed once again. No scent, no reaction in form of a twitching cock straining against the thick fabric of his pants, nothing but a lungful of air.

A cold shower ran down his spine when he suddenly thought about what they were about to do. He grabbed her wrists when she was working on his pants, making her stop abruptly. Kristján swallowed thickly when he pushed her gently off his lap.

“What’s wrong?” Reba asked, her voice heavy with lust and desire. Kristján glanced at her flushed, red cheeks and naked, perfect body. Now, after all those months, he was the one who chickened out when she finally wanted him.

“I have to go to work early tomorrow.”

Reba furrowed her brow and tried figuring out what this was about all of the sudden. Tomorrow was Sunday and although Kristján was like a work horse in some respect, he never worked on a Sunday. She had a suspicion what was really behind this but waited if he would tell her or not. Kristján sat on the edge of the bed, his face buried in his hands while he took deep breaths, trying to will his unneeded erection away.

“I don’t care if you knot me or not,” she whispered eventually and inched closer, “Maybe your body remembers mine even without the scent.”

Reba snaked her arms around his middle and pressed her almost naked body against his.

“Maybe,” she kissed a small trail from his left shoulder, over his tattoo, right under his ear, “I get my scent back like this. Like a kickstarter for my body chemistry.”

Kristján hummed thoughtfully and turned around to her with worried eyes.

“Don’t you think it’s worth a try? And as far as I remember, I did get my fair share of orgasms from you even before you came.”

“Don’t you forget the fact that I purred you into the mood?” he asked skeptically and lifted an eyebrow at her. Reba simply continued peppering his skin with featherlight kisses.

“I am already in the mood,” she breathed against his skin and closed her eyes when she heard a deep growl rise up his throat. Kristján’s lips were on hers in no time at all. Their kiss was all tongue and teeth like love starved teenagers. Reba opened her bra before getting to work on his pants. He leaned backwards flat onto the mattress and toed off his socks while his hands were already massaging the softness of her breasts. Her nipples were as hard as his cock and begged to be sucked; he could almost hear them scream for his lips to finally close around them.

Reba scratched him with her nails when she pulled at his jeans roughly. Her mouth watered when she saw his erection spring free. He was beautiful, not just handsome or sexy, no, in his complete nakedness, he was beautiful. She needed to be naked too!

Her panties joined his pants on the floor and she climbed back onto him, grinding her wet pussy against his thick, hot shaft. She could feel every vein on it. Kristján pulled her face down to his with one hand while the other tested if she was wet enough to take him in. She was so wound up that the
brush of his fingertips over her clit alone almost made her come. He muffled her lusty moan with his lips and reveled in the taste of her tongue. Sucking on it, he grinded up against her and almost drove her insane.

“Fuck me, Kristján,” she whispered huskily. Her eyes seemed to consist of nothing but her pupils when she looked down at him, lifting her pelvis for him to guide the glistening tip of his cock against her tight opening. Reba slowly lowered herself and took in a deep, shuddering breath when he filled her out completely. It was almost too tight, just like it had been in their first night.

But back then he’d purred her wet. Kristján was out of his mind but not enough to allow himself that one primal sound to leave his throat. Her body produced more slick and her muscles slowly relaxed around him. Agonizingly long seconds for him because none of them moved. Reba had her eyes closed and her mouth wide open, almost as if she was in pain.

Painful pleasure would be a better description. Her body remembered his, his scent, the smell of her slick and his precum mixed together, and their shallow pants as the only sound in the bedroom was like heaven. When she opened her eyes again, she was smiling down at him. His hair was a mess, his skin as flushed as hers and the blue of his irises had been almost completely swallowed by the blackness of his pupils. This lids fluttered shut again the second Reba moved her hips. Little movements at first until his was completely covered in her slick.

“Oh god, Reba,” he breathed throatily and grabbed her hips to fasten up her movements. She balanced herself with her hands on his chest, her fingertips nestling between his chest hair. Kristján met her thrusts with his own, burying his cock deep inside her, producing a sharp smack every time they met. Reba's breath grew heavier the harder they thrust against each other. Her hair hung down in front of her face like a pitch-black curtain. She closed her eyes, losing herself in the sound, noises and smells in the room. It almost didn't matter that hers was missing.

Kristján could feel his balls grow tighter. He wanted, no, he needed to come.

“Just a bit longer,” she begged and guided two finger down to her clit, rubbing quick circles to hurry up her close climax. She could almost taste it on her tongue, sweet and salty in one. She had forgotten how wonderful it had felt to have sex, to feel him move inside her, feel… the knot on the base swell like it did right now!

Kristján was chasing his own orgasm too much to really pay any attention. His fingers dug deeper into her flesh. Tomorrow she would have five little round bruises on either side but they would only be proofs that this isn't just a vivid wet dream. This was reality!

“I can't-” The rest turned into a long, primal growl as he buried his knot inside her with a particularly sharp thrust when he came. The hot fluid suddenly filling her paired with the breathtaking sensation of his knot stretching her almost painfully pushed her over the edge, letting her tumble into her shuddering orgasm. Her inner muscles twitched in the same maddening rhythm as his cock was, pumping more and more of his seed inside her.

She collapsed on top of him and had to catch her breath for what felt like forever. Reba listened to her blood rushing in her ears together with the hammering of his heartbeat under her cheek. Kristján wrapped her into his arms as soon as he could grasp a clear thought again. After so many months of living like a monk he needed longer to recover than he would've needed a year ago.

“So, I guess my body did remembered yours,” he panted and smiled broadly when she started laughing. Reba lifted her head and kissed him long and tenderly, leaving him even more breathless than he already was.
“I love you, Kristján.”

He could feel his heart skip a beat at the sight of her happy, glowing face only inches from his. “I love you too, Reba.”

Kristján wrapped his arms around her tighter and scooped them both up on the mattress so that they could fall asleep still hooked together by his knot behind her pelvic bone. He covered them both with his blanket and fell asleep with the hope that tonight was the beginning of their journey to past glories. Maybe this really was the kickstarter they had needed all along. No pills had helped them. Perhaps it had really been this easy. But had their way to here and now really been so easy?

It didn't matter. They were here, knotted, satisfied, loved by one another. Things finally took a turn to the better.
I know it's been a while since my last update but life has gotten in the way of my creative writing vibes. Sorry.

The next morning held another disappointment ready for Kristján. He woke with her snuggled into his side and snoring softly. Her head rested on his chest, her hair was right under his nose but no matter how deep his breaths were, Kristján never even found the slightest hint of her scent in the air.

Well, maybe the kickstarter had failed as well. He wouldn't object another try but a change to the better would've been a nice change for once.

Reba stirred in his arms right before her eyelids fluttered open and her eyes sought his. There was a smile in them without her lips curling up to one. Her expression changed when she noticed why he looked down at her with a frown.

“I guess, we will just have to accept it eventually,” she whispered and cuddled into him even more. She wasn't sure why she was so… unaffected by this final fact but it was better than break out into crying once again.

“I guess so.” Kristján kissed the crown of her head and they both enjoyed a lazy morning together with the smell of last night's sex still faintly lingering in the air.

They enjoyed the new step their relationship had gone to the fullest in the future. Kristján still hoped one morning he would finally smell her scent again but was very talented in disguising his disappointment from her morning after morning.

Two weeks after their second "first time" Kristján suddenly started to notice things changing.

“You eat a lot,” he told her bluntly one Thursday evening when he was still reading some reports from Denmark and she was just returning with a new bowl of cereals for the third time this evening. They had retired into the bedroom an hour ago but none of them had really been tired enough to fall asleep. So, he had decided to work (what else) and she was reading a new book (again, what else).

“Are you saying, I'm getting fat?” she screeched irritated and gave him a death glare.

“Nooo, I'm saying you're eating a lot for two days now. Extra portions at breakfast and dinner. I can't say what your lunch looks like but. Well, it just reminds me of when you -”

“Stop. I'm not getting my Heat,” she cut him off and looked down to the cornflakes swimming in the bowl in her hands. Kristján put the tablet to the side and stood up to walk to her. She wrinkled her nose when he touched her shoulders.

“Why are you so sure about that?”

“Because I don't feel like it, Kristján!” She slapped his hands away and brought the bowl back
downstairs. He sat on her side on the bed when she returned.

“What do you mean by that?” he sighed and almost looked heartbroken about her certainty.

“I mean that whenever I entered Pre-Heat I felt fidgety and… warm.” Reba sat down next to him and leaned her head against his shoulder. “I don't feel like that.”

“But the signs are there.”

“Kristján, please stop. Can't you just let go?” Reba whined and let out a heavy sigh. Why didn't he realize that breaking his heart by crushing his hope was only hurting her as well? He hugged her tightly and buried his nose in her hair.

“Please go to Elva tomorrow and let her run some tests. Maybe something has changed.”

“Kristján -”

“Please,” he cut her off and was relieved when she nodded eventually.

Two days later they were in Elva's examination room. Kristján sat in the chair with Reba standing behind him. She laid her hands on his tense shoulders while Elva looked through the results of her previously made blood tests and gynecological examination.

“So?” he asked, chewing his lower lip nervously.

“Well, you said you can knot her?”

He closed his eyes. God, it was terrible to talk to his little sister about his sex life.

“Yes, I can knot her when we sleep with each other,” he answered. Reba sensed his discomfort and squeezed his shoulders once.

“I don't see why you shouldn't. The hormone level is actually on normal.”

“Then why is she still scentless? Can she get into Heat?”

Elva looked at him for a long moment. He sounded desperate and looked tired. Wasn't he sleeping enough? Reba gave him comfort. This was the first time, Elva actually saw the change and not just heard about it from her brother. It was nice to see it but it was hard to say the next words.

“I don't know. Your results all look perfectly fine, Reba. I… I'm afraid I don't have an answer to why your condition hasn't changed.”

“It has changed,” she retorted and kissed Kristján on the top of his head, “I feel better.”

“But you aren't better,” he hissed and stood up. He had to walk to get rid of the cramped up energy inside him.

“Kristján, relax. Freaking out doesn't help.”

“Shut up, Elva!” he snapped and earned himself a very surprised look from his sister and Reba. “You have two children! You can have even more! I DON'T!”

Reba walked towards him and grasped his face to make him look into her eyes. She hummed soothingly, trying to calm him down from his meltdown.
“You can have children,” she whispered but he only shook his head.

“No, not without you. We've already had this conversation. You are my mate. I want to make you happy and keep you safe. This is my nature. I love you.”

Reba pulled him into her arms and ran her hands up and down his back. There was a bitter taste on her tongue; his hurting distress. He was supposed to be the strong one but after the whole hoping and disappointment his skin had lost its thickness. Little blows already drew blood.

“I'm truly sorry, Kristján,” they heard Elva say behind them. Her sympathy couldn't help them. She had been their last hope that something might actually have changed but she had failed them like all the previous times. None of her pills had worked, her words had been those of comfort for both of them but in the end, nothing had come out of it.

“Let's go home,” Reba whispered and pulled Kristján out of Elva's examination room. Right before leaving she looked back over her shoulder to her sister-in-law and mouthed a sad “thank you”.

A week later it almost seemed like Kristján had finally grown accustomed to the unalterable fact that they would never have any children of their own.

“I will have to travel to Europe for the next two weeks,” he informed her while they made dinner together.

“One week.”

Kristján chuckled but shook his head.

“Two weeks. There are some problems with my hydro plants in Denmark and the solar plants in Spain. I already calculated everything as efficiently as possible.”

“But two weeks is such a long time,” she countered and put down her kitchen knife. The tone in her voice almost broke his heart. It was the look on her face that really got him. She looked like he would abandon her like an old dog on a highway.

“I would rather stay home with you as well, Reba, but I can't.”

“Why can't you send Henry?” she whined and wrapped her arms around his middle.

“Because he's having a second child and his mate is a very demanding pregnant woman as it seems.” He sighed deeply and rested his chin on her head. “I will be home again as soon as I can.”

“Can't I come with you? There is nothing that holds me here when you're gone.”

Kristján sighed again. “I want you to be safe and I would be in one meeting after the other. I would constantly worry about you.”

“But not for two weeks, Kristján, please.”

“Alright, maybe I can skip a few appointments and make it in ten days. How does that sound to you?” he asked, hoping to get her approval. He didn't want to go but he really had to. There had been some inaccuracies in the last couple of economic reports and there had been rumors about corruption he needed to investigate these inaccuracies.

“Still too long,” Reba murmured against his chest but she knew he wouldn't leave her if it wasn't
totally necessary. Suddenly she got stiff in his arms. “We're going to miss your birthday in a week.”

“Unfortunately, yes.”

She let out a small whimper. “But can't you reschedule your trip?”

“Reba,” he grumbled, closing his eyes. They didn't talk about the trip for the rest of the three days they had together. They rather enjoyed the time they had and Reba had won the argument that if he had to leave her for two weeks (or less) he would have to make up for it by no going to work this week. Kristján couldn't really say anything against it but he had wanted to argue with her only because making it up to her in the bedroom was worth any little fight they had. Stress was on "little" here.

The day of his departure was a gloomy one. Reba was holding back tears and tried not to show how she felt. Needless to say that Kristján already knew how she was feeling deep inside. He had to force himself to let go of her when the driver rang the doorbell for the second time.

“Please, stay,” Reba begged. The bond was already making her want to throw up and he was still with her. She didn't even want to imagine what it would feel like with an ocean separating them from one another.

“I'll be back in no time at all.” Kristján groaned annoyed when the driver rang a third time. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

They kissed like they would never see each other again before Kristján left. Reba blinked back some tears and climbed the stairs into their bedroom. Everything smelled so wonderfully of him and what they had done last night, three times. Their "goodbye" had taken them the whole night. Which wasn't too bad because like that they were both tired and it would help him with his jet lag and her with her craving for him.

Reba collected the dirty sport clothes Kristján had purposefully not put into the laundry machine, just so she could build herself a fort with it whenever she missed him so much it hurt. It had been terrible that she couldn’t do the same for him. There was nothing in this apartment, nothing on this planet that still carried her scent.

Reba spent most of her days in bed, only getting up to get herself a snack from the kitchen, the phone for when Kristján would call, and his laptop from the office to kill time. Reba developed an obsession with Youtube videos. Especially the DIY's. Just anything to keep her mind occupied. Amazon was a big temptation as well. She found everything she needed for winter, Christmas, birthdays, everything she could think of, until finally the phone rang at 7pm.

“Kristján, how was your flight?”

“I slept for most of it which is a bummer because I'm in Madrid and it's midnight but I'm awake and I can't sleep.”

“We can talk if you like.”

“That's why I called,” he laughed on the other end of the earth, “what have you done the whole day?”

“Doing some online shopping,” she sighed and glanced over to the screen of the laptop.
“But I will still be rich when I come back, right?” There was slight worry in his voice.

“You could buy Australia and you worry about me shopping?” Reba huffed and heard him chuckle.

“Yes, I am. Are you buying Australia?”

“No, I started with your birthday present and build my way up from there. I think my goal in ten days is owning a few houses, a small country and a publishing company,” she joked but it seemed Kristján wouldn't mind her doing it for real.

“As long as you're happy I'm happy. What did you buy me for my birthday?”

“If I told you now, it wouldn't be a surprise.”

She had found out that there was land available on Iceland that people could actually buy. She hoped he would be happy about this little piece of home. She had also found a book collection about myths and legends especially about Iceland which she had added to her shopping cart shortly before he had called. God, Reba really hoped he would be happy about it. And if not she could still make him his favorite food and get dirty between the sheets.

“Oh God, you sound like Delilah,” he murmured, “She used to torment us as kids with little hints and always grin like a cat when we were even more clueless after every new hint.”

Reba laughed lightly. She could imagine his grumpy face when his step-mother wouldn't tell him what they got for Christmas.

“I would've loved to get to know her.”

“You would've liked her… and maybe everything would be different if she was still around to knock me over the head more often.” The last part was spoken more silently.

“Maybe yes, maybe no. Nobody can tell, Kristján. But I promise I put some thought in your present.”

“Well, I hope so. It will be your first birthday present to me.”

Yes, last year she had been on Heat suppressions and she couldn't have cared less if he fucked her because it was his birthday or just because he wanted to. This year was so much different. She wanted to make him happy and see a big smile on his face when he came home in a few days. Reba was sure he would be smiling anyways when he was with her again bit still.

They chattered for hours until Reba's answers got more and more quieter and shorter.

“I guess I better let you sleep now.”

“No, it's fine. I'm awake,” she yawned and earned herself a hearty laugh from her mate.

“But for how long?” Kristján chuckled and sighed, “Really, I will see if I can catch some more sleep myself before the sun gets up and if not, there's always work waiting for me.”

“Yeah, I know that.”

“We talk again tomorrow, alright?”

“Mh-mh,” Reba murmured, her eyes already closing on their own accord.
“I love you.”

“Love you too.”

She fell asleep without even letting go of the phone. The next morning it was still in her hand.

They repeated their little goodnight ritual the next three days just like this time. He would tell her about the problems there were and that they were thinking about incorporating new technologies into his company. It was all very interesting because apart from Iceland he had never sounded so excited when talking about something. Reba mostly listened and enjoyed just hearing his voice. Her longing for him would become stronger with every day and slowly but surely his scent disappeared even from the dirtiest sport clothes he had left her.

Reba had really bought the land in Iceland and had commissioned an architect to at least plan a house there. Nothing huge, just big enough to escape the world for a month or two. She wanted big windows to see as much of the land (and hopefully the wild horses) as possible, and at least one fireplace in the master bedroom and one in the living room. When the architect had asked for guest rooms/kids rooms she had been silent, just telling him they would probably be alone in the house but that he should go with what was usual for a "weekend house" in the wilderness.

She had also done some research on Icelandic for a little treat on his actual birthday. So when she called him on his birthday, she couldn't stop her hands from trembling and her lips from smiling.

“Hello?” Kristján said tiredly and Reba almost felt guilty because he sounded like she'd just woken him up. Well, it was 6:30 pm so it would be 11:30 in Madrid. Not later than their usual talks. Anyway.

“Til hamingju með afmælið,” she stuttered and reread the phonetic signs she had written under the Icelandic version of Happy Birthday to make sure she hadn't mispronounced anything. It was surprisingly hard to find something spoken in a dead language. Even on the internet.

“You did what? Do you even know how dangerous that was? You could've died, Reba!”

Her heart stopped. “What? No, wait. I just -”

He interrupted her with loud laughter.

“Asshole!” she screamed into the phone but couldn't hinder her smile to curve the corners of her mouth up as well.

“Thank you for your birthday wished, sweetheart. You're Icelandic is getting better than my own.”

“I don't think so but thanks for the sweet lie. So how is your birthday?”

“Over. I'm in Denmark. My birthday ended half an hour ago.”

Again Reba's heart stopped. She hadn't looked up the time zones. It hit her more than she'd expected. There was actually a lump forming in her throat when she thought that she had simply missed his birthday, the birthday of the man she loved.

“Reba, are you still there?” Kristján asked when she didn't say anything.

“I'm so sorry,” she choked out and just wanted to turn back time to call him earlier. He must've been
waiting for her call but she had failed him on such a simple task.

“It's not the end of the world, Reba. Just wish me a happy belated birthday.”
“But I don't know the words.”

“You don't need the words. And actually you didn't make a mistake. It's still my birthday where you are, so...”

“Nice try but I messed it up,” Reba murmured and clutched some of his sport shirts to her chest, taking deep breaths and closing her eyes contently.

“Next year then.”

Well, she didn't have any other choices than to wait another year.

“How was your day?”

“Horrible. There had been a storm warning for middle Europe so no planes could fly. I drove the whole way up to Copenhagen which took me the entire day. But I have a visit in one of my hydro plants tomorrow morning so I couldn't effort to wait if I want to be home again in less than a week.”

“Still a week,” Reba sighed and slid deeper in her cocoon of old clothes and pillows she had collected all over the apartment.

“I know, sweetheart. But we already managed four days. You'll see, in a week you will wish I was still out of the house.”

“Never.”

Week later a lot had happened. The buying contract over the piece of land had finally made it's way through their lawyer's hands and payment has been done, so they actually owned a piece of Iceland now. Kristján had called her outraged when he had found the mole in his company in Copenhagen who had not only stolen money but had also worked for a rival firm from China.

And something else had happened Reba still couldn't really believe and therefore hadn't told Kristján anything about it on the phone. The surprise would be much greater when he arrived home and found it out himself.
Welcome Home

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Reba was in the kitchen cooking dinner. Kristján had called her when his plane had finally landed. He would be here any moment. Excitement grew with every second that passed by. This was a better Welcome Home than any of them could've ever planned.

Finally, when she heard the elevator door open, she bit her lip, smiling like an idiot with her back turned towards the door. She only turned around when she heard his travel bag fall from his shoulder and hit the marble floor with a loud thud.

“Oh my god,” he breathed shocked and stared at her like she grew a second head. Reba turned around and her smile widened even more. Her chest almost burst from having him close to her again.

“W-when?” Kristján stuttered, not moving from where his bag had hit the floor.

“About two days after your birthday I noticed it for the first time again. I thought my mind was just playing games but Elva confirmed it. My scent is back,” she announced and felt tears of joy burn in her eyes, “Don’t you want to come over and say hello?”

He remained where he was standing, still looking shocked.

“Kristján?” she asked slightly worried.

“I’m afraid if I do only one step I will wake up again and find this is just a cruel dream.”

“This isn’t a dream. This is reality.”

From one second to the other he let out a deep sigh and all the tension left his body. Within three strides he was right in front of her, cradling her face in his big, warm hands and taking a deep breath of the air between them. Kristján couldn’t believe this was actually happening. It was almost a shame that his own scent and the smell of the food she was cooking got mixed in with the intoxicating scent he had thought to never smell again.

Reba watched his face closely. His brows were knitted together, almost as if he was in pain, his nostrils were flared when he took in one breath deeper than the one before, his hands on her cheeks were shaking.

“Open your eyes,” she whispered and heard him almost sob when he followed her soft command. Her smile was like heaven on earth. “Welcome home, Kristján.”

His lips came crushing down on hers. She made a small startled noise but moaned against his lips when they wrapped each other’s arms around the other. Reba stumbled backwards against the kitchen counter when he got more and more desperate.

“I’ve prayed for this for months,” he whispered when he lifted her ass up on the countertop. She spread her legs for him, wrapping them around his hips and pulling him closer. This was where he was supposed to be. With her, wrapped in their mixed scents, and with their hearts beating fast against each other’s chests. His lips sought hers again, licking over her lower lips to ask for entry. Reba was more than happy to give him all he wanted. Her hands slid under his coat to push it off his shoulders. Kristján helped her before letting his hands roam over her body, savoring every curve he had missed so much the last ten days. Their kiss turned sloppy and wet.
“Why now?” he asked when he needed to catch his breath again. Kristján's body was already reacting to her scent. His cock was hard and pressing desperately against the fabric of his pants and her core.

“Elva says it could be that my scent had been there for a while now but that it was overshadowed by yours. And now with you gone it got stronger again… as some kind of mechanism to lure you back home to me.”

“Why didn't you tell me on the phone? I would've come back immediately.”

“I know. But I wanted it to be as strong as it could get before you came home.”

Suddenly he stepped back, leaving Reba craving for his warmth and closeness again. There was fear on his face.

“Is it going to fade away again with me here?”

Reba glided off the counter and shook her head no. “Elva said now that it's back it won't go anywhere as long as we don't make the same mistakes as we did before.”

Kristján shook his head violently. “Never again, I swear.”

She kissed him passionately. “I know.”

Reba intertwined her fingers with his and lead him upstairs into their bedroom. Reba had cleaned up the entire mess she had created in his absence but she'd kept the extra pillows because it gave the impression of a nest although her Heat didn't feel near at the moment. Elva had asked her to be just a little bit more patient and not to start worrying too soon. If nothing happened after her usual cycle, they would try fertility drugs again but Reba really didn't want to think about that right now.

Kristján's instincts kicked in when he was confronted with the sight of the plushy bed. He was naked in the blink of an eye, stripping her down as well while taking extra deep breaths and filling his lungs with her delicious scent.

God, he couldn't even express how he felt. It was a weird mixture of happiness, relief, desire, and hope. Hope that they really got another chance to make everything right this time, to have a family on their own, to fill this apartment with laughter and happiness.

Reba returned his kiss and moaned against his lips when he got her naked as well. They fell onto the bed, tangled legs and all with him on top of her. He was aching to feel her come undone under him and scream out his name when he filled her with his seed. That thought alone made him leak with precum.

She was dipping wet when he positioned his tip in front of her entrance.

“Fuck me, Kristján, please,” she begged with lust dripping heavily into her voice. Kristján was more than happy to oblige. He sunk into her slowly, filling her up to the hilt and drinking in the look of her face as she came undone. That look that spoke of complete bliss and pleasure, love and lust.

“I love you,” he growled and started moving inside her. With every sigh and moan he coaxed out of her he moved faster. Her scent was spurring him on. It almost felt like their first time, only better. Kristján knew, he wouldn't last long but she neither. Her inner muscled were gripping him as if they never wanted to let go of him again. Reba wrapped her thighs around his hips, driving him deeper inside her to hit that sweet spot that always made her lose every last piece of control when she was with him like this.
His knot came sooner than expected as did their shared, breathless orgasm. Kristján felt his cock twitch inside her pulsing pussy, shooting his cum into her depths where it belonged. He let out a breathy laugh when his head worked again, coming down from his ecstatic highs. Reba kissed him tenderly before he finally opened his eyes again and looked down at her sweaty, glowing face.

“I love you, too,” she whispered and they rolled into their usual sleeping position when knotted. She snuggled into his chest, her head swimming in the smell around her; his scent, hers, their mixed sweats, the odor of his precum smeared on her inner thighs coupled with her slick on the sheets. This was paradise!

They lay awake for a while after their second lovemaking this night. The second one was much slower, filled with kisses and love declarations.

“So, this is the reality now?” Kristján murmured in Reba’s damp hair. She hummed a "yes" and lifted her head to look into his face. He had never looked so happy and satisfied in his entire life and he had never felt like it. Their bond was beating in the same rhythm of their hearts, making it almost a separate living thing in their chests. It felt amazing, like everything was as best as it could ever get.

“And when can we expect your Heat to come around?” he asked and stroked his hand along her upper arms and shoulders, creating goosebumps all over her body until she shook.

“Elva isn't sure because she can't exactly say when it started again. Maybe still in October, maybe we'll have to wait until January. She will only start fertility drugs again if nothing happens until February.”

“But that's still so long,” Kristján whined and frowned.

“I know.” Reba reached up to kiss him tenderly. “But it's still better than nothing, right?”

Kristján's heart almost broke at the slight desperation in her voice.

“Of course, Reba. I love you and I will wait another year or a decade if I have to, if we need to.”

“I'd rather not wait a decade. You would be over sixty when our first child left whatever school we'll send it to,” she giggled and kissed him again.

“So, not a decade but maybe nine years, sweetheart. I just want you to know that I would be happy with just you and me. You mean everything to me, Reba.”

He stroked over her head and back.

She kissed him long and lovingly. Their tongues wrapping around each other, sending sparks into every last corner of their bodies.

“Why is it taking so long?”

“Relax, Kristján, our appointment is only in ten minutes. It's not Elva's fault we're early,” Reba murmured while sitting in Elva's waiting room, reading the published book of Sam Brooke aka her former chauffeur in the one hand, and holding Kristján's hand with the other. He was sweating.

It was almost Christmas and Kristján was getting nervous with each day that passed without her Heat setting in. Reba was, unbelievably, calm. Too calm for Kristján, so he compensated it by freaking out.
“I'm her brother and you're her sister-in-law. She shouldn't let us wait like here usual patients.”

“Kristján, calm down, please. You're making me feel nauseous.”

“Sorry,” he murmured and kissed the back of her hand. Just when he had forced himself to calm down a bit the door to Elva's examination room opened and a brightly smiling couple of an Alpha and Omega left the room. The Omega was heavily pregnant, at least triplets. Reba still felt a pinch of jealousy when she saw a sight like that because, although she was more relaxed since she got her scent back, she was still worrying that this might be her final state. A scent but no Heat.

She had argued with Kristján ever since he had come back from Europe to be patient but the last days their fights had gotten worse and worse. The sad climax was last night when Reba had been so angry at him that he had spent the night in her old bedroom. Their version of sleeping on the couch.

“Next are you two,” Elva announced and smiled at Kristján with a scolding look on her face. God, she hated it when her brother was early and demanded to be seen. All those years she had spent at university, in hospital, and eventually in her own practice, and Kristján was still her older brother and ordered her around like she was still a little girl.

“So, what's the matter? You don't smell pregnant so you haven't had your Heat yet. I told you to be patient, Reba.”

Reba snorted a laugh when she sat down and heard Kristján growl lowly behind her.

“Yes, you did. Now you only have to tell your brother. He's starting to bite his nails.”

“I am not!”

“Metaphorically, Kristján,” Reba sighed and crossed her legs.

“You don't seem to be very anxious that you might got stuck with only your scent.”

Reba's head snapped around to him, a vicious glare in her grey eyes.

“Only?” she spit out.

“Okay, calm down, both of you,” Elva ordered but the couple kept on glaring at each other. “Alright, why exactly are you here?”

“Isn't that obvious? When will she have her Heat? Will she ever have a Heat again? Do I have to wait one year more? Two? Ten?”

“It isn't just you, Kristján! Stop being so self-centered!” Reba screamed and got up from her chair.

“Well, you don't seem to care, so I have to!” Kristján screamed back. And their fight went on and on with Elva simply listening to the couple's shouting.

When she grew tired of it, Elva stood up and walked over to her medicine cabinet in the corner of the room. It was clear that Kristján wanted to go back to using fertility drugs while Reba wanted to wait. Understandable after all those fruitless trials she had already went through since last February.

But Elva didn't reach for the fertility drugs, she picked pills that looked exactly like the ones Reba already knew but with one little difference. These ones were placebos. Deep down Reba wanted to try the pills too, only that she didn't want him to decide for her. Little fights over dominance were normal in a relationship but please not in her practice while her waiting room was packed.
“Here.”

Elva placed the placebos on her desk and attracted the attention of the "fighters".

“Thank you,” Kristján said with an overdone smug smile on his face as if he had won something before snatching the pillbox from the desk.

“Elva! I thought-”

“Sort that out somewhere else. I have other patients too.”

They left, still angry at each other. None of them talked to the other for the rest of the day and Kristján spent another night in her old bedroom.

“Okay, c'mon, this is ridiculous,” Kristján moaned when Reba didn't want to allow him back into his own bedroom the third night in a row.

“No, you being as patient as a child on Christmas Eve is ridiculous. I will not take those pills.”

“So, you'd rather punish me for trying to move things forward than to actually move things forward? Oh, how grown-up from you.”

“Says the perfect example for adultness and reasonability,” Reba sneered and crossed her arms over her chest, still blocking the way into their bedroom for him.

“Reba, what's wrong with trying?”

“I don't want to do this with chemicals! Kristján! Why don't you understand that I want to do this on my own?!”

“But it doesn't work on your own, for fuck's sake! Accept the fact that you need help because you're not whole anymore!” Kristján shouted and was already waiting for her backfire which never came.

He felt her tears in his chest in form of a tight squeeze before they even showed in her eyes. “I'm sorry, sweetheart.”

But she didn't want to hear his apology. Reba turned away from him and ran into the en-suite, throwing the door shut behind her. She sat down on the edge of the bathtub and tried to muffle her sobs with her hands. Meanwhile Kristján butchered himself in front of the bathroom door, hating himself for being such an idiot, again.

“Reba, please open the door. I'm sorry. You don't have to take the pills,” he called through the door, hoping she would let him in and, first and foremost, let him comfort her after making her cry. This wasn't their first fight with him feeling guilty in the end and her dissolving into tears, but he was tired of being the bad one. “

“Please open the door.”

The lock clicked and the door opened with a creak. Reba wiped away the tears from her cheeks.

“Why can't you just be a bit more patient?”

He didn't have an answer they hadn't already argued about. Kristján stayed quiet and hugged her, feeling the bond in his chest calm down again after a while.

“Can I sleep in my bed again?”
“This is your apartment. Everything inside here belongs to you,” Reba murmured into his chest, “Every bed, every couch, every pill, everyone.”

“Reba, you do n-”

She sighed before he could finish his sentence. Of course he owned her, no matter what he said or did. She disentangled herself from his arms and dragged herself into the bedroom.

“Reba, please don't close up again. Please, scream and shout if you're angry at me but don't punish me with your silence.”

She turned around to him and stared at him for a long time. Her bond was pulsing in her chest. Now he was suffering and she was tired. Reba held out her hand and waited for him to come over to her.

“Don't decide over my head. Especially not when it comes to my Heat,” she whispered, while opening the buttons of his dress-shirt, “I will never forgive you if you do that ever again. I have lost so much to your egoism and selfishness. I will not let you do this to me again, Kristján. You promised me before and you almost broke your promise. You are not satisfied with what we achieved already and I have to ask myself if I can ever make you happy.”

Kristján wanted to object and tell her he never wanted to make her feel like this but she didn't let him even breath in before continuing, “What will happen if I don't get into Heat? Will you make me feel damaged? Will you blame me for everything? Will you abandon me because I can not give you what you want?”

Kristján shook his head violently. “No, no, no, Reba. I love you and I mean it when I say it. It's just that we've come this far already.”

“Yes, we have. Why can't you be happy with what you have? Why am I not enough for you?”

“But you are,” he whispered and cradled her face with his hands. Kristján looked her deep into her eyes. “I want you to be happy. I want us to be normal, to have a family, children. I don't want to waste any more time with waiting.”

“But you will have to wait. And if you really love me, you will.”

Reba turned away from him and made herself ready for bed. She didn't look at him. Her arguments and accusations making the air in the room feel heavy. They slept in the same bed this night but both were conscious not to touch the other.

Kristján thought long and hard about what she had said. It had taken her almost nine months to recover her scent. If her Heat would take another nine months it would come before the end of July next year.

He had managed up until now, really what difference would a few more months make? Reba was right. He should be happy that her scent was back. Be grateful that she was willing to stay with him after everything he had done to her. Kristján knew that there were other Alphas rotting in prison for lesser things that his crimes on her.

The first thing Kristján did after a rather sleepless night was to get rid of the pills. He was downstairs in the kitchen, letting them fall into the sink and watching how the water carried them down into the drain. Reba watched him from the gallery. She couldn't say that she was happy seeing him do it but knowing that he was willing to be just a bit more patient actually painted a tiny smile on her lips.
Maybe now was the right moment to tell him that her appetite had increased, her body got more responsive when he was around… or that she had just started collecting everything she needed for her nest. Maybe it would still take a week.

No, she thought and the small smile became a tiny bit wider, she would not tell him until he sensed it himself. With that thought in her mind, she walked over to him to have their usual breakfast.

Chapter End Notes

I cannot say when I will be able to write/upload the final 24th chapter but prepare yourself for the most fluffiest, diabetis-causingly sweetest final!
It took him two more days to finally pick up at the hints she dropped without meaning to. It just happened that she dragged pillows and blankets in their bedroom like she was physically depending on them. Their bed was almost uncomfortably, stuffed with comfiness before it finally clicked in his head.

“That took you long,” she had laughed into his face when he had carefully asked her if what was going on was what he thought was going on.

It was December 24th when Heat finally hit her full force. Reba felt like in her first Heat when she was eleven. But she preferred this bumpy mess of gushes of slick running out of her in an uneven stream, than a Heat like her last one.

Kristján wasn't home when it had eventually started. He had family business with Elva and his nephew and niece, because they had actually determined that her Heat wouldn't start until two more days. He didn't want his niece to think he had forgotten about her again when he wouldn't spent Christmas with them so he had visited them on Christmas Eve.

Reba was almost going crazy in the bedroom, masturbating like a teenage-Alpha just to get rid of the itch that only got worse with every climax without her mate.

When Kristján entered the apartment, his instincts overwhelmed him. The air was heavy with the smell of his fertile mate in Heat. He didn't even take off his coat when he ran up the stairs into the bedroom.

Reba's naked body was covered in sweat, the air in the room was heavy with her scent and moans she muffled with one of her many pillows. His cock was demanding to be set free from his pants and to be buried in the slick hotness between her so willingly spread legs.

Reba's brain registered his scent at once. She pulled her hand away from her pussy and looked at him through her lashes. Her thighs spread even further, providing him with the perfect view of her glistening wet folds. It was twitching impatiently, aching to be filled by him.

She didn't need to wait any second longer. Kristján pulled out his pulsing, precum dripping cock and buried himself as deeply as possible inside her with only one hard thrust. Her breathy sigh was unnaturally loud in his ears. Her hands closed around the tie and pulled his lips down to hers. He was still wearing his shoes and winter coat, there was even still a bit of snow on his shoulders but it melted away quickly when Kristján fucked her like there was no tomorrow.

There was little reason left in him. The long absence of her scent and therefore her Heat drove him into a mating frenzy. He came once without knotting, but hooked them together tightly only minutes later.

The next days went by in a whirlwind of waking up, fucking, falling asleep, and waking up again. Repeat. The sheets were uncomfortably sticky and smelled of cum, slick, and sweat by the time her Heat broke on day three. They made love one last time before the last waves of her Heat ebbed away and their minds came back out of the instinct-cave they had been stuck in.
They instantly knew she was pregnant when they woke up the morning her Heat ended. The air in
the bedroom had a new, unfamiliar tinge to it. Sweet but also.. coppery? Reba was with child or
maybe even children.

They would have to wait a few weeks to find out how many babies were growing inside her womb
but they had finally started a family. Kristján hugged her tightly to him. No, not just her. He was
hugging his family to him, sucking in the new wonderful alternation of her scent with every breath.

“I think, we just made each other the perfect Christmas present,” Kristján chuckled and kissed the
crown of her head when she started laughing.

“Thought of any names already?” Reba murmured tugged safely against his side, savoring the
pregnancy smell just as much (if not more) than he did.

“No, I didn't want to speak too soon about it.”

Reba snickered and opened her heavy eyelids. “Never took you for a superstitious man.”

“Well, I don't have to "anger the gods" even more than I already did. Have you thought about
names?”

She nodded and he turned on his side so they could look into each other’s eyes.

“I like Matthew for a boy and Josefine for a girl.”

“I want Lúisa for a girl but Matthew is alright.”

“No wish for a boy's name?” she asked suspiciously, “Don't you want a son?”

“Of course I do, I just don't have a favorite name for a boy. I chose Lúisa to honor my mother but I'll
definitely won't do that for my father by naming my son after him.” The last words were nothing but
a growl. Of course he didn't want to be reminded of the monster that drove his mother into suicide by
his own flesh and blood.

“So, you're mother's name was Lúisa?”

“Yeah, I would like to see at least one Lúisa Ness smile in my lifetime.”

Her heart was getting heavy and Reba nodded. “Maybe Josefine as a second name then or for her
sister.”

The following months Kristján didn't leave the apartment much, if at all. He worked from his home
office, delegated like he was already on his way out of his own company, giving his protégé more
responsibility, and stayed around Reba as much as they both could bear each other’s company
without interruption which was a long time thanks to Reba's almost unhuman fear of losing her mate
while his seed grew strong inside her. She couldn't stand the thought of being alone anymore. It was
even worse than before.

And she only left the apartment when absolutely necessary, meaning for the examinations by Elva,
and absolutely never without him. Kristján always held her hand, interlaced his fingers with hers as if
he was just as scared of losing her as she was. Which he was but he told himself it was due to the
long time it had taken them to get here and not because he was absolutely terrified of losing her and
his child(ren).
“Ready to know if I'm going to have a bunch of nieces and nephews in a few months?” Elva asked excitedly and squirted a blob of the pre-warmed gel for the ultrasound on Reba's slightly round belly.

She was only three months along but the belly was already showing her condition if her scent wouldn't have given it away anyway. They were both too excited to say a single word, just stared at the still black screen that would reveal so much in just a few seconds.

“So, let's see what we can find.”

Elva moved the head of the ultrasound handle over Reba's skin and watched the screen closely with narrowed eyes. Reba and Kristján could only make out some weird, changing shapes in this disgusting green color flicker over the screen until Elva stopped at one place and smiled widely.

“I can see two hearts beating. You're going to have twins.”

She made a screenshot and pointed at two big, round blobs and assured the couple that those were, indeed, the heads of their two children.

“And the gender?” Kristján asked, completely fascinated by the picture in front of him. If he really tried, he could make out something that looked like two bubble headed shrimps.

“It's still too early to say but you're going to have twins.”

Reba was shocked. She would never be able to raise two children at once if something happened to him. She broke down in tears right there in the examination room. By now Kristján was a maestro in calming her down from her anxiety attacks, having lived with them for three months now. They weren’t good for the babies.

Purring became a regular ritual between them every night again. Because it wasn't planned, evolutionary, that pregnant Omegas had sex (some scientists believed the knot would hurt the developing fetus) the purring only had calming powers. The lack of sex wasn't hard for Kristján. The change in her scent calmed his sex drive down to a minimum and he could handle that himself under the shower in the morning.

Reba was more into cuddling than anything else. Well, except for food. She was eating the whole day until her 24/7 morning sickness knocked on the door and Kristján found her kneeling in front of the toilet again. He would bring her to bed then, her nest she still hadn't deconstructed and wouldn't until the twins arrived.

“We need a second male name in case we get two boys, Kristján,” Reba murmured one night in May before falling asleep.

The next morning Kristján presented her a list with names. 20 names, one worse than the other.

“I will definitely neither call my son Ásbjörn nor Páll. Just accept that Icelandic male names suck!” she scuffed and apologized immediately when she heard the first milliseconds of his growl.

“I want him to have a connection to my heritage as well, Reba. I will teach him Icelandic as his second language. You can bet on that,” he claimed, determination clear in his low voice.

“And I would never say anything against it and you know that... but please think a few years ahead. His teachers will twist their tongues when they call his name and his schoolmates will also have to take Icelandic classes if they want to pronounce it right or they will make fun of him. And his mate will earn themselves a snap like I did when they mispronounce his name.”
Kristján murmured something about her maybe being right and scratched away 16 names on his list, only leaving "normal" names standing.

"Pick one," he ordered and handed her the piece of paper.

Reba let her eyes wander over the four names left. Benedikt, Friðrik, Hinrik, and Tómas.

"I agree with all of them. You can decide. I already have my name for a boy."

Kristján nodded but remained silent when she asked which one he would pick eventually.

"I will have to see my son to choose in the end," he had only told her and earned himself an evening of stoic silence from her as punishment.

She wasn't thinking rationally anymore. Her entire body was only working on pregnancy mode, being clingy and extremely cuddly, but hating him simultaneously because her Omega brain didn't like the Alphaness around her fragile body although he was her and her babies' protector. It was all a bit strange and it was making her tired within a few hours after a full night of sleep. Reba slept a lot and most of the time she did so wrapped up in his arms or in a pool of his worn clothes.

The apartment was a mess by the end of her pregnancy and they both couldn't wait for it to be finally over. The twins' nursery was the only room in the house you could lick the floor. It was almost clinical clean and Reba took extra care that it always stayed that way.

In October, it was time. Kristján was holding Reba's hand while she suffered from one contraction stronger than the previous one. He purred for her whenever a sharp pain shot through her body. It was working like it was supposed to.

"Just a bit more, Reba," he said calmly and purred soothingly.

"I just want it to stop. I'm so tired," Reba whined, gripping the sheets with her right hand, while the other squeezed Kristján's hand when an especially strong contractions waved through her.

"I know, sweetheart. Only a bit more. You're so strong, Reba," Kristján purred and brushed a damp strand of hair out of her face. He felt the pain too but it wasn't real pain. More like a reason to be extra calm around her and give her the strength she needed to bring his children into this world.

Elva was the doctor overseeing the birth, not assisting. Reba had wished for a natural birth. Elva had advised her against it but she wouldn't listen. Now she suffered.

Reba moaned and screamed when the contractions got worse and Elva started worrying.

"I think, I should help you now," she said calmly and directed her feet into the leg rests to open her thighs widely. Elva could already see that it wouldn't take too long anymore.

Kristján got up from the chair he had been sitting in over the last couple of hours. He hoisted up Reba's upper body a bit to sit down behind her. With her head on the middle of his chest she still felt safe and sound and surrounded by him. The vibrations of his purrs comforted her even more than the sound alone.

Elva had told him to do this when it was going into the final stage of the birth.

"Please, I just want it to stop," Reba whined and grabbed both of his hands by her side. She
squeezed them tightly, almost too tight but Kristján wouldn't complain now!

“I want you to push when the next contraction comes,” Elva ordered and Reba did just as she was told a second later. The sounds his Omega made were unsettling Kristján. He never wanted her to suffer. She gripped his hands even tighter when she pushed the first baby out. It took so long that Reba contemplated in her pain filled brain that they should just cut her open and take the babies out that way.

“Sweetheart, you can make it. Just a bit more,” Kristján whispered behind her and felt her shake with desperate sobs.

“One more push, Reba. I can already see the head of your first baby,” Elva encouraged her sister-in-law.

A few agonizingly long minutes later a sharp cry and a new scent filled the air. Reba had finally made it. Her first child's cry was like music in her ears, all the pain and suffering forgotten by the sight of the slightly purple wailing newborn in Elva's arms. Kristján instantly felt protective of the baby and stood up carefully to take his child from his sister.

A nurse entered the room, wanting to clean the baby, weigh it and take a sample for the Dynamic test. Kristján growled at the stranger when she wanted to touch the crying baby.

“Kristján,” Reba moaned silently, feeling new contractions build up. The little siblings wanted to follow into this world.

“You will get it back in no time at all, Kristján,” Elva said calmly, “Go back to your mate and support her.”

He hated seeing this stranger touch his child but could also feel Reba's level of distress rise inside his own chest. Kristján returned to his place behind her and held her, encouraged her, and loved her until a second cry cut through the heavy air in the room. Elva handed the second baby to yet another nurse. Kristján wanted to get up and interject but Elva stopped him.

“We're not done yet.”

“What's missing? The babies are there.”

Elva opened the windows to let in some fresh air. The smell of blood, the new born babies, Reba's sweat filled with distress and pain was heavy and caused the new mother headaches she didn't need now.

“Placenta,” Reba groaned, feeling sore and pulsing all over.

“And when do we get to even hold our children?”

“Calm down,” Elva hissed and sat down again between Reba's legs. The last thing his Reba needed was a distressed, angry mate.

Ten minutes into afterbirth the nurses entered the room again. The babies were both wrapped up in warm towels, giving away their genders. One pink one and one blue one. Around their tiny wrists there were thin plastic bands with all the important information; surname, blood type, gender, dynamic.

Reba was napping a bit, so exhausted from the birth she just wanted to rest, until she smelled her children. Elva handed the girl to Kristján and lay the boy, the first born, on Reba's chest after she had
opened her hospital gown to allow for direct skin contact.

None of them could put into words how they felt. It was happiness, bliss, exhaustion, and even fear.

“Do you already have names for them?” Elva asked while Reba took a deep breath of her son's scent. She couldn't say a word so Kristján answered.

“Matthew Hinrik and Lúisa Josefine.”

Elva took a deep breath when hearing his mother's name and smiled. She left the family alone as soon as the afterbirth was over. Kristján watched his daughter open her eyes and smiled widely. Blue. His color. A little patch of black hair already graced her little head. Reba's color. Lúisa was the perfect mixture. The perfect child, together with her brother.

Reba stroked Matthew's full, chubby cheek with the pad of her forefinger.

“Come on, open your eyes for Mommy,” she whispered and smiled when he blinked a few times and yawned before closing his big grey eyes again.

“We already knew the gender. The only question that remains is the Dynamics,” Kristján whispered, not wanting to startle his peacefully sleeping son. The birth had been just as exhausting for the twins as it had been for his mate.

Kristján looked down to Lúisa's plastic band. **Ness, AB positive, female, Omega.** One half of a perfect family was already there. Every Alpha wished for an Omega daughter and an Alpha son. Something that was still in the people's heads from the feudalistic times when the aristocracy wanted their sons to follow their father's tracks through military and used their precious daughters as a way to ensure or enlarge their wealth.

Reba looked down to Matthew's band. **Ness, AB positive, male, Alpha.** Perfect. She turned her head to the side and saw Lúisa's bright eyes looking at her. She was just as beautiful as her big brother. This was her family, she thought.

Kristján kissed the crown of her head and took deep breaths. He had never felt such content in his entire life, or such love. He knew he wouldn't make the same mistakes again and he would never make the same mistakes as his own father. His children would never have to fear him. His mate would never have to endure the same things his mother had to go through. He loved her and their children more than anything else in this world and he was sure, he would only ever love them more with every day that passed.

“I love you,” Reba whispered, looking up into his thoughtful face.

“I love you too, Reba, all of you.”

The End
I hope my final was satisfying for you and if not (I'm sure I didn't manage to make everyone happy because that's impossible) please IF you want to tell me your opinion, don't be mean. I wrote as an answer to a comment that I would love to read what you guys would make out of my original characters and I read some really great "twists" as the story progressed. If you don't have an account here or don't want other people to read it, please if you write something send it to me. I would be so happy if that happens. You can send them to my email address chiltonme@web.de and nobody but me would read them.
I really enjoyed this project and want to thank all my faithful readers who stuck around ever since chapter one. You are awesome and your comments more than once made my day.
Thank you so much.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!