50 Flavors Fulfilled

by Cysteine

Summary

The finale to the trilogy that I loathed to read to know what the vanilla world thought BDSM was about. In this book, I've only kept a few key ideas alive while going more into the Carmilla universe while incorporating real-world BDSM groups and events (utilizing fictional characters)

I really can't A/N the differences anymore except maybe point out the original book idea and where I took it to 11. For example: Christian Grey was a child left in a room with his dead crack-whore mother for a few days and was malnourished when rescued by the Greys (who were doctors and adopted him) whereas Carmilla was buried alive in a coffin for almost a century.

As always, the Prologue is Carmilla's POV and a flashback.

Notes

Just heard about Alan Rickman's passing. I'm in no mood to write today, and instead I'm going to go back and re-read "For the Potions Master's Amusement", the Snape/hermione BDSM fic that got me into kink in the first place.

So I'm posting this early because I have two more chapters already done and in queue and I'm taking the last week of January on a cruise anyways and I don't want to lose this draft.
“When shall I meet your family?” Mary asked as we took in the moonlit sky together, arm in arm on the German coastline. I smiled at her sadly, wishing to avoid this topic.

“Mary, I do not think that it’s wise. Could we pretend that they do not exist, and for now just enjoy the moment, and each other?”

“They accept you loving women, something that I wished my own parents would understand.”

“They tolerate it because they have to. Mother and Elladora disagree with everything else I do.” I pressed my lips to her forehead as she curled into my embrace.

“You’re cold to the touch, Mircalla. Please, partake of me.” Mary’s hazel eyes wavered with concern, reflecting the need in mine. I cupped her cheek and pressed my lips to hers gently.

“I don’t want you to lose your rosy cheeks, Mary. I’ll feed again in a few days.”

“My dearest Mircalla, I ache to feel yourself within me, fangs and fingers alike.”

“I dream of the day when I can do that and not risk killing you.”

“Risking death is meager compared to risking eternal hellfire to be with you. And should you drink too much of me in life, I trust that you will have me drink from your chalice of damnation, so we could be together in the deathless night.”

“My dearest Mary, I wish to be with you forever, watching the stars turn in the sky and observing how man adapts through the ages.”

I frowned at her beautiful words. “My dearest Mary, I love you because you are mortal. Once you are transformed into a fellow creature of darkness, I will no longer be able to sustain myself upon your blood.”

She nodded in understanding. “And when that day comes, we shall need mortal companions of our own. It does not bring me pleasure to think of it, but I would share my heart’s one true desire with another so that you may stay well fed.”

“Dear Heart, I would not subject you to the same hell I have withstood for over a hundred years.”

“Tell me, Mircalla, would you still desire me as I age and grow feeble? When I am wan and sickly and you still appear to be in the prime of your youth?” I could see fear in her eyes as she asked that, worried that I would discard her once she was no longer of use to me.

“My dearest Mary, I shall love you with as much strength as I have to love until your dying day. And upon that day I shall meet Death himself for I will not drink from another as my heart and soul belong to you.” As I made that vow under the stars, I knew that I would keep it. I could traverse to
the desert and meet the noonday sun, and have it strip me of life until Death takes me.

As the words settled in between us, the sound of a horse-drawn carriage distracted us as a familiar voice called out to me.

“Oh how positively loving and dreadful.” Elladora stood there, looking at me with derision and disgust in her eyes. “Mircalla, introduce me to your little mortal here.”

Mary faced my former lover, clueless to the danger she was in. “You must be her sister. I’m Mary. Pleased to-“

Elladora’s eyes rolled over to meet mine. “It’s talking to me. I thought you trained your pets better than that. At least Li-Juan knew when-“

Mary jerked back as if she had been slapped. “I beg your pardon, but I am not her pet!”

“Silence.” With that one word from Ell, Mary found herself unable to make any noise. She turned to me in panic and fear.

“Ell, leave her be.” I stated, forcing to keep my voice even. Her gift of persuasion was unnerving.

“What is this, the sixth mortal lover you’ve taken since me?” Mary’s expression went from fear to betrayal. “Yes, Mary, I was her first mortal lover. Mircalla here won’t turn you; she hates her own kind too much to ever share immortality with you.”

“I don’t hate my kind, I hate how you treat people.”

“Oh, this tired old argument again. You would think that the Inquisition would have taught you a lesson. Mary, get the shovel out of the carriage and start digging.”

I looked towards the carriage and saw a coffin. “God’s blood, no…” I swallowed down the lump of dread in my throat. “Mother put you up to this. I gathered my resolve and broke out towards her with a burst of speed, unsheathing the stiletto from inside my cloak.

All I was able to see was a red flash of her eyes before I found myself kneeling at her feet and my blade transecting my neck, blood pouring down my knuckles as I held it with a trembling grip. She made me stab myself.

It took me another second to realize that I couldn’t move.

“She whispered as soft as one would to a lover between stolen kisses in the silent night. I pulled out the silver dagger and put it into her hands, even as my body rebelled my mind’s control. “Now go dig your grave. Mary, prepare the coffin and the silver chain.”

STOP THIS! I told myself to no avail. I kept digging into the soil with the shovel, knowing what my fate was to become.

“You don’t have to do this to me, Ell. We could leave Mother, run away together and never look back-“

“You mean like how Wilhelm did during the Decembrist Revolt? No, dear sister, I won’t let you poison my mind with your ideas of being good, of changing what it means to be a vampire! You might not want power from Lophilliphormes, but Mother and I do. I won’t let you destroy everything I have built here, so I’m just going to bury you alive.”

As she said it, I was helping Mary lower the coffin into the unmarked grave. When the truth hit me, I couldn’t feel anything as shock numbed me while I laid myself into the coffin and teary-eyed
Mary began to close the coffin lid. *Mother was no longer in control of Ell.*

“Mother didn’t tell you to do this.” Ell’s gift turned out to be more than mere persuasion, she could subsume a person’s will entirely.

“Oh, she’ll believe it was her idea all along once I’m done here. You see, while you’ve done your best to *play with your food,* I’ve been growing in strength to rival Mother herself.” She wasn’t even using out verbal commands as I heard the heavy silver chains wrap around the coffin to seal me inside.

“Say that you love me.” Ell demanded through the coffin lid.

“How could I ever love a monster like you?!” I screamed back, still unable to move a muscle if Ell didn’t permit me.

“Tell her that you love her.” Mary’s voice called out, missing all warmth from earlier.

“Mary, RUN!” I begged, unsure if it were even possible. A loud snapping, cracking sound was followed by a dull thump upon the coffin. The quickly cooling blood left a trail of warmth above me as I heard dirt falling onto my coffin.

“Say it before I can’t hear you, Mircalla!” there was a power in her voice that compelled me to comply, even as she was burying me alive. *I will never forgive you for this, Ell.*

“I love you, Elladora.” My vocal chords betrayed me.

“Goodbye, Mircalla.”

“NOOO! Noooo!” Carmilla’s voice is urgent, snapping her out from the depths of her nightmare, face etched in despair. Her hands were clawing at the air as she gasped for air.

“Shh, Carm. It’s okay. I’m here. I’m here.” She wakes as I roll over, grasping her shoulders, holding her. I reached over her and turned on the light to see her face was etched with anguish, dark eyes wide and brimming with pinkish tears.

“Laura,” Her voice is a breathless whisper, the taste of fear tarnishing her mouth. I can see her eyes dilate into narrow, vertical feline slits as a painful reminder of her fight against Baron Vordenberg and Z’Katheggon. “Sorry, I-”

“Shh. It’s okay.” I reply, pulling her into a hug. Carm has buried her face into my neck and shoulder as if I’m a talisman to keep the darkness at bay.

“I had a nightmare…”

“I know. I’m here, I’m here.” *She’s had the same nightmare I’ve had; getting there too late and seeing Danny die.*

“Laura.” She breathes my name, and it’s a ward against the black choking panic coursing through her body.

“Hush, I’m here.” I curl around her, my limbs cocooning her, warmth leeching into her body, forcing back the shadows, forcing back the fear. *I’ll be your sunshine, I’ll be your light… walk away from the darkness.*

“Thank you.” Her voice is hoarse as she wraps her arms around herself, shivering from the memory
“Of course.”

“I mean it. I don’t know how I’ve lucked out to have someone like you in my life. Someone who accepts me this way.” The words rush out of her mouth in a tumble of emotion and confusion and anxiety.

“There’s nothing wrong with you, Carm. It’s just a bad dream,” I whisper and my lips are on hers, comforting her, bringing her back to the now. I stare up through her curtain of hair and meet her gaze with a contented sigh. Carmilla is beside me, stretched out on her bed. My girlfriend and Mistress rolls over to sip from the glass of water on the nightstand as I roll onto my side and take the position of the big spoon behind her.

“Aren’t I supposed to be the protective big spoon?” She whispers into the night air as I turn off the light on the nightstand.

“You’ve done a lot for me already. Now I’m going to protect you from the nightmares. You get chased by monsters, I’ll be there saying ‘pew, pew’ with my laser blaster.”

“Laura Hollis, my personal superhero-slash-dreamcatcher.” Carmilla said with a smile, cuddling into me as the little spoon.

“Yup. And don’t you forget it.” We curl into each other and drift back to sleep.

Carmilla’s alarm on her phone wakes me up, blaring Korn’s Coming Undone as I see JP is already setting out Carmilla’s clothing for the day.

Choke choke again  
I thought my demons were my friends  
Getting me in the end  
They're out to get me

Since I was young  
I've tasted sorrow on my tongue  
And this sweet sugar gun  
Does not protect me

It’s all business today it seems as I sit up and yawn the fog out of my brain. Carmilla nearly mirrors me and reaches for the fresh glass of ice water at her bedside and takes a long gulp.

“Thirsty?” she asks, offering me the glass.

“Yes,” I mutter sleepily, taking it from her and enjoying the cool liquid as Carmilla gets out of bed and walks into her bathroom, the shower already on and at the perfect temperature.

“Armitage, you’re a godsend. Schedule?”

“Nine A.M with Sue, then you two are meeting with the Jewelry executives who inexplicably can’t seem to meet the demand for diamonds that don’t come from the conflict region. It’s like someone single-handedly destroyed the warlord responsible for smuggling them into the world market…”

“Bastards are finally coming around, huh?” Carm asked as she stripped naked.
“Their latest marketing ploy, so-called ‘chocolate diamonds’, is failing horribly according to cable news.”

Carmilla scoffed at that. “They are brown! Nobody wants high-end jewelry where the centerpiece is brown. Tell Perry I want hash browns and orange juice.”

“Right away, Ms. Karnstein.” JP nodded as they left the bedroom and I crawled my way out of bed. They still had a bandage on their neck from Carmilla’s bite, but it was healing quite nicely and was hidden under their high-collared Victorian-era-inspired suit.

“Laura, come, uh… help me conserve water.”

“This your way of asking me to shower with you?” I chuckle.

“It’s for the environment.” Her voice suggested otherwise. I smiled at that and stripped off my pajamas, stepping into the large shower enclosure as Carmilla patted my butt in admiration.

“Such a cute little bum; I really want to see if I can leave a hand-shaped bruise on it.”

I grabbed the soap and decided to play coy as I washed myself.

“That would take time, and I thought I was here to help you conserve water.” My eyes met hers as I deliberately lathered my breasts a bit more than was needed and trailed my hand down my stomach to run my fingers over my already needy lips.

In less than a second, Carmilla’s hands were at the back of my neck and I was pinned to the wall as her lips hit mine with searing passion. Her leg slipped between mine and I gasped as I opened myself up for her, arousal pooling within me as her teeth nipped at my neck.

“We’ll just have to have a quickie then.” Carmilla purred, fingertips finding and rubbing my clit in a tight circle. I moaned at the contact as her other hand moved to grasp my breast and pinch my nipple, forcing out a strangled whimper as her two fingers found their way home inside me, making me gasp as she whispered what she was doing to me in explicit detail.

When Carmilla’s thumb pressed down over the hood of my clitoris, her eyes were locked onto me as she drank in the sight of me coming undone by her hand.

“Beg for me to finish you, my Laura.”

“Mistress, please-”

“Call me Carmilla, love.”

“Carm-sexy-FUCK!” My thighs trembled as the warm water cascaded on her and the resulting spray barely hit me as I felt myself tighten around her dexterous lovemaking inside me, loving the quickening friction within me.

“You can’t even talk right now. Good.” Carmilla cooed, increasing the pressure as she fucked me breathless and I came, violently, and found my lips on hers as I floated back down from where I was a moment before.

“You’re good. Really... “ I gulped in some more air, “good.”

“If you wish to reciprocate, kneel.” Carmilla asked more than ordered as her hands were on my shoulders and I knelt down in the shower, eye-level to her smooth and tantalizing sex. She lifted
her left thigh to rest on my shoulder, calf pulling me in closer so I could bury my face in her, my fingers working their way inside her gently.

My lips and teeth seized upon her folds and I gently sucked, smiling as her hands automatically clasped my head and she ground herself into the sensation. I focused on her movements and her sounds and decoded exactly what she wanted done to herself as I made a pattern of sucking, licking, and fingering her with a building intensity as I added a second and third finger into her, quickening my pace. Carmilla was already so close to orgasm that it only took another minute before she tumbled into an abyss of pleasure, cursing in Romanian as she did. I was fairly certain that her screams were probably heard all the way into the kitchen.

It turns out that they didn’t need to hear Carmilla and I having shower sex as I couldn’t help the look on my face as we ate breakfast and I was still in Carm’s bathrobe.

“Spent the night in Carmilla’s bed, huh?” LaFontaine smirked as they bit into their toast.

“Well, yeah. And then we conserved water together this morning.”

“Conserved water. Right.” They deadpanned.

Perry was unflappable as she tried to make an excuse for me. “LaFontaine, it’s obvious that Laura here is tired this morning. Let her eat in peace so she can go get ready for work.” I flush as Carmilla stifled back laughter at my expense.

“Yeah, I didn’t get much sleep last night.” I fib pointedly at LaF, hoping they would drop it. Last night was actually JP’s night with Carmilla, and they extended the offer to include me as well to watch Mulan and the sequel as we all cuddled in Mistress’ bed together. I had fallen asleep before the first one ended.

“Me neither.” LaFontaine grins, as they take their plate to the sink. I scowled at them and idly wondered what was going on between them and Perry.

“Kirsch will drop me off at work today as I’m having the Jeep’s interior replaced. JP will finish mending my gear.” Carmilla ordered as she flipped through the Wall Street Journal.

My ears perked up at that. “Does that mean I can drive myself to work?”

“I don’t see why not; Mother has been taken care of, James is gone, and SJ’s been admitted for long-term observation.”

“Thank you Mistress!” I exclaim as I finish my food, kiss her on the cheek, and hurry off to my bedroom to get ready for my next to last week of the internship before school resumes.

As I make my way into work, I can tell that the mood of the place is seriously subdued. Lana is cleaning out James’ office of personal effects and smiles sadly to me.

“Morning, Laura. Elsie seems to be out today so I’m left cleaning out James’ personal effects. Guy really trashed the mini-fridge he had in his office.”

I nodded, confused at how he rated a mini-fridge here. “Oh, okay. I can still work at my desk, right?”

She shrugged at that. “I guess so; don’t classes resume soon?”
I sighed, wishing that Elsie were here for this. “Well I wouldn’t mind staying, but I can’t handle a full-time internship and be the the Floor Don at Silas. I’d happily stick around part-time in the evenings if possible…”

“Definitely talk to Elsie about that, then. It’s weird; I think this place has had an incredible turnover rate lately.”

“Well I think we know why.” I said, frowning at the folder of research my former boss had for potential story leads.

"James was never formally investigated for the sexual harassment rumors that spread.” Lana shrugged, and there was a lot of meaning behind it.

"He hasn't exactly been proven innocent, either." I said bitterly, glad that he was gone.

“Did you know that James was only here for 5 years? And he had the most longevity over everyone else in this department?”

“Really? How long have you been here?”

She chuckles at that. “Well it feels like forever; the stories I could tell. Hey, want to get lunch with me today? There’s an amazing Monday special at the Chinese place around the corner.”

“I was planning on surprising Carmilla at work today.”

“Oh then let’s do it next week. You can invite her too; about time I really get to know this woman you keep talking about.”

“Um, okay.” I agree as she walks by with a box of James’ stuff, her perfume making my eyes water slightly.

“Oh, Lana, what’s with the perfume?” I say, trying to not choke on it. She winced in apology.

“Sorry, force of habit. It repelled James, so…”

“Oh. Totally understand.” I reply as I keep sorting through James’ documents and notes. Carmilla had taken his hard drive and scoured his office for anything else electronic, but I was left staring at news articles and photographs that went back at least a hundred and fifty years.

One of the earliest photographs labeled Christmas, St.Petersburg, 1825 had a figure circled who looked eerily like... Will.

Another page showed a receipt from the British East India Company with the name Lilita Morgan on it from 1837.

My jaw dropped finally at seeing a portrait labeled Gräfin (Countess) Mircalla von Holstein from 1847.

I kept going through the documents and found photos of Carmilla holding up a “VOTES FOR WOMEN” sign in 1919, working at a bar ‘Speakeasy, Greenwich Village, 1932’, in an Army uniform in 1943, and in Vegas with Frank-Freaking-Sinatra in 1961.

Holy Crap. James was stalking Carmilla.

I gathered the documents and photocopied them, having even more of a reason to see Carmilla at lunchtime. My stomach grumbled and I realized that it was already twelve-thirty.
I quickly gather my things and make my way over to Carmilla’s workplace, bluetooth headset in place as I called Armitage.

“Laura, what’s up?” JP said in a chipper tone. They didn’t have a quickie this morning; is JP this happy just from cuddles and a movie with Carm? I shrugged it off and asked if Carmilla was free for lunch.

“Sorry, I’m at home mending her gear. Brody is on detail today.”

“Okay, thanks.”

I hung up and called Kirsch. He picked up and mumbled something as if he were eating right then.

“Hey, is Carmilla free for lunch?” I rolled my eyes as he smacked his lips, confirming my suspicion.

“Just about; she hard-balled the jewelry CEO’s by hinting that she was going to fund a documentary with Michael Moore about blood diamonds that would be worse than ‘Gasland’ was for fracking.”

“Wow, she is going to do an expose… wait, she was bluffing, wasn’t she?”

“I’m not entirely certain, to be honest. There have been stories published and documentaries done in the past, but gems are pretty fungible, even with laser inscription. At this point, we just have to prove that the tech makes it cheaper to create than mine.”

“Wait, fungible? How did you know all that?”

“Sue, Natalie, and I role-played the encounter with Carmilla beforehand. Those ladies are some tough negotiators, but I think Carm’s got this in the bag.”

“Well, I’ll remember that if I ever need to get into the money laundering business. I’ll be there in about five minutes, don’t let Carmilla grab lunch without me.”

“Um, okay, but what if she wants to go get lunch and you’re not here?”

“Stall her ‘till I get there?”

I could have sworn I heard him utter a small ‘eep’.

“Gotta go.” Kirsh said as the call ended.

By the time I got there with Baby Smaug, Kirsch and Carmilla were waiting by the curb. She looked smug while Brody frowned slightly.

I pulled to a stop and lowered my passenger window as Carmilla lowered her sunglasses and winked at me.

“Oh, Laura, what a nice surprise!” She was being sweetly sarcastic. I like playful Carmilla, even when it’s at my expense.

I shot Kirsh a ‘traitor’ glance as Carmilla laughed.
“Vampire hearing, sweetness.” She opened the passenger door and got in. “Kirsch, go have lunch with my secretary; I’ve seen the way you two look at each other.”

“Um, really? You think Natalie likes me?”

Carmilla chuckled at that. “Your puppy-dog eyes do have some charm, you know.”

Kirsch was already on the phone, his face lit up like it was Christmas as Carmilla closed her door and hit the button to raise the window back up.

“Maybe they want to join us, make it a double date?” I offer, shrugging.

“Cupcake, as much as I like the gentle giant, the last thing I want to do is—” He knocked on the glass, startling us.

“Boss, Nat swears she just saw you walk back into your office.” Brody said, puzzled. He spoke into his cell phone. “Yeah, Carmilla is right here, Black suit, white pinstripes, grey shirt—”

I looked at the pair of them. “What’s going on?”

Carmilla gasped and reached for her phone. “Oh, FUCK. **KIRSCH, CODE 12!** I’ll text JP to secure home…”

Without missing a beat, he un-holstered his gun and had it pointed at her. I sat there, frozen in fear, as I heard him command authoritatively, “Bulldog.”

*Bulldog? Is this a code word?*

Carmilla fumed, rolling her eyes at him. “Goddamn it Kirsch, if _I_ were the Doppelganger I wouldn’t know what code 12 is.”

*Doppelganger is code 12? Then who is up in her office?*

He clenched his jaw in consideration, lowering his pistol. “Right. Um, what about Hollis?”

“Ask her something only she would know… well, and that we could confirm…”

*So paranoia suggests that I could be a doppelganger? THINK!*

“Uh, my middle name is Trevelyan.”

Carmilla nodded, relieved as Kirsch looked back up at the Karnstein Industries building, panic in his voice. “Nat, get out of there!”

I felt more than heard the boom of the explosion on the top floor, car alarms blaring everywhere as a cold panic flooded through me. As I looked up to the twentieth floor, dark clouds of smoke were rolling out of the building from where Carmilla’s office used to be.
Be Thou For The People

Chapter Notes

Changes from 50 Shades Freed:
- No flashbacks to an impromptu wedding (that should have been given more 'screen time'
- The 'fire' to Christian's servers has been upgraded to a full explosion as seen at the end of the last chapter

My phone was vibrating in my purse as I heard sirens coming in from the distance. Kirsch was stunned silent while Carmilla was on the phone with someone.

“Spencer, I need the security feed from my office ten minutes ago... Did something happen? Someone just sent me a message in the form of a giant fireball! Yeah, then loop and wipe the existing footage, I need to deal with this in-house. No, Spencer, the bomber dressed up like me to get past security. That means I was tailed today, or I have a traitor in the company. Besides, police will just think it was insurance fraud... No idea; just the bomber and Nata- oh my god. I’ll call you back.” She hung up the phone and looked to me.

“Laura, are you here right now?” I blinked and nodded as reality poured back in and I had to catch up with my senses. “Go park your car, police and firemen are on their way. Do not mention anything about a doppelganger. Kirsch, come with me.” Carmilla ordered as she got out of my car.

“Carm?” I asked as the door closed. She turned and faced me.

“You’ve got this, go park.” I nod, understanding the task before me as I get my car into the nearby visitor parking lot. By the time I walk back to see them, they are both standing over the burned body of someone I barely recognize.

“The blast must have knocked her out of the building.” Kirsch said, his voice hollow in shock.

Carmilla bit back tears. “She was the best secretary I ever had.”

The burned husk of Natalie coughed once as the charred flesh flaked off, floating away into the air as she groaned in pain. “I jumped out of the window when I saw the vest. I don’t get paid enough to get blown up for you, Ms. Karnstein.”

“HOLY SHIT SHE’S ALIVE!” I exclaimed as she reached into her jacket pocket and pulled out a vial of deep red liquid and checked her watch. As the burned flesh flaked away, I could see asian features appear as the bones in her face realigned and set themselves.

“I don’t fit the standard definition of ‘alive’, Laura,” Natalie replied, cursing softly as she read her watch. “That stunt just cost me eight months of Chi.”

Chi, as in life-force?

“What the hell are you?” Carmilla’s voice quaked slightly in shock.

Natalie sat up slightly, coughing to force air into her lungs. “Was human. Now… not exactly sure
“Is that blood?” Carm asked, nose scenting the air.

“Not everything is about what you can drink, vampire. It’s a pale imitation of the Elixir of Life.” Nat replied, her laugh turning into a painful-sounding cough. She pulled her blouse open to reveal a branded circle overlaid with a square, diamond, and a hexagon over her heart. “Adept of the Brotherhood of Paracelsus. At your service.”

“Parasols-what?” I asked, unable to make sense of any of this. Carmilla went from shocked to unconcerned in an instant.

“Alchemy Club’s big-league cousin; they recruit only the best Alchemists from the club. Their mission is to help mankind.”

“Be Thou For The People.” Natalie rasped, nodding.

“Why be my secretary all this time?”

Natalie pulled her blouse closed, eyes shut in pain as her body seemed to heal inhumanly quick. “I apologize for the deception; the Brotherhood has wanted to reach out but didn’t know if you could be trusted anymore until you had taken care of the individual you knew as Lilith.”

“Yeah, matricide always brings people together. What does the Brotherhood want from me now?”

She shook her head as she started to get up, the charred flesh flaking off of her skin like singed paper floating away into a non-existent breeze. “We’re repaying the debt from your assistance with the Plague Doctor. Lophiliphormes is Ascendant.”

“Yeah, about that. I tried to take it out with Will and an army of Revenant Vampires. It massacred us with The Hungry Light.”

“We had intel that He Who Lives In Shadows gifted you the Blade of Hastur-”

“-that is a last-ditch weapon. You can tell Hohenheim that I will NOT be using it unless I absolutely have to.”

Kirsch looked over Natalie uncertainly, trying to figure something out. “So all this time you’ve been flirting with me-”

“You’re the first guy in seventy years that has caught my eye.”

“Uh, seventy years? You don’t look-”

“This is my real body. I just quit aging fifty years ago when I invented my potion.”

“Huh. So do you wanna get lunch sometime?”

I missed her response as I noticed my cell phone was vibrating again. It was Lana from work.

"Laura, finally you pick up! Are you at Karnstein Industries? The bosses want you to capture some video on your cell phone, maybe give a short report on any injuries-" She said in a rush as I decided to cut her off.

"I won't report on the assassination attempt on my girlfriend. It feels like an ethical boundary for me."
“Assassination attempt?” Lana replied, genuine fear in her voice, "is she okay?"

"Yeah, everyone is fine, but the- I am not going to report on this."

"Okay, I won't push it. Just letting you know the bosses here are being ghouls." She didn’t seem happy with the decision either.

"Thanks, Lana." I ended the call, dreading my return after lunch. *This internship has been rather illuminating. Tomorrow will be my final day; between James and the bosses asking me to report on the explosion here, I would rather be selling textbooks.*

I looked to see where everyone went; Carmilla and Kirsch were giving witness statements to an officer while firemen went up to battle the fire. Natalie, however, seemed to have disappeared in the commotion. *She's an 80 year old Alchemist who is crushing on Kirsch.*

That seemed to confuse me more than the bombing. It was obvious to me that Carmilla got attacked either by James or by some agent of Z'Katheggon. Or by a business competitor. Or by anyone who stands to profit off of blood diamonds...

My phone dinged again and I saw a message from an unknown number.

‘Ph Őplace around the corner. -Natalie’

I looked to Carmilla and Kirsch who also must have gotten the same message and we all excused ourselves to go finally get some lunch.

Carmilla was sipping her broth while Natalie smiled at Kirsch fumbling with his chopsticks. “You knew I was a vampire this entire time and didn’t say anything.”

“You never killed humans to feed, so I wanted to respect your privacy and not out you.” Nat replied with a shrug. “I did notice you started to wear contacts to hide your eye change when you’re thirsty though.”

“I didn’t start wearing contacts to hide my eyes going silver,” Carmilla huffed, “they are stuck in leopard form. Taking on Z'Katheggon was, possibly, the dumbest thing I’ve ever done.”

“Well, now that you’ve killed that Elder God, Lophii-”

“-wait, ‘Lophii’? It has a cute nickname now?” Carmilla interrupted, slurping up a noodle.

“It’s easier to say and spell; you can just imagine the hassle it is to encrypt your notes having to spell out the entire name of entities that should remain unnamed. My point was that Lophii doesn’t have an equivalent rival power keeping it in check now, and its rising will have catastrophic effects if we don’t put it down immediately.”

“Catastrophic how?” I asked, wondering exactly what an underground fish-thing could do.

“Well, the Elder Gods have essentially formed two camps: those who want to bring back the Old Ones, and the ones who wish to keep the status quo. Z’Klatheggon was in the second camp, and as scary and horrible as it was, it didn’t want to have Cthulhu return. Now that Lophii is ascendant, it’s trying to become as powerful as the Old Ones to bring them back.”

“Wait, that’s what you meant by ‘ascendant’? Not breaking out from behind the First Gate, but ascending in power to be an Old One?”
I looked between them, confused. “What’s the difference between and Elder God and an Old One?”

“First tell me what you think ‘Immortal’ means.”

I shrugged, confused at the question. “It means to never die; to live forever.”

“Would you consider Carmilla immortal?”

As a vampire, she would live forever. And I wouldn’t. I’ll grow old and she’ll look the same age.

“Yeah.” I didn’t want to think about that.

“But she’s not un-killable. Hit her with an RPG and have her rain down in small clumps of charred flesh over half a square kilometer, and she’ll hope she’s dead.” Natalie explained.

“Thanks, I think.” Carmilla responded, eyebrow cocked in confusion.

“That’s the big difference between the Old Ones and an Elder God. Cthulhu literally can’t be hurt, while Z'Katheggon burned to ash just fine.”

Carm looked at her in surprise. “You lot crossed the First Gate and burned the remains?”

Natalie nodded stoically. “We didn’t want the tentacle-laden chicken-god's remains to become cultist relics, or worse, weapons.”

Carmilly gulped at that. “I didn’t even think anyone could access it-”

“Professor Parson’s anti-space experiments could.” The alchemist replied darkly, “The Brotherhood has contacted her and requested that she be more careful with the security around her lab. She’s nearly reached the breakthrough that would allow humans the ability of translocation at will, and from there it’s a short jump to transdimensional travel.”

Carmilla’s eyes opened wide at that. “Without aid of ancient Sumerian technology and the blood of an Elder God? Impressive. I’m so glad I’ve thrown research money her way.”

“Well I hope I’ve made my point clear to you, Ms. Karnstein. The Brotherhood along with the Alchemy Club will do our best to keep the Old Ones asleep somehow, but Lophii needs to taken care of while it’s still killable.”

“What’s the time-table?”

“We aren’t certain; I think we have about six months to solve this, though.”

Carmilla let out a huff of air, bewildered at the new task set before her. I didn’t catch her reply as my mind dwelled on what Natalie had said.

While it is still killable. God, that is Fifty Flavors of fucked up.

Natalie pulled out her phone. “I’ve got to inform the Hohenheim that I’ve survived and made official contact.”

Kirsch looked at his lunch, lifting up a noodle with his chopsticks. “It’s buried under the Dudley Chapel that JP fire-bombed, isn’t it?”
Carmilla nodded. “We should evacuate the campus to minimize casualties, but I still don’t have a way to get past The Hungry Light.” Her phone buzzed and she pulled it out, huffing in frustration. “Now what is it—finally! The footage is ready.”

Carmilla’s eyebrows knitted together in wonder as she looked at the footage on her phone and back to Natalie. “Nat, how certain were you about my doppelganger?”

The Alchemist raised her eyes to meet her boss. “Very certain.”

“What were you trained to see through glamour charms?”

“Of course; The Brotherhood is strenuous in testing their Adepts—”

Carmilla raised a hand in dismissal. “I’m certain you are well-trained; I’m more worried about how SJ got her hands on a glamour so strong it could fool you.” Her eyes tightened in concentration as she went pale.

I was left feeling hollow at that. “It was Sarah-Jane? I thought she wanted to kill me in order to be with you...”

“She called me by my original name before she blew herself up in my office. This wasn’t an assassination attempt; this was a message. I think Elladora is back in town.”

I was at back my desk and staring at a blank screen. *Elladora, Carmilla’s first submissive, is back.* I didn’t know much about her, except that ‘Mother’ turned her into a vampire and adopted her into the dysfunctional, incest-ridden, murder family.

And yet Carmilla was punished and buried alive for decades. My mind couldn’t wrap around that fact; that someone could be isolated that long and not go mad.

*And Carmilla is over three hundred years old.* A niggling issue that I had been trying to ignore came to the forefront of my mind: that she refuses to entertain the idea of turning me.

*I’ll age normally while Carmilla doesn’t. We’ll have to refrain from holding hands in public when I hit 40 and she can pass as my daughter.*

*People will consider me her mother, and Carmilla might have to call me that in order to avoid suspicion when she wants to say that she loves me in public or wants to kiss my cheek as I get grey hair and depend on my Mistress taking care of me.*

*If we ever got married, it would be for my ‘forever’ but for her only a lifetime that ends with me in a nursing home with visits from my ‘granddaughter’ who seems to flirt with me a bit too much.*

*We’d have to move constantly and she’d have to change identities in order to avoid raising suspicion that she’s not growing old.*

“Laura, you okay?” Lana asked, breaking my train of depressing thoughts.

I dabbed away tears that threatened to roll down my cheeks. “Sorry, just having bad thoughts about the future.”

She nodded as if she understood what I meant by that. “Hey, Carmilla’s okay, and I’m certain her office is insured. Maybe you should take the rest of today off; help clear your mind.”
“I really should start packing up since the summer is almost over.” I mentioned, looking around my desk. There really wasn’t anything here that mine, though.

“You can deal with it tomorrow, and Elsie will be here.”

“She will?” I asked, sniffling.

“Yeah, she called in after the explosion hit the news, knowing that Channel Three should have been ‘all hands on deck’. Some family emergency.” Lana shrugged, “but not as bad as you’ve had today, so go home.”

I decided she was right, and packed up for the day to make my way back home. I decided to check my email while I waited for the elevator to take me back down to the lobby and came across a message from Jordan, the Leather girl who gave me her card at The Eagle.

‘TNG is doing a Karaoke thing tonight, you and Armitage should bring your Mistress and meet Lady_HotPants!’

I smiled at the invite, thinking that maybe this was exactly the thing that I needed. I dialed up Carmilla and she answered on the first ring.

“Creampuff, what’s up?”

“Hey, I’m leaving work early-”

“-something wrong? Did they fire you?”

“No, nothing like that, just… a lot happened today. I need to de-stress.”

“Well, I already like where this is going.” I could hear her seductive grin over the phone.

“Not like that. I mean, we could go out. The local kink community for the 18-35 crowd has a Karaoke event tonight-”

“Don’t you think I’m a bit old for that?” The elevator dinged open and I went in, hitting the button for the bottom floor.

“You will always look like you’re 25, Carmilla.” I flippantly reply before thinking about it. “Though I guess we don’t have to go if you are worried that it’s a security risk-”

“No, I want to go.” Carmilla’s response was almost too assertive. “I’ll bring JP and Kirsch. I’m not about to stay home and be scared because of my ex. Same place as before?”

“Yeah, but it’s not retro night.”

“Okay, see you at home.”

I came home to a humming JP who was sharpening Carmilla’s sword with a whetstone. “Laura, you’re home early.”

I shrugged. “Yeah, after everything that happened today, I just couldn’t focus at work.”

They frowned at that, nodding at the other sword. “Want to help? It’s just like sharpening a knife, only bigger.”
I declined but decided to sit with them anyways and recounted the day’s events, including my fears of growing old beside an eternally youthful Carmilla.

“You know she’s not going to just drop you, right?”

“Well, you and her have a kind of contract, which essentially means you’re here for the rest of your life.”

“All contracts have exit clauses; for example, I can retire at 50 and take the money locked away in a savings bond as my severance pay.”

“Do you want to?”

“Not at all. But I might change my mind then. The point is, I’m going to be living my life until then, and not worrying what will happen almost three decades from now. Otherwise I’m not going to enjoy the path I take.”

I couldn’t disagree with his reasoning; as much as it bothered me to dwell on it, I couldn’t slow down time nor make myself immortal. But I can enjoy the time I have now.

I take a calming breath. “Okay, JP, show me how to do this.” They smile at me and hand me the second sword and a whetstone and we get to work.

"This was Will's." I say, mostly to myself.

"Yeah." Armitage's clipped voice was trying to hold back emotion. "We can't bring him or Grace back, but we can honor his memory."

I remembered our previous conversation about Carmilla's 'Mother', and how JP was willing to die to kill her. Their resolve was only strengthened when she used whatever powers she had to control JP and to use their birth name.

"I'm not the kind of person to wish death on someone, but I'm glad you killed her."

JP nodded as their lips pressed thin. "Yeah, she was a piece of work; no wonder Ms. Karnstein was so conflicted about her."

"Where did you learn to shoot?" They looked at me curiously. "Your shooting stance isn't what they teach in handgun classes."

"There was a guy in The Marketplace, Sergeant Battle," I scoffed as he raised the whetstone-holding hand up at me, "true story. Master Sergeant Roy Battle, USMC. Taught me to not question myself should the time come, and if you pull the gun, you better shoot to kill."

I nodded in understanding. "That's what my dad taught me. He's a cop; even put me through Krav Maga at age eight so I could defend myself."

Their mouth dropped open in surprise. "Krav Maga? At eight? Damn, my parents thought watching Power Rangers would make me into a tomboy." We chuckled at that together.

"I think you turned out to be an amazing gentlem-person." I corrected myself with a wince.

"It's okay, I'm genderqueer but a bit masculine-of-center. I like being handsome, but I also know I can pull off femme and cute should the mood hit me."

I shook my head as I tried to imagine it. "You know what I want to see? Carmilla in a cutey pink
poofy dress, knee length."

JP's face went into a comical grin at that. "Best. Makeover. Ever! Think we could talk her into it?"

I shook my head at that. "Are we conspiring against my Mistress?"

They nodded slow and meaningfully.

"Yeah, and at the worst, she'll give you a spanking." JP grinned at that. "And you know that will lead to..."

_Is JP really going to do this and help me get laid?_ I cocked an eyebrow quizzically. "What do you get out of this?"

"I get to do a makeover and Ms. Karnstein will enjoy uh... you." I smiled at that idea as another thought crossed my mind. _What all does JP um, 'enjoy'?_

"So I looked up asexuality and I learned that some asexuals will still have and enjoy sex. Would um, you ever want..." I gulped as I tried to get the question out, "... to do that?"

"I enjoy serving and pleasing others, Laura. I myself have a very low sex drive, and it's not really attuned for my own pleasure."

"So you don't um, masturbate?" I blush as I ask it.

"I have occasionally, and I've liked it when I did. Why are you asking?"

_Just say it, Laura. You know they won't judge._

"Because we all fell asleep in bed together Sunday night, and my relationship dynamic with Carmilla is sort of like yours, but sexual. And I know you mentioned that you kind of like Kirsch-"

"Yeah, but he's totally into Natalie." JP shrugged it off.

"That's what I mean. He's got her, LaFontaine and Perry have been together since forever, and I have Carmilla... I can't help but think you should have someone."

"Someone other than your Mistress, you mean?"

"No, that's not what I meant-" I stammered, uncertain what I was trying to say.

JP put down the sword and whetstone. "I have one night with Ms. Karnstein every other Sunday. I'm more than happy with that arrangement. I get where you're coming from, and I like that you want to see me happy. But I'm actually happy right now, serving Ms. Karnstein and sharpening swords with you."

I nod as words just tumble out of me in a rush. "Yeah and if you ever want more I'm just saying I would be okay with it."

"Oh, so you're offering?" Their eyes looked me over as it hit me how I sounded.

"What? Um, I uh..." _What did I just do?_

They smiled at me as a hint of pink touched their cheeks. "I see why she likes you. You're cute when you're flustered."
"I meant with Carmilla. I know when you first showed up I was a bit..."

"Territorial? Jealous?" Their playful smirk took the sting out of the words.

"...insecure." I finished honestly. "But I love Carmilla and know that she loves me too. And you love her, in your own platonic way. If you or her think it might go-"

"-just forgot I need to go get-" JP was up and hurrying out of the room before I could put down my own sword and whetstone and catch up.

"JP!" What did I do wrong? They stood at the edge of the hallway, back turned to me.

"Sorry, Laura, I just... I don't deal with emotional stuff well sometimes. And my last Master screwed it all up by getting emotionally attached."

"Aren't they supposed to, though?" I ask, feet away from them. I reach out momentarily and then decide against it.

"Yeah, but in the right way for everyone involved. He tried to force me into the girlfriend zone by making me feel like a girl sexually. With Brody, my crush is mostly bro-bonding." Armitage's head and shoulders slumped. "With Ms. Karnsrein... I don't want to screw this up. It's good where it is now."

"Okay then. Do you want a hug?" I offer, arms outstretched. Armitage turned to face me, eyes watering slightly and chuffed as they looked at me.

"Yeah. I'm glad we get along, Laura." They say softly into my ear as we hold each other.

"Me too."
I can't help but imagine Annie Briggs and Kaitlyn Alexander dominating a Karaoke Rap Battle IRL.

When we get to the Karaoke bar, I see a goth girl with long black bangs and short spiky blue hair at the back of her head, belting out the lyrics to an 80’s goth anthem I don’t know.

*How bad it gets, you can't imagine*
*The burning wax, the breath of reptiles*
*God is not mocked, he owns our business*
*Karma could take us at any moment*

*Cover him up, I think we're finished*
*You know it's never been so exotic*
*But I don't know, my dreams are visions*
*We could still end up with the great big fishes*

She flipped off the finger as if a salute to someone in a different time and place, making the sign of the cross as the beat got heavier.

*Priests and cannibals, prehistoric animals*
*Everybody happy as the dead come home*
*Big black nemesis, parthenogenesis*
*No one move a muscle as the dead come home*

My eyes adjust to the darkened bar, and I find Carmilla watching me while an athletic young woman walks away, her tray held aloft, her high blond ponytail swinging provocatively.

“Thirsty?” she asks as my eyes trail down her neckline and I force myself to not gape at her cleavage.

“Yes,” I mutter under my breath. Carmilla took mercy as I blushed and answered for us.

“JP will get us drinks. Appletini for me, cider for my girl, please.”

The DJ spoke up at the end of the song as polite applause died down. “Thank you Lynn, that was Shriekback’s *Nemesis*. Next up we have HotPants with Depeche Mode’s *Corrupt*.”

I turn and see a familiar girl getting up from a table, and I wave awkwardly as she flags me down. It was Jordan, the girl of Leather from the Eagle Bar. *She looks so different in normal clothing.*

“Hey, Laura and Armitage, right?” She gestures over to lithe brunette getting up from the table. “This is my Ma’am, Lady HotPants. Is this your um, ‘partner’?”

“Oh, hey,” I reply, confused at how ‘vanilla’ it seemed. “You’re not wearing your vest.”

She shook her head slightly. “Muggle establishment. We still use our scene names to protect our
identities, though.”

Carmilla extended a hand. “Hi, I’m Car-um, Christina.” She blushed slightly and glanced down at her suit. “Christina Grey. Oh, god, that’s a stupid name....”

JP smirked at that. “I think it suits you, Miss Grey.” Carmilla shot them a look as they turned to go to the bar.

I stifled a laugh as Perry and LaFontaine introduced themselves as well and made their way to the sign-up sheet.

“Last call for HotPants!” Jordan turned to yell at the DJ that she was getting to the stage.

“See you in a bit!” I called out as the three of us followed Perry’s lead to choose a song we’d do.

“So far this seems like a decent crowd.” Carmilla mentioned as she flipped through the book of songs. LaFontaine came back with a goofy grin on their face.

“Guess what, Laura? LaFerry is going to rap tonight.”

I couldn’t help but laugh out loud at that. “Perry raps?”

She turned and faced me, holding out a pen so I could sign up for a song as well. “Oh yes, I can throw down lyrics freestyle, and I can do a sick rendition karaoke style.”

“Okay, this I have to see.” Carmilla chuckled as she turned in her request slip and I wrote out my own request and turned it in, making my way to the table as JP got us drinks. Jordan pointed out a few open seats as she was enthralled by Lady HotPants’ singing.

“I could corrupt you
It would be easy
Watching you suffer
Girl, it would please me

But I wouldn’t touch you
With my little finger
I know it would crush you
My memory would linger

You’d be crying out in pain
Begging me to play my games...”

Carmilla leaned over to ask me how we had met Jordan before.

“At The Eagle; JP and I wanted to get a drink and she was there with the puppy treats.” I answered, watching Jordan nearly drool over the seductive lyrics. I liked seeing how a couple could mix being kinky and romantic at the same time.

As Lady HotPants finished, she returned to the table and our conversation continued as someone else took over with Goodbye, Earl by the Dixie Chicks. “So tomorrow’s our back to school party at the local dungeon, think you can come, maybe see if my Lady can make me cry out in pain?” Jordan winked at her Lady as she said that.

“I’d love to!” I reply, looking over at Carmilla, who smiled and nodded graciously.
"I'll bring the paddle, Jordan." She answered as if a playful threat. Jordan grinned at that.

“Sweet, well RSVP through the FetLife event page.” Jordan replied as she introduced us all to the other people at the table. Most of them were in college as well, and we all got to chat about the unusual disturbances at Silas and our various kinks. Most of the girls were either switches or submissives and only one guy wasn’t on the left side of the Dom/sub slash and got along with JP as they talked about former D/s dynamics.

“LaFerry! You’re up next!” The DJ announces as LaFontaine and Perry get up to the stage, turning on the second microphone. The opening riff is something familiar and catchy that I can’t recognize as LaFontaine claps one hand on the other holding the microphone to the quick beat as it hits me that it’s a Linkin Park song.

In an instant, Perry goes from the reserved, prim housekeeper to professional rapper that would make any juggalo proud.

“Yeah here we go for the hundredth time-
Hand grenade pins in every line
Throw ’em up and let something shine
Going out of my fucking mind..

“Filthy mouth, no excuse-
Find a new place to hang this noose
String me up from atop these roofs
Knot it tight so I won’t get loose..”

The entire audience started clapping to the beat as well, and all eyes were on Lola Perry as she kept up with the lyrics.

“Truth is you can stop and stare
Bled myself out and no one cares
Dug the trench out laid down there
With a shovel up out of reach somewhere..

"Yeah, someone pour it in
Make it a dirt dance floor again
Say your prayers and stomp it out
When they bring that chorus in!"

LaFontaine quit clapping and immediately dove into the chorus, looking every bit the part as they tore into the lyrics.

“I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
Just to throw it away
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out!”
JP gave a low whistle in surprise and approval. “They would totally defeat us in a rap battle.” I just nodded in stunned silence.

“Go stop the show
Choppy words and a sloppy flow
Shotgun opera lock and load
Cock it back and then watch it go..

“Mama help me I’ve been cursed
Death is rolling in every verse
Candy paint on his brand new hearse
Can’t contain him he knows he works..

“Fuck this hurts, I won’t lie
Doesn’t matter how hard I try
Half the words don’t mean a thing
And I know that I won't be satisfied..

“So why try ignoring him?
Make it a dirt dance floor again
Say your prayers and stomp it out
When they bring that chorus in!”

Perry lowered her mic, panting to catch her breath as LaF took over.

“I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out!”

LaF and Perry face each other and belt out the next part together, proving a dynamic that has been there for over a decade and how they are quite possibly soulmates.

“I’ve opened up these scars
I’ll make you face this
I’ve pulled myself so far
I’ll make you **FACE! THIS! NOW!**”

LaF gave Perry a high five, lowering their mic to catch their breath as she took over the chorus this time.

“I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away
I bleed it out digging deeper
Just to throw it away

Just to throw it away
Just to throw it away
Just to throw it away...

LaFontaine joined back in and LaFerry finished strong.

“I bleed it out digging deeper
   Just to throw it away
   I bleed it out digging deeper
   Just to throw it away
   I bleed it out digging deeper
   Just to throw it away

   Just to throw it away

   Just to throw it away!

   I bleed it out!

   I bleed it out!

   I bleed it out!”

The audience erupted in major applause as LaFerry took a bow and turned the microphones off before putting them back in their stands.

“It's okay, next up is Christina Grey with Slept So Long.”

Carmilla got up from the table and took the microphone in hand, turning it on with ease.

“This one goes out to my long-lost ex. See you in hell, bitch.”

“Walking, waiting, 
   Alone without a care. 
   Hoping and hating, 
   The things I can't bare.

"Did you think it's cool to walk right up
To take my life and fuck it up!
Well did you, well did you?

“I see hell in your eyes!
   Taken in by surprise!
   Touching you makes me feel alive!
   Touching you makes me die inside!”

Gauging from her emotion on stage... Carmilla’s feelings for Ell are complicated to say the least.

“Walking, waiting
   Alone without a care
   Hoping and hating
The things I can't bare

"Did ya think it's cool to walk right up
And take my life and fuck it up!
Well did you!

"I! HATE! YOU!"

Yeah. Carm's definitely venting from today.

“I see hell in your eyes!
Taken in by surprise!
Touching you makes me feel alive!
Touching you makes me die inside!”

JP got up from the table and joined her on stage, taking the second microphone to do the backup vocals near the end.

“I've slept so long without you-
It's tearing me apart too-
How did you get this far?
Playing games with this old heart?

I've killed a million petty souls,
But I couldn't kill you!
I've slept so long without you…”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“I see hell in your eyes!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Taken in by surprise!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Touching you makes me feel alive!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Touching you makes me die ins - I see Hell in your eyes!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Taken in by surprise!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Touching you makes me feel alive!”

“-Touching you makes me die inside!”

“Touching you makes me die inside!”
The audience applauded as I stared, transfixed at my Mistress and the pain she's facing all over again. “Thank you, Christina Grey and her backup singer! Next up is Laura!”

*Okay, Hollis, you can do this.* I thought to myself, touching the silver bracelet for emotional support.

Carmilla was back in her seat, appletini in hand and JP by her side. Her eyes were glued to me as I silently mouthed the words “I love you” to her.

The music started and the screen showed “MUSE - UNDISCLOSED DESIRES” before switching over to the lyrics.

“I know you've suffered
But I don't want you to hide
It's cold and loveless
I won't let you be denied..

“Soothing - I'll make you feel pure
Trust me - You can be sure..”

I made and kept eye contact with Carmilla, singing out the refrain like a vow I’d keep for her. *I loved this woman and would go to the ends of the world for her.* I could see her eyes watering up as Armitage was there with a bar napkin for her.

“I want to reconcile the violence in your heart
I want to recognize your beauty's not just a mask
I want to exorcise the demons from your past
I want to satisfy the undisclosed desires in your heart.”

There was the slightest smile on her lips, and I could tell that I dislodged a heavy burden that she had put on herself centuries ago. She had me now, though, to help her with it.

“You trick your lovers
That you're wicked and divine
You may be a sinner
But your innocence is mine..

“Please me - Show me how it's done
Tease me - You are the one

“I want to reconcile the violence in your heart
I want to recognize your beauty's not just a mask
I want to exorcise the demons from your past
I want to satisfy the undisclosed desires in your heart.”

As the instrumental break started, I had to wipe at my eyes to keep the tears away. *I love you so much, Carmilla, and I know it's been difficult for you, but I'm here to help, and so is JP, and Kirsch, and ‘LaFerry’.*

“Please me - Show me how it's done
Trust me - You are the one

“I want to reconcile the violence in your heart
I want to recognize your beauty's not just a mask
I want to exorcise the demons from your past
I want to satisfy the undisclosed desires in your heart...

I got down from the stage and was enveloped into a bone-crushing hug by my Mistress, and even JP joined in and I hugged both of them back, glad that lyrics could say the words that I might not be able to say out loud to her.

I thanked JP for the water as Carmilla held back tears as she looked at me. Apparently my choice of song really hit home and I was glad she understood the depth of my love for her, despite all of the crap that we've had to go through with crazy exes and jealous bosses.

"So how did you two meet?" Lady HotPants asked, pointing between the two of us.

I smiled nervously, uncertain how to answer that without disclosing she's the rich and yet-somehow-enigmatic millionaire CEO. But who would expect her at a place like this, with someone like me?

"School project," Carmilla replied easily, "she needed to do an interview- mock interview- and I was the lucky victim, as it were."

"So you introduced her to kink, Christina Grey?" HotPants inquired playfully as Jordan asked Perry about making weekly meal plans. She's not submissive, but the skills seem to cross over.

"Actually, my girl here seemed primed for it already; driven to prove herself, ambitious, and eager for approval and reward for a job well done." Her eyes locked onto me and it was like she was staring into my very soul. "To be told that she's a good girl."

I blushed deep scarlet at that. "I also really liked smutty fan fiction so the idea of kink didn't scare me off; more like it was the adrenaline rush of actually doing it was the big thing for me."

"Well now that you've come out to an event, I hope to see you take the full plunge and see me work my single tail at the dungeon sometime." A thrill went up my spine as I thought what the local community's dungeon would look like in comparison to Mistress' playroom.

"You promised me an interrogation, My Lady." Jordan plaintively reminded her Domme.

"And I'll interrogate you with a whip, Jordan," Her reply was equal parts seduction and threat, "Don't give me incentive to be extra cruel."

Jordan blushed at that and I couldn't help but smile at the cat-and-mouse nature they had with each other.

The night progressed as one might expect; other people got up to sing as we mingled and talked with the other people at the TNG meetup. It was interesting to see how the other college students navigated the Dom/sub dynamic and built their own toys on a shoestring budget while I had to bite my tongue to refrain to mentioning my Mistress' well-stocked play room.

At some point I finally noticed how JP was always at Carmilla’s side and seemed to be psychic when it came to bringing her another alcoholic drink or a glass of water. They even took care of me and it had both the Dominant and submissive-identified people turning their heads.

“JP, is it?” Lady HotPants began, “you’re really good at the anticipatory service. Were you formally trained?”

They opened their mouth to respond, thought about it, and continued. “I used to be a waiter; I can tell when a glass is getting low and I know her drinks of choice. Same for Laura here.” Maybe it
was because I knew them so well, but it was getting easier to catch them when they were lying. *Not like they can mention the Marketplace.*

"I find myself thirsty for something this bar can't serve me, Armitage. I think we need head home; I have a girl to... tango... with."

"We're going to dance?" I ask too naively once I see the look on her face. *Oh. 'Tango'.*

"I'll close our tab, Ms. Grey." JP replied without missing a beat.

"Shame this isn't the Leather bar, else I'd suggest you two go to the ladies room." Jordan's Domme hinted conspiratorially.

"Seriously?" I asked incredulously.

"I have waited in line for the ladies' single stall as couples go in together to 'work off some tension'." HotLady_Pants said with a wink.

Jordan giggled at that. "Yeah, it happens occasionally. Part of being in a sex positive culture is to realize that sex happens. But the bears better not hold up the line if I need to pee, else I'm telling the bartender and they get kicked out."

JP returns with a receipt in hand. "Shall we go, Ms. Grey?"

Carmilla nodded as her smoldering eyes were fixed on me and leaned into whisper conspiratorially into my ear. "I want to pound you into another realm of consciousness."

My clothes were quickly shed and tossed aside in a crumpled heap as I stood in front of Carmilla's full-length mirror and watched the reflection of my Mistress' hand snake around my arm to grasp my breast. I closed my eyes as her other hand slipped between my legs to jump-start my arousal as the first one pinched and tugged on my nipple, eliciting a whimper from me.

"Do you want me to keep going?" She whispers in my ear, teeth nibbling at the bottom of my earlobe. I nod in confirmation as her fingers slip inside and I find myself exceedingly wet for more. As her teeth found my neck, she pressed but didn't break the skin as her hand shifted to play with my other breast.

Carmilla wasn't about to take me fast; she wanted to be deliberate as she slowly indulged herself with a second finger going deeper. My breath shuddered as she commanded that I open my eyes and see us.

"You are gorgeous and stunning when you're aroused and under my control, creampuff. I'm going to go put the Tango on, okay?"

"Okay." I whisper as I see her step away and put the Fuze Tango on and cock an eyebrow between me and the bottle of lube she had out.

"Not certain I'll need that now." As she approached me, I took in with a shudder the sheer size of the silicone toy between her legs and realized that I wasn't scared, but eager.

*And I think I wanted her to restrain my hands as she did it.*

Carmilla's eyes seemed to look into mine and a Cheshire grin spread across her face. "Really? Okay, cutie. Lay down on the bed." A second later she had a pair of handcuffs out and had them
click into place as my wrists were pinned above my head as her dark curls cascaded over us as our lips met passionately. Her cold toes touched my ankles and I knew to spread my legs as she knelt between my knees, laying on top of me.

We were silent for a moment as we looked into each other's eyes as our panting subsided from the kiss we shared.

"You can read my mind."

"Nothing that exact. I just knew you wanted your hands immobile as I did this." I swallowed and nodded at that. "Even without my Insight, it was pretty obvious from your body language."

**Insight?** I tried to figure out what she meant by that as her lips and teeth nipped my breast and quickly made their way down to suck on my swollen and needy center.

"Damn it just fuck me already, Carmilla." My pleas fell on deaf ears, partly because my thighs were clamping down over them as she continued her teasing assault upon me. Aside from the quickie we had in the shower, it felt like ages since we had truly explored and enjoyed each other.

It was then that I realized we weren't just sexually deprived but sensually deprived. As her fingers trailed over my quaking thighs I understood that she wanted more than just getting off; she needed all of me. She desired to feel, smell, and taste me as she moaned and lapped within me. **Goodness her tongue feels good inside me.**

"Ready?" Carmilla asked, slipping fingers inside me to lubricate the toy strapped onto her hips.

"Yes!" I breathed out sternly, "fuck me already."

Carmilla's hand pinned my hands down below my head as the other one helped guide the head of the Tango inside. I gasped, fingers clawing ineffectively at the headboard as my wrists met the cold resistance of the handcuffs. Her thrusts were gentle at first as she painstakingly worked one-third of it back and forth inside, allowing me to get accustomed to the size and the arousing resistance that my tightness provided.

"Harder, Mistress." I encouraged.

Carmilla's free hand squeezed my neck, not enough to choke me but as a possessive gesture as she drove herself all the way in, making me cry out as my cervix was hit. She smiled wickedly at me as she pulled out and thrust again, repeating with a gradual increase of intensity and speed.

"Mine." Carmilla purred as I made whimpering sounds of pain, need, and delight as she growled and grunted as she sheathed herself inside me to the hilt with a ragged breath.

"Yours." I reply, knowing that it was true as she used me, completely, to our mutual undoing. I didn't care if I didn't orgasm from this, I just really enjoyed the weight of her on me and inside me as she moved her hand down to the tango to turn on the vibration and continued her thrusting assault in me.

"Fuck me." I knew that Carmilla liked to hear those words from me and I wasn't surprised as she quickened her pace and bit her lip as I recognized the look on her face as she was about to come. I struggled against the handcuffs and her hand pinning my wrists down and felt my inner walls clench as I started to feel dazed and disconnected as the sounds and sensations melted together as Carmilla's rhythm broke and shuddered as she stayed within me.
"Gods..." Carmilla gasped as she came, the harnessed toy's vibrations making her shudder as she fell over the edge and kissed me.

"Mmm," I whimpered as I kissed her back, Carmilla still inside me. We were silent but for the vibrating Tango that she quickly turned off, still inside me.

"Did you...?" She asked uncertainly.

"I don't know. But it was..." I searched for the term, "satisfyingly intense."

"Oh." Her expression crumbled slightly. "I can continue..."

"More?" My voice cracked nervously. "Can I roll over?"

"Whatever you want, sweetness." Carmilla purred as she pulled out and I struggled as my wrists were still bound.

"Do you want me to undo those?" She asked helpfully.

"No. Just... pillow." I blurt out as if a command. As I get up on all fours, Carmilla puts a pillow in front of me and I let my face fall into it, knowing exactly how graceless I look right then. "Okay." I turned my face to the side so that I wouldn't accidentally smother myself as Carmilla positioned herself behind me.

Carmilla's hands found purchase on my hips as she slid herself back into me and I groaned in carnal appreciation. I nodded to give her permission to continue as she found the ideal rhythm and angle by listening to my moans of delight. Before long I slipped back into that disconnected headspace as the pleasure built in me and I no longer knew where I was until it all came back in a flash as Carmilla's thrusting and words snapped into place.

"Come for me, cupcake. I want to hear you come," Carmilla repeated as her thrusts seemed to hit the perfect spot inside me.

I nodded sluggishly as everything buckled and shuddered and I didn't orgasm as much as I just let go and let it happen, waves of pleasure triggering a release inside me as I finally realized that I was rocking back and forth to meet Carm's thrusts as I clenched on the Tango and fell apart with a series of rapid moans and shuddered breaths.

She went still and slowly pulled out even as my heart pounded from the mind-blowing sex we just had. I rolled onto my side and fingered the button to release my wrists as I took off the handcuffs and exhaustively crawled myself under her sheets.

"Gods Blood, I love you," Carmilla whispered as she curled up in bed behind me, spooning me as she pulled the comforter over the pair of us and I felt warm, safe, and secure in her arms.
YES, FetLife is real. So are TNG groups. So are dungeons.

This chapter is as close to the real community as I can write.

I was back at work, wrapping up the last stories and shredding James’ research on Carmilla and her family when Elsie came by to see me. There was something off about the way she stood there, like there was a nervous energy about her. She did just suffer a family emergency.

“Laura, I hear you’re leaving us to go back to school for your final year. You’ll be missed here.”

“Yeah, this internship has been pretty- informative.”

She nodded sadly at that. “I wish I could tell you that what happened here isn’t the usual way a news agency works, but as long as you’re involved with a high-profile person like Ms. Karnstein, people will expect you to exploit your connection-”

“Oh, that. Yeah.” I shrugged it off, mind dwelling on the explosion and who would want to kill her. “I was thinking about, um, James.” I fibbed, hoping it was believable. At the mention of his name, she broke eye contact with me and seemed to visibly pale.

“Men are always going to be incorrigible, no matter where you go.”

“Is everything okay with you?”

Elsie twitched at that. “I haven’t been taking care of myself lately like I should. Just a lot of stuff has been happening, you know.” She swept a lock of her straight brown hair behind an ear, and I caught a glimpse of a small burn mark on the back of her hand. It was round, and no larger than.... a cigarette butt.

“He did that to you.” I stated more than asked, pointing to her hand. She flinched, covering up her hand and keeping her eyes to the ground.

“No, it was a- an accident. Silly me trying a curling iron.” Her eyes flicked up to mine and I could just tell that she was lying.

“James won’t hurt you anymore.”

“It wasn’t James-” she amended, her nervous fidgeting getting worse.

“When you’re ready to talk, you know how to find me.” I said earnestly.

“I’ll be fine.” She snapped back. “Just… have to move on.” There was something in the way she said it that told me she wasn’t referring to James. Family emergency, seeming off? “I need to get back to work.”

I gave her a wan smile as she left and I continued to pack up my desk. This feels like the end of a
That evening JP, Carmilla, and I were at the TNG back to school event at the local dungeon. We had to show identification at the door and sign a legal waiver explaining that we knew where we were and that we weren't law enforcement here to shut them down. Apparently public BDSM clubs got the bad rap that they are somehow sex clubs, even though they almost never are.

As we paid the entry fee and made our way into the receiving room, I was surprised at the normalness of it all. There was a bulletin board of events as well as business cards of individuals ranging from custom equipment to dog boarding and walking services. In one corner was a buffet table where people brought food to share next to a fridge filled with sodas and bottled water with an honor system payment jar inside.

"Ms. Ka- shall I continue to refer to you as Christina Grey?" JP asked as the three of us found a seat at a table where the Bigger Blacker Box of a certain card game was begging to be opened.

"Please do. You too, Laura." Carmilla replied.

"I meant to ask you about your ID; how did you get that?" I asked curiously.

"Oh, Frank got me in touch with a cobbler back when I ran with the Summit... which everyone else calls The Rat Pack. Before that, the New York Mafia was able to bribe an official to crank out fake ID's for the right price."

I jerked back, stunned at the revelation. "I knew about Sinatra, which I totally want to hear about some time, but the Mafia? Aren't they dangerous?"

Carmilla shrugged it off. "It was the roaring 20's. If you wanted decent hooch that didn't make you go blind, you dealt with the Mafia. Besides, they liked being the muscle behind the gay and lesbian bars. Safe and happy customers were returning customers who wouldn't snitch to the Coppers."

I smiled at her use of the word 'coppers' though JP didn't seem to believe her.

"Okay, what was the name of the bar-" They started to ask, but got cut off by a reminiscing Carmilla.

"-Candy Box. I'd show up in a suit that I had to get tailored and know the password to get in while the song 'Masculine Women and Feminine Men' played on the phonograph. Maggie and Dottie absolutely loved that song as well as my signature fedora. And I mean an honest-to-god fedora, not a trilby." There was a hint of a New York accent starting to come through that piqued my interest.

My next question was cut off as the leader of the TNG group stood up and got everyone's attention.

"Hello everyone, I'm Dan." He appeared to be a wispy blond guy in his late 20's and had decent amount of stubble and a playful smile on his face. Sitting beside him seemed to be either his girlfriend or play partner, a brunette who seemed to be a blend of butch and femme at the same time, with hazel eyes full of mischief.

"Hi Dan!" The group responded as a whole, like an old joke that has turned into a social ritual of some sort.

"Okay. Welcome everyone to TNG, The Next Generation, the 18-35 group for the kink
community. Often we will have presenters showing off a skill or demo, but this month we're just
going to kick it with a play party. The Dungeon Monitor will have an arm band on, and whatever
they say is the law. This isn't 'dark party' rules, so please keep it PG-13."

Everyone laughed at the joke there as he brushed it off. "You know what I mean. No direct sexual
contact of genitals with your hands, mouth, or other genitals. And yes, that includes inserting
anything anywhere, Sadistic Cupcake." He looked down to the mischievous raven-haired girl by
his side.

"Kicking a guy in the balls is fair game, right?" She asked with shrug. He covered his crotch and
took a step away, mock horror on his face.

"Ouch, Sadistic! Do you go around thinking of horrible things to do?"

She shrugged at that. "Sadist." There was already a guy looking at her in delight.

Jordan approached us and gave the three of us a tour of the dungeon. Once past the normal looking
social room, there was a small hallway where a dressing room along with a unisex restroom.

"Here's where you can change if you need, and up ahead is the main play space. Off to the right
there are a few specialty rooms; jail cell, school room, and the medical playroom." She shuddered
at the last one. "I once saw a really messed up scene here once involving a clown and an enema... I
had to get a cookie. That means leave the area, because their kink isn't my kink, and that's okay."

As we stepped into the dungeon, it reminded me a bit of Carmilla's playroom, but it was bigger and
the equipment looked a bit more used. It was obvious that it was a renovated warehouse and that
the decor was all hand-made and probably by a guy who settled for function over elegance. All in
all, if I hadn't been already spoiled by Carmilla's playroom, this would look like a giant adult
BDSM playground.

Lady HotPants was cracking a bull whip in the large open area of the dungeon, aiming for a small
target with every pop of the whip and making some of the people startle and jump at each crack.
Jordan didn't even flinch.

"Now our group only has the dungeon for the first two hours before it's opened up for everyone.
Etiquette demands that we not interfere with others' scenes unless someone is in actual danger or if
they have used the house safe word of 'red' and the Top isn't respecting it. Either way, go to the
Dungeon Monitor."

"That all being said, don't feel like you can't approach anyone here. We're all a pretty friendly
group and you can't learn unless you ask questions, okay?"

Jordan's head spun as two guys went by, one is carrying a tall ladder while the other had five rolls
of duct tape.

"Marc, you're not going to-"

"-fuck yes I am!"

"...kay." She sighed and shook her head at that. "I swear he'd pull out a rubber chicken and beat his
boy with it if he had one."

Dan and the Dungeon Monitor went by a second later, already responding to Jordan's comment.

"He already did that and made his boy cluck as he counted." Dan grinned at the memory. "One, ba-
The DM turned to Jordan. "Can you vouch for Grey, JP, and Laura here? They know what they're doing?"

Jordan nodded. "Yeah, why?"

The Dungeon Monitor rolled his eyes. "Some new guy showed up with a gaggle of newbie girls so they could sponsor him in despite the age limit. I've never seen him before and it sounds like he's talking big to impress them. I swear, they read one book or see some third-rate smut movie and think they are experts..." He looked over to the corner where Marc was setting up a stepladder and had multiple rolls of duct tape. "Hey Marc, you have to clean the wall of dust before you use the tape! Excuse me..." He bowed politely as he and Dan rushed off to supervise the unusual scene playing out.

Jordan forced a polite smile as we continued our tour. "I swear, we're all normal here. Some more normal than others. Okay, so you see at every station a spray bottle and some paper towels. That's for you to spray down and sanitize the equipment once you're done; some sort of anti-microbial solution."

"Cavicide Disinfectant." JP corrected her automatically.

Jordan stopped short at that and looked at them speculatively. "Yeah. Sure you haven't been to a dungeon before?"

They shook their head and pointed at one of the stations. "It's on the bottle."

Lady HotPants was behind Jordan and motioned us to stay quiet and back off a bit, and as we did she threw the whip and caught Jordan with it, Indiana-Jones style. "I think you've given a decent tour, now go change so that we can have our fun."

Jordan grinned at us and excused herself to the dressing room as Carmilla pointed out a nearby Saint Andrew's Cross. "Armitage, I want that one. Bring out the toy bag and prepare yourself to get tied up to it." I sat down at the adjacent sofa taking in the rest of the people staring to set up to do their own rope suspensions, spankings, and duct-taping-to-the-wall.

"Ca-Christina, so you're going to play with JP?" I asked cautiously.

"Yeah, it's been awhile since I got to Florentine." She replied, unbuttoning her jacket and stretching her arms as sensual rock played overhead.

"I don't think you mean eggs, do you?" I ask as JP returned in a silk robe and carrying Carmilla's leather toy bag. Carmilla thanked them as they opened the bag and handed them a pair of leather cuffs to put on as she pulled out a pair of matching leather floggers.

Floggers. Florentine Floggers. I thought as JP took off the robe and faced the cross, only wearing a pair of boxers as they put their arms up to be buckled to the large eye bolts near the top of the cross.

"Laura, help clip them into place." Carmilla requested as she reached her arm out to gauge the distance, bending at the knees in a type of fighting stance and threw a false swing to gauge her range. I made it to the cross and saw a nervous-yet-aroused JP pressing their breasts up against the cross so nobody could notice them.

It was a simple d-ring clip on either side and they were latched into place, letting their arms go...
I sat back down on the sofa and watched a look of concentration and wicked pleasure cross my Mistress’ face as she tapped her toe to the music as the intro to *Tear You Apart* began. She didn’t seem to hold back as the first swing of the flogger in her right hand smacked spectacularly on JP’s back with the beat of the song and continued with each flick of her wrist as she stepped to the right to keep the same swing but adjust where the leather falls were hitting. She crouched down slightly and was lightly hitting just above their kidneys (a massive safety issue from all of the research I had done before) before the beat changed to the refrain and Carmilla swung upward with the left flogger, impacting with a louder smack across the butt. JP grunted in what had to be pleasurable pain as she repeated the swing from the other direction, hitting the other cheek with equal force and precision.

Both floggers spun around as if she were freaking Deadpool in that horrible *Wolverine Origins* movie, spinning faster than I could keep my eyes on with both wrists crossing over each other the leather falls of both floggers raining blows down on Armitage like a non-stop waterfall of pain. *Is she using her vampire agility?* JP seemed to be melting into the cross from this rather than screaming in pain like you might imagine.

*I can't keep my eyes on!* I noticed that others came nearby to see Carmilla's flogging technique as she kept up the barrage in time with the music, moving herself around JP as their skin went pink and then red with each strike. Before I know it, Carm tosses me one of the floggers and continues, unfazed, one handed as she points into the toy bag. I figure out what she means as I pull out a new flogger, this one twice as thick and with three times the number of leather falls and I toss it at her, handle-first.

The song goes for the instrumental break and she instantly tosses me the other flogger and continues with the new one in her right hand, the obvious heft making it heavier and she adjusts accordingly as the new blows to JP's back no longer sound like leather meeting flesh but more like gunshots that actually startle the Dungeon Monitor and a few more people to come see what's going on. Lady HotPants waved to the DM that it was okay as Carmilla doesn't break her concentration or rhythm as she continues her heavy assault on Armitage, only winding down as the song does.

My Mistress comes over for a bottle of water and a towel, wiping the perspiration from her face and dropping the flogger and picking up the silk robe for JP and uncuffs their wrists from the St. Andrew's Cross. She has to force them to sip some of the water as Armitage looks mentally gone and blissed out as if they had a ten hour sex marathon or something.

*That's one hell of a sub-space endorphin rush.* I look into the bag and pull out a chocolate bar as they collapse into the sofa next to me while Carmilla uses the spray to clean up the cross as well as wipe down the floggers.

"You here JP?" I ask, glad to see the blank, glazed look on their face start to fade as they chew on the chocolate.

"Sure am, Professor Lupin. But I wasn't attacked by Dementors." They joke as they take another sluggish bite.

"What's with the Harry Potter reference?" I ask as Armitage points out Jordan getting dragged across the dungeon by her hair wearing a pink hoodie, jeans, and trainers as Lady HotPants is dressed up like none other than Bellatrix Lestrange.
"...put the boys in the cellar! I'm going to have a conversation with this one, girl to girl. " Lady HotPants yanks Jordan again as her hands are clutching onto her Domme's wrist and falls to her knees, making her crawl to keep up. It was a stage trick to make the hair pulling look more damaging than it really was. They were making their way to an area that she had already put her equipment out at, letting go of Jordan with force as she rolled to a stop on the rug.

*This is their interrogation scene?* I wasn't certain if I liked it or not while JP passed the chocolate bar under my nose and I absentmindedly took a bite of it as well.

Lady HotPants' boot hit Jordan with little force as she was playing up the scene rather than actually try to break any ribs. Jordan still seemed to have the breath knocked out of her as she rolled and sobbed in a good approximation of Hermione Granger.

"That sword is meant to be in *my vault* at Gringotts, how did you get it? Did you and your friends *take it from my vault?"* She even had a wand out and pointed at Jordan, and the girl trembled as she had to remember the line from the movie.

"I didn't take anything. Please. *I didn't take anything!* " Jordan panted as panic flushed her cheeks and Lady HotPants knelt down and gripped her by the throat roughly.

"I don't believe it! And you, you *filthy* little Mudblood, don't deserve to be tortured with magic!" She threw her wand into the toy bag and instead pulled out a stun baton. As the first strike crackles to life, Jordan's scream was a bit too real and I wanted to excuse myself. Carmilla understood and told me that I could go back to the receiving room as she'd watch over JP's recovery from the scene. I tried to ignore the way she licked her bottom lip and looked on at the interaction with delight. *Well, she's definitely a sadist.*

As I made my way back through the dungeon, I go to see that Marc had indeed duct taped his boy to the wall and was giving him water via a bottle and a straw as he stood on a stepladder. What could have been a high school prank looked oddly comforting with the amount of concern and detail Marc was giving to his boy. Even so, I couldn't help but laugh at the sheer hilarity of the scene as he went into softly singing 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!' which made his boy snort water out of his nostril.

Just by the entrance of the dungeon there was a man who was definitely over the 35 year age limit giving what looked to be an impromptu flogging lesson to three naked, giggling eighteen year olds. There's something about how he's flirting with them and touching the butt of the girl attached to the Saint Andrew's Cross that gives me pause.

"It doesn't hurt if you do it right, know what I mean?" He threw the flogger and it hit square in the lower-middle of her back, dangerously close to her kidneys. She naturally yelped and wriggled from the impact as he slapped her ass with his bare hand to caution her to stay still.

Except that he was more groping her ass than just slapping it.

The blonde girl tied to the cross giggled nervously as he backed away and grabbed a second flogger and got back into position behind her. *He had crappy aim with just one and now he's going to do two?*

Sadistic Cupcake was coming into the dungeon, wearing a low-cut black pleather bodycon dress with matching pumps that left little to the imagination and left me wanting to lick my way up her calves and thighs. I shook the wayward thought out of my head and called out to her.

"Hey Sadistic Cupcake, have you seen the DM?" She met my eyes before giving me a once over. I
was simply wearing a pair of snug denim jeans and a Count Chocula tee that had everyone do a spit-take before I left Carmilla's place.

She shook her head. "I think he's watching Marc, why?"

I pointed with my thumb over my shoulder. "It doesn’t look like he knows what he’s doing." She nods and goes to get him as I turn around and see the old creeper attempt to Florentine with significantly less skill than Mistress had and with absolutely zero accuracy. After the third strike directly on her kidney, I decide to intervene.

"Hey, stop! Hitting the kidneys is like, super bad and can cause damage. You want her to pee Blood in the morning? Because that's how you make someone pee blood!"

"Listen girlie, I know what I'm doing-" I interrupted him.

"Really? Because your aim is horrible and you're taking more time to grab her ass than actually demonstrate flogging!" I turn to the girl. "You know you can call 'red' as your safeword here and he'd have to stop, right?"

She nodded uncomfortably. "But that's the watered down, PC way to play. I want to learn the real way, where slaves don't have the privilege of that."

"Oh for the love of Pete, you believed that line of crap?! Did he find you on the internet and invite you into his windowless van with candy, too?"

The creeper Domly-Dom put his hand on my chest, just under the neck, and pushed me to arm's length. "Okay, thank you, peanut gallery. Now leave us be." He turned to the gaggle of girls. "This is the problem with BDSM today; fake subbies who get uppity and think they know everything and refuse to obey a Master."

Oh hell no.

" Remove your hand before I break it." I threatened. I was livid at this complete asshole as Sadistic Cupcake, Armitage, and the Dungeon Monitor showed up.

"Laura, we'll take it from here. Hi. I'm the DM right now, and I'm saying you're out of here." The Monitor said, shoulders set square against him.

Sadistic Cupcake looked at him suspiciously. "I've never seen you with any clubs nor at community events; did you move here from another city? Or are you just some rando creeper who wants to fuck young girl?"

"I don't need this shit. I have a better dungeon at home!" He packed up his floggers into his toy bag and started to walk off.

Sadistic Cupcake unhooked the girl from the Saint Andrew's Cross, rolling her eyes in disgust. "I highly suggest you come out to events and join a club to learn about kink and how to play safely. Also because we like to protect our own and will warn you off of people who have all the red flags of being an abuser ."

The girl rubbed her wrists and shyly looked up at Sadistic Cupcake. "I'd like that; I prefer the idea of a girl doing stuff to me anyways. He told me online that the only females who do that are the expensive Dominatrixes."

Sadistic Cupcake looked her right in the eyes, and there was something about her presence that
exudes from her. All I could say was that it was that Domme 'look' that renders some submissives speechless. *It was pure confidence, the same way Carmilla gets when she has me kneel for her.*

"Well, I do this for the low, low payment of the sounds you make as you whimper, moan, and beg for more. Besides, what's wrong with doing a little slap and tickle for pay?"

The so-called 'Master' came back and reminded the girls that he was their ride. Sadistic Cupcake arched a defiant eyebrow at him.

"I'll see that they get home; either I can drive them or give them cab fare as to keep them away from you." He fumed as he walked away, the DM escorting him out.

Dan showed up and tried to smooth things over and let the girls know that they were welcome to stay as he was about to do some fire-play with his girl in the medical room. "Oh Sadistic? My girl wants a gang-bang for her birthday and she's specifically asked for you to be a part of it."

She blushed at that. "I showed her a picture of my feeldoe stout. Been wanting to break it in. I take it you'll be supervising and making sure everyone has their recent STD test results and everyone wears a condom?"

"You know me. Also, polyurethane since she's allergic to latex. Allergy play is sooo not her thing." Dan replied, cocking his head to the medical room. "Who wants to see a girl on fire?"

My jaw dropped at the frank exchange. *Yeah, these people are radically sex-positive.*

The blonde next to Sadistic Cupcake stayed by her while the other two girls followed the TNG leader to the medical play room. "What can you show me?"

There was a familiar wicked smirk as she had an idea. "How about rope bondage, and if you're up for it, tickle torture. I think you could use a few good laughs."

The two of them peeled away in a different direction leaving me with JP. "Why didn't Car- um, Mistress come over?"

"She wanted to rip his arm off for touching something that wasn't his. I offered to come instead and be a bit more diplomatic, though it seems you can handle yourself just fine."

I nodded. "I really wanted to kick his ass. Did you hear him dismiss me as a submissive and then get upset that I was uppity and wouldn’t obey him?"

“Yeah. He was full of crap.”

“The only person I’m going to obey like that is MY Mistress.” I said angrily. He made an ‘mhm’ grunt and we fist-bumped before we made our way back to Carmilla.
The Cruise

Chapter Summary

Main elements from the original story that are still here:

- An interior designer comes and gets too friendly with our Dominant (it's for a new mansion instead though)

- They go on a cruise (it's the honeymoon for the wedding after only knowing each other for 3 months)

Everything else is new.

Kirsch is standing in the hallway. He takes a step back and grins as I steam past him in Carmilla’s bathrobe. The events after leaving the dungeon came back to me slowly as reality set back in. Carmilla wound up driving as JP was still somewhat out of it and snuggled me in the back of their Audi as they were still in need of some serious after-care. They went out like a rock in their bed once we got home and Carmilla decided that she needed to tie me down to her headboard and ride my face before returning the favor.

_I never knew I could make Carmilla whimper and beg like she did._ I tried to not blush as I felt more proud than embarrassed about waking up everyone but Armitage from last night.

“Hi, Kirsch,” I mutter.

“Laura,” he murmurs. I slept in and it’s almost noon. _I have no job, and two weeks of absolutely nothing to do until school resumes.. besides figure out how to fight and kill an Elder God._

I go through the great room and head into the kitchen, where Perry is at the stove.

“Good morning, Laura.”

“Hi, Perry,” I mutter once more. I head straight to the fridge and pull out the carton of orange juice. Carmilla follows me into the kitchen and watches me like a hawk as I take a glass down from the cupboard. She removes her suit jacket and casually places it on the countertop. My eyes trace up her arm and I can’t help but find her drop-dead gorgeous in the long-sleeved blouse and matching tie. _She’s definitely rocking the hard femme look today._

“Do you want a drink?” I ask super sweetly, hoping to distract her eyes from my neck.

“Not of OJ,” she says, not taking her eyes off me, and I know what she’s suggesting. Slowly, she removes her tie then opens the top button of her shirt. I look away and pour myself a large glass of juice as Carmilla carelessly tousles her hair. When I turn around, Perry has disappeared. _Shit! She’s my human shield._ I take a large gulp. _OJ is good for donating blood, right?_

She takes the two steps between us so she’s standing in front of me. Gently she tucks my hair behind my ear and caresses my earlobe with her fingertips, sending a shiver through me. “Stop this,” Carmilla whispers to herself.
“Stop? Why?” I whisper back, my body reacting to every touch as if we’re tuned to each other.

Natalie clears her throat apologetically and it breaks the moment between us. I wanted to glare daggers at her.

“Sorry, but since her office was fire-bombed, we’re having to work here.” Nat explained.

*Oh, okay. That makes sense.*

“The contractor Vecha Marino will be here in just under an hour. You should get dressed and eat.” Carmilla said suddenly, trying to clear her mind of what just nearly happened. *Okay, I know when I’m being dismissed.*

“I’ll just get out of your hair for now. Any ideas on dealing with Lophii?”

“My associates have research and other affairs to wrap up before they can arrive in about a month.” Nat seemed bitter about that. “I’ve recommended that Ms. Karnstein-”

“-No.” She cut her off suddenly.

“It’s the safest thing to do and to be quite honest, you need a vacation!” She snapped back.

“I have an appointment to get my office rebuilt since you refuse to use Alchemy-”

“-you know I can’t abuse my craft for personal gain! Besides, you’re getting an insurance check for all this so it would look pretty suspicious if your office were completely restored overnight!” Natalie retorted hotly.

“You know, I liked you better when you were just my secretary and didn’t talk back to me.” Carmilla spat angrily.

*Where is this hostility coming from?*

“Carm, what the hell! You apologize to her, this instant before she... turns you into a newt!” I almost order her, and she looks ashamed at the chastisement.

“Sorry, Natalie. I just... feel powerless knowing that Elladora is back.”

“Yeah, I know. That’s why I’m saying take some time off.”

“It feels like I’d be running away.” Carmilla slumped at that. “That’s pretty much what I did for over a century; try to avoid Mother and Ell and whatever new scheme they hatched up.”

“Yeah, okay, but don’t take it out Natalie.” I said plaintively. “You’re better than that.” Carm shrugged in agreement as she pulls her ‘soy milk’ out of the fridge and drinks straight from the container. She grimaces slightly and checks the date on it before putting it back into the fridge.

“Sorry, my thirst manifests in a few different ways; sickly, grumpy, and horny. I’ve been trying to ration myself to see if LaF’s treatment is working,” she whispers.

“I think the stress of everything is getting to you.” I reply, finishing my juice.

“Fine,” Carmilla relents, “Nat, can you-”

“-already done, last minute deals for everyone here.” Natalie replies smugly. “Two ocean view staterooms and one balcony suite for a total of fifteen hundred before taxes and drink plans.”
Kirsch comes in and announces that the contractor is on their way up. “Hey, uh… I don’t do well at sea and wanted to ask if I could get some time off to see my family. We can put this place on lockdown-“

Natalie interjected. “-or I could stay here and protect the place with my Golem.” A golem?!

Carmilla looked between the two of them. “I don’t like it when my staff conspire together.”

“It’s for your own good, boss.” Brody replies.

Carmilla turns her head and calls out to JP. “You in on this too?”

“…am I allowed to lie and say ‘no’, Ms. Karnstein?” Armitage says as they pop their head into the room. Carmilla shakes her head and gives in.

“Fine. Let me and Laura go get packed…” She narrowed her eyes at Armitage and pressed her lips tight. “Already done?”

“The first thing about anticipatory service is to anticipate what your owner needs before they do, Ms. Karnstein.” JP said politely.

“And did you anticipate Kirsch wouldn’t want to go?” She asked pointedly.

“Well, no…” Armitage hedged uncertainly.

“So I have a third room booked for no reason.” Carmilla huffed at that.

“Who was going to share a room with Kirsch?” I asked, “I mean, I assumed JP and I would share the suite with you…” Inspiration hit me and I ran to my room to phone Betty. “Don’t give up the third room!” I called out as the front door opened and an outmaneuvered Carmilla put on a forced smile to deal with the building contractor.

She answered on the fourth ring, a bit breathy.

“Hey, Bets? Wanna go on a cruise with me and my girlfriend?”

“What? School starts pretty soon-” I hear bed squeaking in the background and look at my clock. She’s still in bed at noon?

“.The stateroom is already paid for. You can bring Jamie, too!” I suggest, surprised to hear his voice in the background. There’s no response as a hushed conversation goes on between the two lovebirds that I try to not listen in on.

It’s not long before Betty is back on the phone. “Sure thing! When are we leaving?”

“In a few hours.”

“WHAT? I HAVE TO PACK!” She exclaimed, hanging up on me. I chuckled at that and idly wondered if she and Jamie were on my bed or hers back in our dorm room.

As I come out to let Carmilla know that Betty and Jamie are in, I take in the contractor and am very surprised. Vescha Marino is a good-looking woman—a tall, good-looking woman. She wears her short, salon-blond, perfectly layered and coiffed hair like a sophisticated crown. She’s dressed in a pale gray skirt suit; the skirt and fitted jacket hug her lush curves, and hem line just being this side of professional. Her clothes look expensive. Showing-off-too-much-skin expensive.
At the base of her throat, a solitary diamond glints, matching the single-carat studs in her ears. She is well groomed—one of those women who grew up with money and breeding, though ‘breeding’ takes a different meaning as I look her over; her pale blue blouse is undone too far.

“You must be Laura.” She beams, showing perfect white teeth, and holds out a manicured hand to shake my hand. She’s a fraction shorter than Carmilla, but then she’s in killer heels. I smile coolly, and there’s something that bothers me about all this.

“Must I be?” I reply coolly.

“You both looked magnificent together at the fundraiser,” she says smoothly, her brown eyes gazing at Carmilla through long mascaraed lashes. Carmilla puts her arm around me, holding me close.

“The honor of Laura’s first dance was worth every penny.” She brushes her lips against my temple, taking me by surprise. It’s as if she’s saying ‘See... she’s mine.’

I can’t help but grin. Right now I really love you, Carmilla Karnstein. I slip my hand around her waist and wonder why she’s being so openly affectionate. Vescha gives us a thin smile. “Have you managed to look over the plans?”

“I have,” Carmilla murmurs. I gaze up at Carmilla, who grins down at me, one eyebrow raised in wry amusement.

“Please,” Carmilla says. “The plans are over here.” She gestures toward the dining table. Taking my hand, she leads me to it, Vescha following in our wake. I finally remember my manners as I realize JP isn’t here and is probably packing or something.

“Would you like something to drink?” I ask. “A glass of wine?” My prompting gets her attention.

“That would be lovely,” Vescha says. “Dry white if you have it.” Sauvignon blanc— that’s a dry white, isn’t it? Reluctantly leaving my Mistress’ side, I head over to the kitchen.

“Would you like some wine, Carmilla?” I call. “Natalie?”

“Please, sweetness,” she croons, grinning at me. Nat shakes her head politely.

Okay, she’s putting on a show on purpose. Reaching up to open the cupboard, aware her eyes are on me, and I’m wondering what her angle is with Ms. Vescha Marino. Does she think that Vescha’s attracted to her and being too obvious about it? It gives me a small rush of pleasure when I realize maybe she’s trying to reassure me. Or maybe she’s just sending a message loud and clear to this woman that she’s taken.

That’s when it hits me, the duality of our relationship. She can say she’s the Domme in the relationship and I can call her Mistress, but as much as she can say that I’m hers, she is also equally mine.

Carmilla was saying to Vescha ‘I am hers’.

Smiling to myself at the realization, I collect three glasses from the cupboard and take the opened bottle of sauvignon blanc from the fridge and pour each of us a generous amount. Vescha is leaning over the table while Carmilla stands across from her and points at something on the plans. Wow, that’s just gratuitous cleavage on display. Nat rolls her eyes at me while Carmilla isn’t even
looking at her.

“I think my assistant Natalie has some opinions on the glass wall, but generally I’m pleased with
the design you’ve come up with.”

“Oh, I’m glad,” Vescha gushes, obviously relieved, and as she says it, she briefly touches her hand
in a small, flirty gesture. Carmilla stiffens immediately but subtly. Vescha doesn’t even seem to
notice.

Stepping casually aside so she’s out of her reach, Carmilla turns to me.

“Ah, thank you,” she says, taking a wine glass.

“And of course,” I reply. Vescha makes her uncomfortable. Why didn’t I see that before? That’s why I
don’t like her. She’s used to casual touching and social flirting, and usually she thinks nothing of it.
But there’s something about this woman that is setting her off.

Well, Hollis to the rescue. I offer the second glass to Vescha, positioning myself between them.
She smiles courteously as she accepts it.

“Cheers,” Carmilla says to us both, but looking at me. Vescha and I raise our glasses and answer in
unison. I take a welcome sip of wine.

“Natalie, you have some issues with the glass wall?” Vescha asks.

“Merely from the safety angle; I want it to be laminated and reinforced to sustain multiple
gunshots. Can you make it with transparent aluminum?”

“Transparent… isn’t that just science fiction?” She shrugged.

“It is real, actually.”

“I’ll look into—” Vescha’s voice wavered slightly.

“You’ll get it.” Natalie replied kindly in a way that still seemed like ‘fuck you, bitch’.

Vescha is looking at Carmilla, waiting for her to make the decision. I watch as her pupils dilate and
her glossed lips part. Her tongue darts quickly over her top lip before she takes a sip of her wine.
When I turn to Carmilla, she’s still looking at me—not at her at all. I am going to have words with
Ms. Marino.

“Laura, what do you think?” Carmilla murmurs, very clearly deferring to me.

“I agree with Natalie; we should reinforce the glass.”

“Me, too.” I turn back to Vescha. Reluctantly, Vescha drags her greedy eyes away from Carmilla
and smiles down at me. Does she think I’m not going to notice?

“Sure,” she acquiesces pleasantly.

“Any other issues?” Other than you bothering my Mistress?

“I’d like to see the windows also work as solar panels.” I murmur. There’s a discreet cough from
the entrance to the great room. We three turn as one to find Kirsch standing there.

“Kirsch?” Carmilla asks.
“I need to confer with you on an urgent matter, Ms. Karnstein.” Carmilla clasps my shoulders from behind and addresses Vescha.

“Laura is in charge of this project. She has absolute carte blanche. Whatever she wants, it’s hers. I completely trust her instincts. She’s very shrewd.” Her voice alters subtly; I hear the veiled warning to Vescha.

I shake my head as she’s telling Miss Provocative-And-Unfortunately-Good-At-Her-Job just who’s in charge. I caress her hand as it rests on my shoulder. “If you’ll excuse me.” Carmilla squeezes my shoulders before following Kirsch. I wonder idly what’s going on.

Vescha clears her throat, obviously thrown by this. “So... photovoltaic, bulletproof transparent aluminum?” Vescha asks nervously. I gaze up at her, pausing for a moment to ensure that Carmilla and Kirsch are out of earshot before I let her have it.

“You’re right to be nervous, Vescha, because right now your work on this project hangs in the balance. I’m sure we’ll be fine as long as you keep your hands off my girlfriend.” She gasps. “Otherwise, you’re fired. Understand?” I enunciate each word clearly. She blinks rapidly, utterly stunned. She cannot believe what I’ve said. Hell, I cannot believe what I’ve just said. But I hold my ground, gazing impassively into her widening brown eyes. I’ve learned this maddening impassive expression from Carmilla who does impassive like no one else.

I know that renovating the Karnsteins’ office would be a prestigious project for Vescha’s company—a resplendent feather in her cap. She can’t lose this commission.

“Laura— I-I’m so sorry. I never—” She flushes, unsure what else she can say.

“I don’t need you to be sorry, I just need you to not continue flirting. Is that understood?”

“Of course,” she murmurs, the blood draining from her face.

“As I said, I just wanted to be clear.”

“Ms. Hollis, I sincerely apologize if you think... I have—” She stops, still floundering for something to say.

“Just stop. I’m certain that a bit of social flirting has worked for you with many clients before, but right now? Stop it. Now as you know, Carmilla and Natalie are determined that her office should be secure and carbon-offset, so I’d like to reassure her as to where all the materials are coming from.”

“Of course,” she stutters, wide-eyed and frankly a little intimidated by me. This is a first. Vescha pats her hair into place, and I realize this is a nervous gesture. I kind of like this feeling.

“And the lobby?” she prompts anxiously, her voice a breathless whisper. Now that I have the upper hand, I feel myself relax for the first time since my meeting with Carmilla this afternoon. I can do this.

“Natalie?” I assume that she has a list of notes for it, and she does.

Carmilla joins us just as we’re finishing up.

“All done?” she asks. She puts her arm around my waist and turns to Vescha.

“Yes, Ms. Karnstein,” Vescha smiles brightly, though her smile looks brittle. “I’ll have the revised
plans to you in a couple of days.”

“Excellent. You’re happy?” she asks me directly, her eyes warm and probing. I nod and blush for some reason that I don’t understand.

“I’d better be going,” Vescha says again too brightly. She offers her hand to me first this time, then to Carmilla.

“Until next time, Vescha,” I murmur.


“Kirsch will see you out.” My voice is loud enough for her to hear. Patting her hair once more, she turns on her high heels and leaves the great room, followed closely by Kirsch.

“Thank you,” Carmilla says, looking visibly relieved.

“No problem.” I shrug, trying to remain neutral rather than ask ‘how did she get under your skin’?

“What did Kirsch want?” I ask partly because I’m curious and partly because I want to change the subject. Frowning, Carmilla releases me and begins to roll up the plans on the table.

“It, uh... was about Stevenson.” My creepy ex boss?

“What about Stevenson?” I whisper.

“It’s nothing to worry about, Laura.” Abandoning the plans, Carmilla draws me into her arms.

“It turns out he hasn’t been in his apartment for weeks, that’s all.” She kisses my hair, then releases me and finishes her task. She’s holding back.

“So what did you decide on?” she asks, and I know it’s because she doesn’t want me to pursue the Stevenson line of inquiry.

“Photovoltaic glass, so it will help power your office. I think she likes you,” I say quietly. She snorts.

“Obviously. Did you threaten her?” she asks and I flush. How does she know? At a loss what to say, I stare down at my fingers.

“I may have said something.” I mumble. When I peek up at her, she’s regarding me warmly, and for an unguarded moment she looks... pleased. She drops her gaze, shaking her head, and her expression changes.

“She reminded me of Ell; like I was the less-favored child.” She sounds vaguely bitter, disgusted even. “I’m totally off my groove; Nat’s right. I need this vacation.”

It wasn’t long before JP had all of us in the extended parking and we met up with Betty and Jamie as we went through the long line of customs before we could get our ID and board the cruise ship. The customs agent was obviously reading from a script as she looked up at me and Carmilla and asked if either of us was pregnant.

Carmilla arched an eyebrow at me comically. “Not unless my girlfriend here has been keeping
I shrug guiltily. “Yup, you caught me. I can magically grow a penis.” I deadpanned.

The agent blinked twice before getting up from her chair and walking away a bit before laughing.

JP leaned in next to me and whispered, “Expecto Erection” and looked down at me, shaking their head sadly. “Nope. You’re safe, Ms. Karnstein.”

LaFontaine was guffawing while Perry tried and failed to deny knowing any of us as they also went through the same customs agent a moment later.

We were all beet red as they tried to take our pictures as we got onboard the ship.

Perry, Carmilla, and Betty each made their way to the map by the elevators and found our respective staterooms. We weren’t anywhere near each other but traded room numbers so we could call each other to stay in contact.

“The meals here are mostly cafeteria style but it is fancy dress tomorrow evening in a formal dining room,” JP points out on a calendar of events, “so we can dine together-”

Jamie’s eyes bulge wide in disbelief. “They have a taco bar onboard! CUSTOM TACOS!”

Betty just smiled good-naturedly at him and shook her head. “I swear, you’re like an excitable puppy at times.”

I exchanged a meaningful look to JP. *He still hasn’t told her.* Jamie looks Betty right in the eyes and gives a not-too-subtle “Woof” in acknowledgement.

Carmilla stood a bit taller as she looked him over like a threat. I turned to whisper in her ear. “Easy there, kitten.”

She looked a bit embarrassed at the vaguely feline response she had. “Okay, let’s find our rooms, and uh… Armitage, you packed a ‘bottle of wine’ for each of us?”

They nodded. “I did, Ms. Karnstein. In your suitcases, if it says ‘Chardonnay’, it’s got Vodka inside, and the ‘Merlot’ is Rum.”

LaFontaine and Perry grinning at that. “So I’m technically a rum-running pirate in the ocean? Cool!”

JP nodded happily. “Smuggling, yes. Each of you has an unlimited drink plan that includes mixers but not any alcohol.”

Carmilla chimed in there. “Yeah, I’m not made of money you know… okay I kinda am, but this is what keeps me wealthy.”

I looked at the brochure that listed the various bars and hot tubs across the ship. “I’m all for creative penny-pinching when… geez! The drinks are a minimum of $8 here?... and gratuity is added separately. I’m sooo getting lots of orange juice for my ‘Chardonnay’.”

As we finally got an elevator, I found out that Betty and Jamie were a floor below us in the aft-port section while LaFontaine and Perry were in the front-starboard section.

“Call you in 10, Laura!” Betty said as the elevator doors closed. I waved back and turned to kiss Carmilla and give JP a big hug.
“So we’re sharing a room for the next few days…” I begin.

“You spend the night in Ms. Karnstein’s bed back home.”

“Yeah, but if she and I want to, uh, you know… get giggy?”

Carmilla bit her bottom lip in mental anguish. “May I never be accused of ‘getting giggy’ or any other cute euphemism for ‘nookie’ that you can come up with. I’m over three hundred and have a reputation to uphold. I fuck, fornicate, and eat pussy like it’s the reason God put me down on this planet.”

I was rendered silent as a memory replayed in my mind that told me that she was indeed gifted.

“If you’re worried about needing privacy, I can leave the stateroom. Or watch and give colorful commentary like it’s a BBC nature show.”

Carmilla snorted as I slapped their arm in embarrassment. “Armitage! You really going to do that?”

They chuckled at themselves. “I swear I’ve never had as much fun ribbing someone as I do with you.”

The doors to the elevator opened finally and the three of us got out, taking a moment to reorient ourselves and make our way to the forward port area where our cabin would be. It took about a minute of walking and we made it to our room. It was well lit and had a wall of glass to the ocean, giving an expansive feel to what should only be a decent bedroom size.

“Oh wow, mini fridge and everything!” Armitage said in astonishment.

“You ever been on a ship before?” Carmilla asked.

“No, Ms. Karnstein.”

“Me either. But you must have.” I reply.

“Yeah, they got bigger and less rocky. Though the lack of rats became problematic over the years.”

Rats? I looked at her in horror.

“What? A vampire’s gotta eat somehow.”

“Still, ew.” I looked over the room and sat on the sofa, realizing that there’s not enough room on the floor by the bed for Armitage. This is really uncomfortable. “Um, JP, where will you sleep?”

They point to where I’m sitting. “That pulls out like a futon I believe.” I get up to let them try it out and, after a bit of struggling and a ear-splitting metallic squeak, it unfolds and they tumble onto the bed, thudding painfully on the rails.

“I don’t think it’s well padded.” I say, a moment too late.

“OW! Worse than Master Chen’s kendo sticks…” JP moaned painfully.

Carmilla came over and squeezed what could generously be called the mattress. “I can ask for another mattress, or see about a few layers of comforters for padding…”

I look at the queen sized bed and make a decision. “You can sleep with us.”
Armitage’s eyes bugged out in shock as if I just did some major faux-pas. “Ms.Karnstein-I-would-never-presume-nor-insinuate-” They gave me a terse ‘don’t get me punished’ look.

“... if that’s okay with you, Mistress.” I finish, hoping that’s enough.

Carmilla took in my confused look along with JP’s cowering puppy look and sighed in relief.

“Armitage, bench.”

As soon as she said that, JP was on all fours ready to serve as a human bench and Carmilla sat on their back. They looked relieved at this.

“You feel better serving now, don’t you?” They nodded, albeit a bit too nervously. “You’re not in trouble.”

“What did I miss here?” I asked.

“The Marketplace slaves are trained that sharing a bed with their owner is a privilege granted, not something to be schemed for. I’m guessing one of the trainees made that mistake at the Long Island facility.”

They nodded. “They were forced to sleep naked in the stables for a week to learn humility while the stable master Jack availed himself to ‘discipline’ her. He was brutally efficient at breaking people.”

Oh, shit. “I’m so sorry, JP…”

Carmilla leaned over and stroked their hair in a comforting gesture. “I knew from the moment that I bought JP’s contract from Mistress Alexandra that I wasn’t going to hold JP to the same house rules that they teach all of their slaves. Knowing that they simply wanted to serve and be a Varlet, giving them their own bedding would help reinforce that this wasn’t to be a sexual arrangement. Isn’t that right, JP?” She asked with a loud swat on the butt.

“Yes, Ms. Karnstein. And thank you for that.”

“But we’ve shared a bed before when we watched movies.” I responded, trying to make sense of it.

“I invited them into my bed, that was the difference.” The phone in the room rang and Carmilla got up, directing JP to answer it. We were expecting the call about ten minutes ago. “Now tell me about the dynamic between Betty and Jamie. It’s not Domme/sub, but close.”

I chortled at the idea of my roommate wearing a skintight outfit like Sadistic Cupcake did and cracking a whip around Jamie. “He’s not out to her about being a pup.”

“Oh is that it? Wish I could could give him the same shape-shifting ability that Daiena did. I think he’d make a great canine.”

“Who is Daiena?”

“The Romani… well, ‘witch’ I met back in 1770.”

“I thought that was just another vampire trick of yours.”

“Nope, the vampire package is just heightened senses, speed, strength, and thirst. Mother helped each of us develop whatever additional ‘gift’ we got but that was unique to each of us. She could possess dead bodies, while Will’s was the ability to befriend anyone.”
“His supernatural ability was to be liked?” I thought that was a strange ‘power’ to have.

“It works pretty well for our predatory nature if you think about it.”

“What about yours? You said ‘Insight’ before.”

Carmilla nodded at that sheepishly. “You know how you sometimes get a ‘gut instinct’ about someone? I always have that, and it’s almost always right. That’s what has made me a great business woman. If I try hard and use a bit of my power, I can even get a picture of their surface thoughts and persona.”

“That’s how you knew about James.” I concluded.

“I forced myself to not use my Insight because it can turn my eyes silver and make me thirstier. You recall our first meeting?”

“Yeah, I thought you were a control freak.”

She smiled at that. “Yes, but I believe my exact words were ‘I’m very good at reading people’. I recall your face flushing as I tried to ‘read’ you.”

“Merlin’s Beard you do know Legilimency!” I said in shock. “How do I know you’re not mind-reading me now or controlling me with your vampire mind-powers?!”

“Because it’s quite taxing on me and because I literally cannot control people. Ell does that.” There was a haunted look in her face as she said it.

“That’s how SJ was …” I trailed off, unable to finish saying ‘turned into a suicide bomber’.

“What do you think she wants?”

“She’s a disturbed, unstable girl who was spoiled by Mother for far too long. I just want to stay out of her way.”

“Do you think she will want revenge for killing Lilita?” My mind raced at the idea of a vampiric Killgravez.

Armitage took that moment to cut into the conversation. “She can try, but that’s why I’m here.” They turned to Carmilla. “They want to meet by the taco bar in five minutes, Ms. Karnstein.”

Carmilla smiled and nodded at JP’s conviction. “Thank you. I know you’ll protect us.” She kissed their forehead in a sweet gesture, making them blush. There was a knock at the door and we saw that our luggage had finally been delivered. JP brought them in as I changed into something more appropriate for a cruise.
The Proposal

Chapter Notes

I absolutely loved that bar on my cruise. I do not recommend their cafeteria food though. Go for the taco bar.

http://www.carnival.com/~media/Images/explore/onboard/bars_menus/alchemy-bar-menu.ashx

“You cannot be human.” Perry said in horror as Jamie finished his 8th taco.

LaFontaine nodded in concern. “Perhaps his stomach is a transdimensional gateway.”

Jamie, however, took a long sip of his (spiked) juice with gusto. “What? I like tacos.” Betty giggled at that. Betty never giggles over a guy.

Carmilla sipped from her own glass of orange juice, wincing as it was a dark red-orange color. “LaF, the last batch of… cloned blood’, “soy milk seems off.”

Betty chortled at that. “You help us smuggle rum and vodka on board in used wine bottles, and you sneak on soy milk? Laura, your girl is weird.”

I shrug, glad to realize that her secret is safe. LaFontaine took a sniff of their drink and shrugged. “It seems fine to me. Sorry, boss.” They shrugged, knowing that nothing could be done at this time.

I look at my Mistress and I let the thought echo loud in my mind. I’ll donate blood for you. “Will you be okay, Carm?”

She gave a subtle nod in thanks. “Yeah, I’ll be fine. Guess I shouldn’t have tried to smuggle it onboard.”

Perry looked over the evening schedule as she was the one who wanted to have ‘organized fun’. “Alright everyone, now that we’ve all had dinner, there’s a movie starting here in about half an hour, or there’s a stand-up comedian in the aft section next to… Alchemy Bar?”

LaFontaine’s eyes widened at that. “Perr… we have to go to there. I hear they have nearly every kind of herbal extraction you can think of.”

Betty scrunched her face in confusion. “What? Extraction?”

“Kinda like a tincture; you know, soaking a high proof liquor with anise, chamomile, or thyme. Not just a garnish but infusing the flavor.” LaFontaine seemed really intrigued about this.

Carmilla shrugged gallantly. “Reminds me of the roaring 20’s. We would mix all sorts of flavors to cover up the taste of whatever bathtub gin we could get our hands on. Besides, the movie looks kind of boring.”
I looked back at the pamphlet. “It’s listed as two dollar signs, meaning it’s more expensive than the poolside bar here.” I had no idea how much herbal extractions could cost.

LaFontaine shrugged it off. “I’ll just have one.”

When we got to the Alchemy Bar, I was surprised at the menu. Rather than being referred to as drinks, they were called potions, elixirs, and a fountain of youth all sold as ‘cocktail therapy’.

Carmilla smirked at that. “Okay now this takes me back. Snake oil salesmen trying to pass anything off as an elixir for youth. Though the Youthful and Bold Beritini looks good.”

I scrunched my nose up at the description. “Elderflower?”

Carmilla nodded at that. “Grapes were expensive, so back then only the churches and the wealthy had wine. The common folk fermented elderflower or whatever else they could get their hands on.”

JP was getting the Perfect Storm and wondered how a sprig of rosemary would do with strawberry and spiced rum. I couldn’t choose between the Deal Closer (vanilla vodka meets amaretto and irish cream liqueur) or the classic Moscow Mule for that crisp ginger flavor.

“The bartender says she garnishes with a cube of ginger in the glass,” Perry advised me as she ordered The Quick Fix. *Apparently she’s got a thing for Absinthe that I didn’t know about.* “So get ready for it to be really sharp.”

I decided against that and went with the Deal Closer as Jamie and Betty shared a Forty is the New Twenty, a cranberry vodka with pomegranate liqueur and citrus juice.

As our drinks were being made, Carmilla and I took in the crowd of people around us.

“Hey Carm, have people changed since- um, do you think people have changed over the centuries?” I quickly amended my question as Betty raised an eyebrow at me.

“You guys, I know about Carmilla,” Betty replied with a roll of her eyes, “we go to a college with actual gnomes, annual goat sacrifices, and it’s powered by ley line reactors.”

It took an extra second to realize my jaw had dropped. “And you didn’t say anything?”

“Who did the research for the interview, Hollis? She’s a Silas Alumni from 2005 and looks like she could still pass for a sophomore. Either she’s moisturizing every 12 hours or she’s some sort of supernatural creature. I just don’t know what kind she was.”

I furrowed my brows as I remembered my disastrous interview. “That wasn’t in your notes.”

She shrugged. “I wasn’t certain back then and I didn’t think you would have asked her if she’s some sort of immortal being or just showers in the blood of virgins like-”

Carmilla hotly interjected herself. “–Elizabeth Bathory was before my time and Mother said she was just a crazy human, afraid of growing old.”

“And you believe her?” Betty inquired, looking her over. “Are you some sort of immortal highlander?”

Carmilla accepted her drink from the bartender with a thank you and said to put all of our drinks on the same tab. “I had no reason to not believe her. And no, I’m not that kind of immortal, though I
can use a sword.”

“You’re an alchemist who discovered an Elixir of Life.” Betty pressed on.

“Do you really think I’ll admit any of this to you?” Carm replied testily, “Last thing I want is to be outed to the general public.”

Betty brushed that aside with a sweep of her hand as Jamie got their drink. “I’m not going to ’out’ my best friend’s girlfriend.” She ran her tongue along the inside of her lips. “Made a deal with a Demon?”

“Mother did that, actually. But no. No demonic power here.” I kept my mouth shut as I knew that most of her scars from the Inquisition were removed because of Lophii, but she didn’t want people to know that. “I’ve never seen her in a bathing suit before. Will she wear one? What about the scars she couldn’t remove?”

“Vampire?” Betty shrugged.

“Do I look like sparkly emo twerp to you?” Carmilla countered.

Betty narrowed her eyes in thought. “Legend says that they are allergic to Holy Water and Garlic.”

“Legend also says if you throw seeds down on a vampire’s grave they have to count every last one before they leave their coffin. Same for having to untie multiple knots in a rope. Sounds less like an undead predator and more like Rain Man.”

“Okay, fine. You treat Laura well, so why should I judge?” Betty resigned, taking a long sip of her drink. “Want to go for a walk on the deck, Jamie?”

He nodded to her and they left the group, LaFontaine looking deep in concentration into their empty tumbler. Perry picked up on it first.

“LaF? You okay?” At her voice, they stirred and gave a nervous smile.

“Yeah, Perr. I kind of wanted to go to the observation deck at the front of the ship.”

“Do the thing from Titanic?” She mused with a humorous smirk.

“No, better than that. Come on.” They extended their arm in a gentlepersonly fashion and Perry took it with her own hand as LaF escorted the pair of them over towards the elevators.

“You coming too?” Perry extends the invitation to us.

Carm shrugs in her usual carefree way. “Sure, I love stargazing.” She signs the tab off and finishes her drink while JP and I decide to take ours with us.

As we are at the front of the ship, there are plenty of couples who are taking pictures with their cameras and cell phones together, struggling to keep hair out of their faces. The salty breeze is delightful if a bit chilly, and it makes a wonderful background noise with the crashing of the waves on the ship.

I just roll with it since it’s nearly impossible to tangle my stick-straight hair. Perry pulls out a pair of hair sticks and has her hair up in a messy-yet-artful bun while Carmilla has JP giving her a french braid.
“I had no idea Betty had a clue about you, Mistress…” I begin to apologize as we have privacy amidst the gusts of wind.

“It’s fine, Laura. I know she’s not going to out me.”

“You just know?”

“Yeah; it would break your heart if she did.”

Oh. I look up at the black sky and can see glittering stars expand for as long as I can see. “It’s gorgeous out here.”

“Yeah, city living has ruined the night sky with light pollution; it’s been ages since I’ve been able to see all of them at once like this.”

Armitage finishes the braid and lets go of Carmilla’s hair, smiling at the thanks she gives them. As she glances at the bow of the ship, she chuckles at Perry’s ham-handed “I’m flying! I’m flying Jack!” as LaFontaine is holding her up and shaking their head at this.

“I hate you, Perr.” They laugh as they don’t really mean it.

Perry turns slightly to swat at them in jest. “This was my dream since I was a little girl. I’m going to enjoy it.”

Carmilla sniffed the air and directed JP to pull out their cell phone to take video. I was completely baffled at that.

What’s going on?

As LaFontaine helped Perry back down to the deck, they turned her to face them as they went down onto one knee.

“And this is my dream ever since we watched that movie together.” They pulled a small box out of their pocket and opened it up. “Perry, remember that meteorite fragment we found as kids?”

“Yeah, you said it was the star stuff that proved how big the- oh, my god.” Perry’s voice rose an octave as she realized what was happening.

“Perr, you’ve been my best friend and the one person who has always tried their best to understand and accept me. And I know we’re not the type to follow social norms, but you get me. And I get you. And I just want you to know that I want to spend the rest of my life with you, no matter where it takes us. So, will you marry me?”

Her eyes were watering with tears of surprise as she shook her head in disbelief. “You’re proposing to me!”

LaFontaine nodded bemusedly. “That’s why I’m on one knee with the ring presented to you.”

She huffed in exasperation. “But-but that means you beat me to it!”

LaF grinned at that. “Yeah, well, fortune favors the bold.”

Perry just stood there transfixed at the situation and LaFontaine didn’t know how to proceed.

“So, Perr, if you wanted to propose to me, does that mean you’re saying yes?”

Lola Perry was startled at that and she took the ring from the box. “Of course I’m saying yes!” She put the ring on and LaFontaine kissed her as the people around us began to applaud politely. Tears
rolled down her cheeks as LaFontaine kissed her again.

“Thank you Perry.”

“I can still counter propose later, correct?” Perry asked them.

“Only until we’re married.” They responded cheekily.

They kissed again as Carmilla held me close. JP finally stopped recording and saved the file to upload later. “Good call, Ms. Karnstein.”

“I knew they had the stone set in the ring already, I just didn’t know when they would pop the question.” Carm replied, kissing my forehead tenderly as JP came in and joined the embrace.

A small moment of fear went through me as I remembered the difference of mortality between Carmilla and myself. We can’t do the same type of ‘till death do us part’, unless it’s my death while she looks for a new blood source, looking as young as she does now...

"How do you want to do this?" LaFontaine asked, "big ordeal in a church, get back in touch with your parents-"

"-Actually I took a page out of your playbook." Perry muttered as she looked towards us. "Laura's dad already gave me his blessing and I filed the paperwork already."

"So elope?"

"No muss, no fuss, and there's a Captain who would love to invoke the maritime law."

"That's why you went to Guest Services... wait, don't you need me to be there in person with you to apply for that?"

"You were. You're quite the absent minded professor at times, you know? You will literally sign anything I put in front of you."

"I love you. Thank you for keeping me grounded, babe."

"And thank you helping me take flight, LaF." Perry replied with a kiss.

“Okay, well, looks like I have stuff to do and set up, LaFontaine, I already packed your nice suit for the ceremony. So I’ll just pop down to the laundry room and iron out our clothing before I go to sleep.” Perry was back to her usual no-nonsense self.

“You’re going to go do laundry?” JP asked, baffled.

Perry nodded soberingly. “Ironing, yes! You can’t get married with wrinkled clothing!”

LaFontaine smiled at their fiance incredulously. “I didn’t even know they had a laundry facility on board.”

She shrugged at that. “I saw it online before we left. Do you still want me to do laundry this weekend?"

Carmilla smiled at that. “You’re on vacation, Perry. You don’t have to-”

The curly redhead shot back a fierce look. “But I want to. I do laundry on Sundays.”
LaFontaine’s amused look went slightly fearful. “Swimwear and my favorite pants okay?”

The rest of us nodded enthusiastically, wanting Perry to wash out the chlorine from our bathing suits. She’s a bit scary when it comes to that.

“Finish up. We’re going to bed.” Carmilla says off-handedly. What? “Drink,” she mouths at me, her eyes darkening. The look she gives me could be solely responsible for global warming. I pick up my drink and drain the glass, not taking my eyes off her. Her mouth drops open, and I glimpse the tip of her tongue between her teeth. She smiles lewdly at me. In one fluid move, she stands and bends over me, resting her hands on the arms of my chair. “I’m going to make an example of you. Don’t pee,” she whispers in my ear. I gasp. Don’t pee? Why?

“It’s not what you think.” Carmilla smirks, holding her hand out to me. “Trust me.” She looks so sexy and genial. How can I resist?

“Okay.” I place my hand in her, because quite simply, I’d trust her with my life. What has she got planned? My heart starts pounding in anticipation. I look to Armitage but they remain with Perry and LaFontaine. Carmilla leads me across the deck and through the doors past the now-closed salon, down the narrow corridor, and down some stairs to our stateroom. The cabin has been cleaned since this morning as there is now a crane-shaped towel on the bed. It’s a lovely room. With a glass wall giving a view of the ocean, it’s elegantly decorated in dark walnut furniture with cream walls and soft furnishings in gold and red. Carmilla releases my hand, stripping naked and tossing her clothing onto a chair. Will I ever tire of looking at her naked? Her skin glows—she’s caught some sun, too, and her hair is longer, flopping over her forehead. I am one lucky, lucky girl. She grasps my chin, pulling slightly so that I stop biting my lip and runs her thumb along my lower lip.

“That’s better.” She turns and strides over to the impressive suitcase that she brought aboard. She produces two sets of leather cuffs and an eye mask. She strokes my cheek with her index finger, trailing it down to my mouth. She leans in as if to kiss me. “Do you want to play?” she says, her voice low, and everything in my body heads south as desire unfurls deep in my belly.

“God yes,” I breathe. She smiles.

“Good.” She plants a feather-light kiss on my forehead.

“We’re going to need a safe word.” What? “Because ‘don’t’ and ‘stop’ won’t be enough since you will probably say that, but not mean it. Or you’ll mean it like ‘don’t stop’ and I’ll have to ask you to clarify.” She runs her nose down mine—the only contact between us. My heart starts pounding. Shit… How can she do this with just words?

“Will this hurt?” I ask tentatively.

“This is not going to hurt. It will be intense. Very intense, because I am not going to let you move. Okay?” Oh my. This sounds so hot. My breathing is too loud. Fuck, I am panting already. My eyes flick down to see my shorts and panties already on the ground.

“Okay.” My voice is barely audible.

“Choose a word, Laura.” She says softly.

“Red.” I say, panting, “Just like in the contract.”

“You don’t have to—” she begins to say.
“I like it. Also using ‘yellow’ if needed.” She grins as she leans back to gaze down at me.

“Okay, Laura. Lift up your arms.” I do, and Carmilla grasps the bottom of my shirt, lifts it over my head, and tosses it on the floor. She holds out her hand, and I give her back the leather cuffs. She places both on the bedside table along with the blindfold and yanks the quilt off the bed, letting it fall to the floor. “Turn round.” I turn, and she undoes my strapless bra so that it falls to the floor.

She gathers my hair into one hand and yanks gently so I step back against her. Against her breasts. I gasp as she pulls my head to one side and kisses my neck. “You made me an offer earlier,” she murmurs in my ear, sending delicious shivers through me.

“Yes,” I whisper.

“Hmm. What are we going to do about that?” I feel her teeth graze my flesh and my body is aching to bleed for her.

“I think you’re pretty close to an answer,” I breathe. Her soft languid kisses are driving me wild. She grins against my neck.

“Ah, Ms. Hollis. I believe you may be right.” She straightens. Taking my hair, she carefully parts it into three strands, braids it slowly, and then fastens my hair tie to the end. She tugs my braid gently and leans down to my ear.

“I’m not actually thirsty for that tonight,” she murmurs. Moving suddenly, she grabs me by the waist, sits down on the bed, and yanks me across her knee so that I flail and catch myself with my hands as the blood rushes to my head. She smacks my ass once, hard. I yelp as I’m already lifted up and put onto the bed, and she’s gazing down at me, her eyes molten gray. I’m going to combust.

“Do you know how beautiful you are?” She trails her fingertips up my thigh so that I tingle everywhere. My rear end feels warm and tingly against the sheets and I realize that I’m already wet for her. Without taking her eyes off me, she gets up from the bed and gathers the leather cuffs. She grasps my left leg and snaps one cuff around my ankle. Oh! Lifting my right leg, she repeats the process so I have a pair of cuffs attached to each ankle. I still have no idea where she’s going to attach them. She could put them together but that would keep my legs closed. “Sit up,” she orders and I comply immediately. “Now hug your knees.” I blink at her then draw my legs up so they are bent in front of me and wrap my arms around them. She reaches down, lifts my chin, and plants a soft wet kiss on my lips before slipping the blindfold over my eyes. I can see nothing, all I can hear is my rapid breathing and the sound of the ocean crashing against the ship at sea. I am already aroused.

Taking my left hand, she snaps a cuff around my wrist then repeats the process with my right. My left hand is tied to my left ankle, my right hand to the right leg. I cannot straighten my legs. Holy fuck.

“Now,” Carmilla breathes, “I’m going to fuck you till you scream.” What?! She grasps both of my heels and rolls me back so that I fall backward on to the bed. I have no choice but to keep my legs bent. The cuffs refuse to give as I pull against them. The leather is soft and pliant as I cannot really move. This feels weird—being trussed up and helpless—and fully exposed to Carmilla. She pulls my ankles apart, and I groan. She kisses my inner thigh, and I want to squirm at the light touch, but I can’t. I have no purchase to move my hips. My feet are essentially suspended by my arms. I cannot move. Holy shit.

“This is a little different than when you were tied to the headboard; you can’t just lie there and
enjoy it. You’re going to struggle the whole time, Laura. Enjoy it,” she murmurs as she crawls up my body, kissing me along the outside of my thigh as I am completely naked and at her mercy.

“Ah,” I sigh. I had no idea this could be so exciting. She traces soft kisses and little bites upon my breasts.

“Shhh...,” she soothes. “You’re beautiful when you whimper in need, Laura.”

I groan, frustrated. Normally I’d be grinding my hips, responding to her touch with a rhythm of my own, but I cannot move. I moan, pulling on my restraints.

“You drive me crazy,” she whispers. “So I am going to drive you crazy.” She’s resting on me now, her weight on her elbows, and she turns her attention to my breasts. Biting, sucking, and pinching my nipples between her fingers and thumbs, she drives me wild. She doesn’t stop. It’s maddening. She grinds her wet cunt against mine.

“Carmilla,” I beg and feel her triumphant smile against my skin.

“Shall I make you come this way?” She murmurs against my nipple, causing it to harden some more. “You know I can.” She suckles me hard and I cry out, pleasure lancing from my chest directly to my groin. I pull helplessly on the cuffs, swamped by the sensation.

“Yes,” I whimper.

“Oh, sweetness, that would be too easy.”

“Oh… please.”

“Shh.” Her teeth scrape my chin as she trails her lips to my mouth, and I gasp in need for her mouth on mine. She kisses me. Her skilled tongue invades my mouth, tasting, exploring, dominating, but my tongue meets her challenge, writhing against her. She tastes of berries and Carmilla Karnstein, and smells of the sea. She grasps my chin, holding my head in place.

“Still, sweetness. I want you to stay still,” she whispers against my mouth.

“I want to see you.” I whimper in the dark as she starts to descend down my body with kisses and nips of her teeth.

“Oh no, Laura. You’ll feel more this way.” And agonizingly slowly she pushes two fingers partway into me. I would normally tilt my pelvis up to meet her but I can’t move. She withdraws, even slower than before.

“Ah! Carmilla, please!”

“You want more?” she teases, her voice hoarse.

“Carmilla!” She pushes fractionally into me again then withdraws while sucking on me, her tongue circling my hood. It’s pleasure overload.

“No!”

“Do you want me to stop, Laura?”

“Yes,” I beg before realizing what the question was. “No! Don’t stop… don’t….”

“Tell me,” she murmurs, her breathing harsh, and she teases me once more—in... and out.

“And have me you will, Laura.” She slides three fingers into me and curls them expertly inside me. I scream, tilting my head back, pulling on the restraints as she hits my sweet spot, and I am all sensation, everywhere—a sweet, sweet agony, and I cannot move. She pulls out, then slides back in and curls again, and the motion goes straight to my core.

“Do you want me to stop, Laura?”

“Fuck no...”

She curls her fingers inside me again, ignoring my plea, easing out slowly and then slamming into me again.

“What was that?” she hisses, and I’m vaguely aware that it’s through gritted teeth. I cry out in an incoherent wail... this is too much. I cry out in an incoherent wail... this is too much.

“Repeat that.”

“Carmilla...”

“Laura, I need to know.” She slams into me again, thrusting so deep, and I’m building... the feeling is so intense—it swamps me, spiraling out from deep within my belly, to each limb, to each leath restraint.

“I said fuck no!” I cry out. “Don’t Stop! I love you! Please, Carmilla.” She groans loudly and thrusts deep, again and again, over and over, and I am lost, trying to absorb the pleasure. It’s mind-blowing as I long to straighten my legs, to control my imminent orgasm, but I can’t. I’m helpless, and it only feeds into the moment of passion as I’m collapsing and exploding at the same time. I’m hers, only hers, to do with as she will... Tears spring to my eyes. This is too intense. I can’t stop her. I don’t want to stop her... I want... I want... oh no, oh no... this is too.

“That’s it,” Carmilla growls. “Come for me!”

I detonate around her, again and again, round and round, screaming loudly as my orgasm rips me apart, scorching through me like a wildfire, consuming everything. I am ragged, tears streaming down my face—my body left pulsing and shaking. Even my legs are twitching of their own accord despite the restraints. And I’m aware that Carmilla’s fingers are still inside me, still yet pressing into me, as she leans in and kisses me tenderly. She clutches the back of my head with her free hand and pulls out, savoring the slack look on my face as she tears off the blindfold and kisses me. Carmilla gives me a slight smile as she reaches down and begins to touch herself with the hand that undid me, my own wetness now inside her... and there’s a connection there as we look into each other’s eyes and she shudders, biting her bottom lip as she quickly reaches her orgasm and we kiss again. I feel her shudders and waves of pleasure as my tongue probes her mouth and she’s falling apart above me. It’s draining, it’s exhausting, it’s... heaven. It’s hedonism gone wild.

Carmilla kisses my eyes, my nose, my cheeks. She kisses away the tears, cupping my cheek with her hand.

“I love you, Laura,” she breathes. “I don’t know how to say it other than—I just feel so alive with you.” I don’t have the energy to open my mouth to respond. Very gently, she lays me back on the bed undoes the handcuffs. When I’m free, she gently checks and rubs my wrists and ankles, lies down beside me again, and pulls me into her arms. I finally stretch out my legs, and damn, that feels good. I feel good. That was, without doubt, the most intense climax I have ever endured.
My bladder reminds me that I have to go, so I get up and make my way to the bathroom. I stagger, nearly falling over due to my muscles not wanting to cooperate.

“Sweetness, turn off the ‘do not disturb’ switch by the door so JP knows it’s cool to come back in.” Carmilla calls out lazily. *When did she turn that on?* I hit the switch and make my way into the restroom, gratefully relieving myself as reality is still filtering in.

The door to the cabin opens up and I realize that I left the bathroom door wide open as Armitage covers their eyes as they pass me by and address Carmilla. *Okay, that’s kind of embarrassing.* I finish up and flush, washing my hands as Carmilla comes in to wash her hands as well.

“Okay, this was a boundary I wasn’t expecting to ever break…” I said awkwardly.

“Laura, I have *tongue-fucked* your vagina. Don’t get all weird about this.”

I can’t help but shrug at that. “This is all new to me. Which, by the way, telling me to not use the restroom before hand… that’s a thing, isn’t it.” I ask without really asking.

Her knowing smirk is all the confirmation that I need as I dry my hands, brush my teeth, and get dressed for bed. Armitage is already in on the left side, clutching a small white and pink unicorn. I crawl into bed as well and take the middle as Carm comes in after me and spoons me, making me see a bemused JP look back at me with a raised eyebrow.

“God, just say it.” I mutter.

They poke my nose with the end of the unicorn’s mouth, making a kissing noise before rolling over on their side effectively making me the middle spoon. I tentatively put my arm around them as they snuggle into me, humming contentedly.

“Goodnight Laura.” They whisper as the lights go out.

“Goodnight JP.” I reply, giving them a slight squeeze.

“Goodnight Ms. Karnstein.” JP continues with a sing-song intonation, and I swear I can hear Carmilla roll her eyes at this.

“Shut up, Armitage.”
I looked up, curious as to why I’ve been shackled, but knelt for her without question. I took a moment to admire the soft, gentle lines of her nude form, put on display directly in front of me. The scars were gone and her pert breasts defied gravity for someone over three hundred. Her nipples were rosy and hardening already. Her cunt was slick as she ran a finger over it and teased my lips with its scent. The cold metal of the shackles on my wrists and ankles felt heavy as I strained to move closer to touch my Mistress.

“Laura, I need you follow instruction.” Carmilla started, handing me a complex vibrator with multiple buttons and settings. It was designed to penetrate and stimulate the clit at the same time, and I couldn’t wait to use this on her or have her use it on me.

As I knelt there, I felt the weight and pressure of the two heavy balls deep inside of my body. Carmilla laid back on the bed and curled a finger in an inviting gesture as she requested that I use the toy to get her off. As I struggled to get in place between her legs, the ben-wa balls made their presence known as I was forced to clench upon them with every move I made.

“Fuck me, Hollis.” She ordered sensually. I was slowly working the toy into her, enjoying the moans she made beneath me as I obediently pumped the toy in and out, testing the buttons for the proper setting for my Mistress.

The look on her face was absolute delight as she turned her head and arched her back as I pumped in and out with deliberate force, wishing I could feel this same rhythm inside me as I did this.

“You miss being penetrated, don’t you?” She asked with a wicked smile.

“Yes, Mistress. I need my cunt fucked.” I blurted out the truth, uncaring about how crude it sounded. I was needy as I obediently worked Carmilla towards an orgasm as hands grabbed onto my hips and a gentle pair of fingers worked the balls out and began to lubricate me.

I tried to turn around but couldn’t as Carmilla’s hands were cradling my face. “Do you want this?”

My inner walls clenched against the delicate fingers working inside me and I nodded, giving into the moment.

“Please fuck me.” I beg out loud.

“Go on, then, Armitage.” Carmilla’s voice was velvet and honey.

I let out a quiet whimper and bit down on my lower lip, knowing who that was behind me. I turned to see JP blush, strap-on jutting out magnificently as I moaned in desperate need to be penetrated.

As they climbed onto the bed, I gasped as the tip rubbed my slick labia and slid easily against the inner walls of my vagina. Armitage settled on top of me, doggie-style, as I was tasked to resume my duty with Carmilla.

“Let’s see who can get their partner off first, JP or Laura.”

She just turned this into a fucking contest. I tried to focus as Armitage gripped my waist and
slowly pulled out and thrust back into me, making me gasp and drop the toy. I scrambled to get back to work as I increased the vibration of the toy and pumped it in and out, meeting Carmilla’s leer with a challenging gaze.

“Look at you both,” Carmilla purred, fingers running through my hair and clenching tightly, “My perfect pair of submissives. You two compliment each other so well.”

My mind raced to interpret that. Where I was soft and femme, with a fondness for living off of cookies and baked good, Armitage was angular and just slightly butch in an androgynous way. Often I would gender them as ‘he’ and JP didn’t seem to mind.

I clenched my inner muscles as the rhythmic assault continued within me as I savored the hip-thrusts of JP obediently fucking me for Carmilla’s pleasure.

A scream of delight rose from beneath me and it made me remember that I was responsible for Mistress’ pleasure as I turned the vibration up to maximum.

“LAURA!” Carm screamed, back arched and breasts heaving as she muttered a mantra of ‘thank you’s and ‘yesyesyes’. Armitage stilled within me as they panted, tired and a bit disgruntled that they lost at this little ‘game’.

Carmilla sighed and pulled out the Fuze Tango from the bedside and put it on, directing me to straddle her. I did as I was told and had my Mistress sheathed within me and I began to rock back and forth wantonly as Carmilla stilled me with a polite double tap on my thigh.

“Laura, I want you to relax and hold still. We’re about to try something new, okay?” I obediently stilled, confused at what she was saying. She pointed to me and JP climbed onto the bed and I felt the first bit of cool lubricant go where no man has gone before.

“If you feel any discomfort or pain, just say yellow or red and we’ll stop. But I assure you that once you acclimate, it will be worth it.”

I nodded, shocked that the three of us were doing this. JP asked me to angle my hips upward and I was rewarded with Carmilla kissing me as I felt familiar fingers probe and lubricate me all over again. I gasped at the intrusion and couldn’t fully comprehend the sensation of fullness I had at the double penetration.

“Breathe, Laura.” Carmilla soothed as the one finger became two and worked its way into me. My Mistress took the moment to rock back and forth inside me as I shuddered in shock and delight between the pair of them.

“Shall I, Ms. Karnstein?” JP asked Carmilla before their teeth nipped on my ear. “Laura, you ready?” He asked as our lips were practically touching each other.

I nodded impulsively as our lips met and Armitage kissed me tenderly, much softer than I had ever expected from someone like him. I nodded yes as Armitage shifted, re-positioning the head of the strap-on to enter my ass.

“Laura, eyes on me.” Carmilla’s order was gentle as my panicked eyes met hers. “Touch yourself, lose yourself in the pleasure of the moment.”

I was at a loss for words as my fingertips found my clit and circled with quick pressure as Carmilla and JP both eased their way into me in tandem, making me shudder and tremble as I felt full to bursting from their tender ministrations.
Fuck.

"Armitage..."

"Laura!"

I couldn't tell who said it or where I ended and either of them began as they each drove their way into me, pressing lips onto my neck and back and face as the three of us rocked in sweet synchronicity as I was losing myself to the pair of them.

"Fuck, I didn't set an alarm!"

My eyes shot open and I realized I had been sleep-humping JP as Carmilla was stumbling around in the dimly lit cabin.

"ARMITAGE!" The lights came on with blinding intensity as I bolt upright in bed, startled awake from a very erotic and possibly inappropriate dream.

JP sat up, eyes and face bleary as they yawned and panicked when they looked at the time. "Ms. Karnstein."

"We're late for breakfast with Betty, the Bobbsey twins, and pup-boy. Laura, you need a cold shower." Carmilla chided, turning it on for me.

Damn vampire senses...

I wanted to groan and leave my face buried in the pillow and just die of embarrassment.

"What am I wearing, JP? Keep in mind it's formal dinner tonight, too." Carmilla snapped as she quickly got naked and started to look in the dresser drawers.

"We'll come back and change, Ms. Karnstein. Let's just get to the breakfast buffet before there's no more bacon."

"Judging from yesterday's taco apocalypse, I agree." She replied as I made my way into the shower as Armitage began brushing their teeth. I turned my back to them as JP just scoffed at my modesty, spitting into the sink.

"Laura, I woke up to you humping me and you've already seen me naked, so don't get all prudish on my behalf."

"Um, sorry." I quickly apologize as I climb into the shower and lather myself down.

"So what was the dream about?" They ask as I turn and have to face them through the thin plastic curtain.

"Um..." I tried to think of anything other than the threesome dream.

"Must be really steamy." They chuckled as I finished up and stuck my hand out for a towel.

"Yeah. Kind of embarrassing, too. Towel, please?"

"Okay now I have to know, Laura." Armitage replied, handing me the towel but still holding onto it.

"Norman Reedus..." I fibbed, pulling the towel out of their grip.

"That's not bad. He's kinda pretty for a guy." Carmilla replied as she was doing her eyeliner.
"Are we talking about Walking Dead or Boondock Saints?" JP asked as I dried myself.

"Boondock Saints. Along with Sean Patrick Flanery..." I winced at the admission, finding a set of clothes laid out for me on the bed and gratefully get dressed.

"Yeah, that's hot." JP replied, "...even if they played brothers..."

Carmilla walked past me, patting my bum in an affectionate manner. "Well technically, it's not incest if they aren't related by blood..." She leaned to whisper into my ear. "Your secret's safe with me, buttercup."

My eyes widened in shock and horror. Then I got angry at her and barely spoke above a harsh whisper. "Did you do that... insight thing?"

She shook her head in offense. "You woke me mumbling their name." She whispered back.

I huffed a quick apology as her lips were already on mine. "It's okay, sweetness. I'm not jealous." Carmilla raised her voice back to normal levels. "Better than my dream last night; I was throwing up blood non-stop as House couldn't get me into the hospital bed." She rubbed her thumbs against her fingertips. "Even had blood pouring out of my fingers."

JP came back into the main room and squeezed into their compression shirt in order to bind down their breasts before getting dressed as I turned away and quickly got ready. We were out the door in almost no time as we made our way down to the breakfast buffet. Carmilla has her sunglasses on and points to an empty table through the dense crowd.

"Fetch me food and I'll save us those seats." Carmilla breezed away as JP dutifully collected breakfast for two. At any other occasion, I'd think she was being lazy. But seeing how busy and crowded it is here, it makes sense.

I get in line for Belgian waffles as Betty finds me. "Laura!" she whispers harshly. "We need to talk."

I point to the line I'm in. "We can talk here."

She clenches her jaw in frustration. "It's personal... about Jamie." I look around and realize that they aren't joined at the pelvis.

"Sure, what's the problem?"

"He told you about his... puppy predilection?" She tried to stay as quiet as possible. I finally got my waffles and grabbed two small plastic cups of syrup before hesitating and grabbing a third. Betty huffed in exasperation and pointed me towards the muffins and I thanked her as I made my way there.

"I kind of ran into him on an event night at the leather bar. I think Jordan was playing fetch with him, too."

Betty's eyebrows knitted nervously. "He does this in public, and fetches for others?" She scoffs at that and I realize that she didn't take the revelation well. "I mean, it's one thing that you and Carmilla like fuzzy handcuffs occasionally, but this... how do I even deal with it?"

I wince at her assumption of my sex life and remember what I saw at the last TNG event. "What Carmilla and I have isn't just 'occasional fuzzy handcuffs', Betty. I love her and love serving her. She's not just my girlfriend who enjoys spanking as foreplay; she's my Mistress."
Betty hedged nervously. "I thought it was just role-playing some authority in the bedroom." I grab the muffins and make my way towards the table where Carmilla is sitting with a glass of juice.

"No, it's more significant than that. Why is this a problem for you?" I ask as I sit down.

"Good morning, Betty. Laura, wow. Got enough syrup there, creampuff?" Carmilla asked as she looked out in the crowd to find JP.

"So you like, obey her every command like her personal slave?" As Betty asked that, Carmilla's eyebrows shot up in shock. I gestured to her to calm down and that I'd explain it in a moment.

"Technically, that's JP. But yeah, if she asked me to do something, I'd probably do it because I trust her to know how far to take things and that she'd respect my boundaries so that I could live my own life and still make my own decisions. My Mistress has only really asked me to do things that I wound up actually enjoying." I smiled slightly at that.

"God, Laura, you're totally smitten with her... you can't understand what I'm going through!" Betty was on the verge of tears. "No, you're in love with her!" She looked absolutely distraught.

"Okay, what's the problem here?" Carmilla interjected as JP arrived with breakfast, setting out the plates in front of her.

"The eggs were all from a powder and looked unseasoned, so I got you Eggs Benedict with Salmon. I suggest you skip the salmon part though. The baked fish and salad seemed okay while the bacon was way too limp and greasy."

"Ah. Thank you, Armitage." Betty looked at the exchange between them in complete horror.

"Why are you doing that? Why can't you just be normal?" Betty muttered, more to herself than to Armitage.

"I like serving Ms. Karnstein, I actually want to be in service, and it made logical sense for her to save a table as I went and got food." An attendant came by with three glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice and returned Carmilla's card and a receipt for her to sign.

"The fresh-squeezed is a breakfast only thing and is much better than the drink mix on tap here. JP, if you want coffee, avoid the swill here and we'll get proper coffee elsewhere on board." Carmilla stated as she put a glass of juice in front of each of us before looking to Betty. "I know it must look odd from your perspective for me to apparently use these two individuals like servants, but I strive to please them in ways that they need as well. It's more symbiotic than parasitic."

"Jamie found out about LaFontaine and Perry." Betty finally said as if taking a burden off of herself. "And it turned into us having a discussion about our own future, and where we see each other in 5 years. I really like him, and he's been a fucking saint to me as I learned about transgender issues and asked all sorts of inappropriate and embarrassing questions. That's when he told me about the puppy stuff and I don't know if I can handle that kind of weird."

Shit, Betty has really been thrown for a loop here.

"What's the problem exactly?" JP asked as they delicately ate their grapefruit.

"I looked up the whole puppy thing and found furry conventions. Jamie says he's not a furry, but what if that changes too and wants to put me into one of those suits?"

"Nothing I heard so far sounds like he's asking you to participate. Just understand." Armitage
replied, "besides, puppies aren't the same as furries and even so, there's nothing wrong with that. Pups usually have humans act as owners or trainers, so you'd be throwing a tennis ball or feeding him gummy bear or teddy graham treats. And that's only if he's asking you to be a part of it; more than likely he'll find someone who wants to fulfill that role for him without having to involve you."

She shuddered at that. "That's what bothers me. I don't want to 'share' him. But I also don't want to settle down and do puppy-owner stuff either. I'm just turning twenty-two and feel like I should get to be young and explore life, get drunk and fuck random guys I meet at the bar."

I cocked an awkward eyebrow at that. She and I have had very different standards when it comes to sex. "She and I have had very different standards when it comes to sex. Bets, please tell me you're not going to throw him away because you're looking to... sow your wild oats."

She slumped in resignation at that. "That's just it. I don't know if I want to do that or not. I just want to be able to have the opportunity if I want it."

"You don't want to be tied down... figuratively." JP said, adding the last part quickly.

"Getting tied down isn't all that bad." I said, shrugging.

"What makes you think that you have to choose that now?" Carmilla asked curiously. "If you love Jamie, accept him and let him do his thing while you do your thing."

"I can't share him with someone else; I'm too jealous for that." Betty looked between me and JP. "Frankly I don't get how you share Carmilla."

JP swallowed his juice before responding. "It's not like I'm having a sexual relationship with anyone."

"Well, actually, the three of us shared a bed last night." I corrected Betty, feeling defensive over Carmilla's relationship with JP. "And when school resumes, I'm not going to waste time worrying about what those two are doing together all day because I love and trust them both."

Betty looked at me in horror. "Both? I just can't wrap my mind around that idea." She sighed again, a tear rolling down her cheek. "I really like him, Laura."

This is so not like Betty. She turns to me. "I've fallen in love with him. At first I thought it was just, you know, great sex. But he's charming, and funny, and kind, and warm... I could see us growing old together... and I'm not ready to settle down and try to understand his puppy thing."

I wince at that her assumptions. "Why do you think being with him means settling down?"

"That's how relationships... well, normal relationships... go." She looked at me sheepishly. "Sorry, but you know what I mean."

"Elizabeth Anne Spielsdorf, why on earth do you want a normal relationship while you're in your twenties at Silas?" As I asked that, I knew that I was never going to regret the choices I made that got me to this point in my life. "Where is Jamie?"

"He gave LaFontaine an impromptu bachelor party last night. They got a beer and went to the on-board dance club." She shrugged at that. "The pup thing is just weird, but it's the commitment stuff that's scaring me."

"Go be honest with him, Bets." I reply, finishing my muffin. "You realize he loves you so much that he was willing to divulge his biggest secret and risk losing you, right?"
She nodded at that. "Fine. You're right. I just... this is scary."

Armitage smiled back at her. "If falling in love weren't scary, it wouldn't be worth it."

We got back up to the bow of the ship where Perry was in a pastel sundress and LaFontaine looked quite sharp in their custom-tailored suit, looking down at their fiance with tears as she was kneeling and presenting them with a titanium band ring.

"Perr, isn't this cutting it a little bit close?" LaF tried to joke as the Captain smiled at the exchange.

"Nothing is ever perfect, but everything with you is just... right." She replies as LaFontaine helps her up and kisses her.

"So may I begin?" The captain asks as his XO officer signs the license and walks over to Carmilla. They both are wearing white officer uniforms and the XO's tanned legs contrast magnificently to her white pumps and it takes me an extra moment to stop checking her out.

Okay, women in uniform is definitely a thing for me, I think to myself as I remember Carmilla in her WAC uniform from WWII.

Carmilla and I were chosen to be witnesses and as I signed the document using her tablet as a surface, I wondered if they would hyphenate their last names. Would Carmilla do that for me? How attached is she to the last name 'Karnstein'? I push the thought away, knowing that it's too early to even think about marriage. Laura Karnstein. Laura Karnstein-Hollis. "Happy Holidays from the Karnstein-Hollis...es..."

Carmilla signed her name with a bit of a flourish, looking more like calligraphy than my mere scribble on the paper.

Carmilla Hollis didn't sound like a millionaire CEO.

The XO thanked us and handed the paper back to the Captain as he addressed us.

"We're gathered here today to recognize the love between Mx. LaFontaine and Ms. Perry. Before we get started, I have go through the formality of asking if anyone here has any objections to this marriage. Anyone?"

A voice spoke up from the XO's tablet. "I don't object, but I'd like to wish them well."

Dad?

The XO grinned as she flipped the cover over and I saw my dad waving back to all of us on the ship.

"Dave!" LaFontaine cried out in surprise as Perry dabbed at her eyes to stay dry.

"Sorry I can't be there in person; but I'm glad Mr. Armitage contacted me and set this up so I could see my kids get married."

Perry gushed at that. "Thanks, Papa Hollis."

Carmilla put an arm around JP and kissed their forehead. "That was really thoughtful of you. Thank you, JP." I was on the other side of Carmilla, holding her hand. Dave gave a small smile at the throuple of us before turning back to Perry.
"Okay, I'm ready. Let's get them married!"
"This is indeed the life." I sipped on my margarita with my toes buried in the sand while Carmilla and LaFontaine paired off against Jamie and Betty in an epic game of chicken fight in the ocean.

Perry stayed under the beach umbrella with JP, who was in a tank top and board shorts. "Have you noticed something different about Carmilla?"

I shrugged, happy to feel the sun's rays beat down on my skin. "She smiles more?" I looked out and see her wearing a vintage-style one piece halter bathing suit, something modest and yet cute with all of the ruffles. It was to cover up her scarred body, a memory that she would always see in the mirror.

"Well, there's that, but... I can't put my finger on it." Perry stated, putting down her drink and admiring the ring on her finger. "I can't believe we actually did it."

"It was always just a matter of time, Perry." I replied, finishing my drink. As I put it down, JP was already replacing it with a bottle of water. "Armitage, you don't have to-"

"One: I want to, and Two: Ms. Karnstein told me to make sure you stay hydrated out here. I have water for her as well." JP replied, taking a swig from his own bottle. "And I think what you're seeing is a three hundred year old vampire frolicking in the sunlight for the first time in centuries."

I looked back out into the water and realized that Carmilla was indeed enjoying the sunlight like someone who hasn't been able to for ages.

"Well that's another vampire myth busted, isn't it?" I ask nobody in particular.

Perry shook her head. "Actually, that's LaFontaine's anti-viral at work. And some homemade SPF 100 sunblock that she's going to have to reapply in a few minutes."

"Really? She's only been out there for twenty minutes." I couldn't believe how fast it would wear off.

"The water will wash it off and unless Ms. Karnstein wants tan lines..." Perry shrugged, "...but that's why I'm here in the shade."

Sure enough, LaFontaine and Carmilla were coming back to shore and JP was ready with the sunblock. I couldn't be certain, but I think Armitage was more than happy to slather it all over Mistress' body. I know I would be.

"Perr! My darling wife!" LaFontaine made their way onto the beach also in swim trunks and a tank top, but without binding their breasts as JP had. Perry got up and walked over as I averted my eyes from her pale skin glowing amid her flowing, floral sarong.

"My wedded spouse!" She replied as she hugged them, getting spun in place as LaFontaine laughed.
and kissed her. Carmilla was grinning from ear to ear like an excited child with a shiny new toy.

"My skin is warm to the touch, Laura!" Carm spun in place as JP waited patiently to rub her down with the sunblock. "Vampire in the sun! Vampire in the su-uun!"

I stifled laughter at the cheerful, carefree Carmilla that stood before me.

"Um, Carm, you alright?" I asked, amused.

"Yeah! Just excited to be out on a beach in like forever." She replies, taking JP's water bottle and chugging it. "Damn I'm thirsty."

"That's what happens when you do tequila shots, boss." LaFontaine replies humorously.

"Hey, I was not about to say no to free shots!" Carmilla goes over and lies down on the body towel that JP left out under the large beach umbrella. "Grease me up, please."

Armitage dutifully began rubbing down Carmilla's arms and legs with the sunblock and I felt a twinge of something as they took care of my Mistress. Was I being jealous?

Soon they were done and asking her to flip over and I found myself kneeling on the other side of her and Armitage squeezed a bit of the thick cream into my hand to massage into her legs while they took care of the arms and back.

Carmilla purred as the pair of us worked in tandem to rub in the sunblock and spread her legs apart a bit, shaking her bum at me suggestively. "Missed a spot."

I rolled my eyes at her playfulness as JP took a glance and informed her that she probably had enough coverage down there from the sun.

"Spoilsport." Carmilla got up on all fours, leaned back and did a very feline-like stretch before standing up. "I'm going over to the buffet line by the pool, would you please also reapply sunblock on cupcake?"

"Of course, Ms. Karnstein." JP replied, giving me a challenging look. "Lay down, cupcake."

I laid down on the towel, face down. "You don't have to do this. And don't call me cupcake."

"One," JP repeated themselves, "I want to. And two, Ms. Karnstein told me to, Laura." As their hands began to rub the sunblock on me, I realized how tacky it felt against my skin and how crisp my skin felt already from the sun's rays. JP's hands went all the way up and down my back, delicately working under the thin tie on my back before working down to my kidneys.

I had to bite my lip to refrain from moaning. Has Carmilla turned me into some insatiable sex kitten?

"Um, you okay Laura?" JP asked, lifting their hands off of me. "You stopped breathing."

"Sorry." I blurt out quickly, trying to play it cool as they resumed. "I can get the rest of me easily once you're done there." Why are you being so terse with them?

"Sure." They finish up and I roll over, taking the tube of sunblock and begin to apply it to my legs and the front of my torso. I scoot over on the towel in order to give them space to sit next to me. JP sits next to me and has their hand out as I squirt a bit of sunblock into them.

"Don't forget the ears; a lot of people forget those." They state as a matter-of-fact as they rub it onto
their face and shoulders. I do my ears and face before getting to my neck, shoulders, and chest. The new-born silence between us seems to stretch forever as I notice they are looking at me.

"What?" I ask, and there's a lost look in their eyes as they seem to really try to see me.

"I'm sorry if you got jealous or uncomfortable with Ms. Karnstein's directions, Laura." They seemed genuinely contrite, and it somehow made me feel even worse.

"It's not that, JP." I sipped my water as I tried to find words.

Betty and Jamie were out in the water, splashing each other like they didn't have a care in the world. LaFontaine and Mrs. Perry were cuddling and making out a few feet away from us.

"Are you happy with the arrangement we have?" I say quietly as I look distantly into the ocean.

"I'm fine with every other Sunday with Ms. Karnstein. And honestly, having you there too is quite rel-"

"I mean between us." I blurt. "What are we?"

"Laura, I'm uh..." JP stammered nervously. "Emotional talk. Okay. I'm-m not u-usually good with this. And that's a... really open-ended question."

"In your mind, what are we to each other?"

"We're both in service to Carmilla, albeit in different ways." The answer was automatic and as honest as I could expect.

"But does that make us friends?" I look towards them and felt relief flood through me as they nodded at that.

"Of course we're friends, Laura! I've sworn my life to your protection." Armitage put their arms around me and I hugged back. "Is that what this is about?"

I refuse to end the hug as I don't want them to see my face as I say this. "Friends who sleep-hump each other?"

They laugh at that, rubbing my back with their hand. "Sure." We break the hug and they look into me again. Half a second later, their eyes close and exhale.

I close my eyes and lean in, hopefully interpreting the moment right as our lips meet. It's much softer than I remember from my dream. As I pull back, I hope that I didn't just ruin our friendship.

"Was that okay?" I asked nervously.

JP smiled at that. "Yeah, it's fine."

"It's just that I know you're asex-"

JP silenced me with a quick peck on my lips. "I may not have the sex drive, but I do love people and do crave companionship."

I nodded at that, huffing out a breath that I feel like I've been holding in all day. "Okay. So... my dream last night wasn't about the Boondock Saints. It was us."

Armitage gasped as they remembered this morning all over again. "As in you-and-me us, or-"
"You, me, and Carmilla." I said, looking over towards the bar area only to see her standing behind us.

"About time you two talked this out." Carmilla sighed, water in one hand and margarita in the other. She put down the margarita in front of me; on the rocks with salt on the rim. Just how I like it.

"What do you mean, 'about time'?” I asked her.

Carmilla sipped her water as she looked to JP. "Varlet, do you love me?"

"You know I do, Ms. Karnstein."

"And do you love Laura?"

"I do, Ms. Karnstein." JP looked away from me at the admission.

"Laura, remember that people can express their love in different ways. And as long as I'm the only one getting called Mistress, I don't mind if you two have each other. I think I should let you two sort this out." She handed JP her bottle of water and made her way back into the ocean, waving at Betty and Jamie.

I looked at JP sheepishly, who just rolled their eyes at me. "It's actually common for... 'sister subs' to grow attached to each other."

I grimaced at that. "I don't like that term."

"Me either, but I'd be lying if I didn't say I am fond of you." Armitage shrugged at that. "But it doesn't mean we have to change anything between us."

"But we both have feelings for each other, right?" I asked, trying to wrap my mind around what this technically made us now. Platonically non-dating?

"...'Dumbledore would have been happier than anybody to think there was a little more love in the world'..." They pulled me into a hug and I grinned, hugging them back.

"Wow, you're a total dork, JP." The grin on my face wasn't going anywhere. And we didn't have to make it go anywhere.

"At least I'm not sleep-humping my friend." They tease back.

"I love you, too." I steal their water and take a playful swig.

Rather than go to the proper dining room for formal dinner, Carmilla decided to spring for all of us to have dinner at the steakhouse on the top deck.

"The steaks are cooked to order here, and though we pay a bit more, we get a bottle of wine for free on formal dinner night." Mistress explained to the table as we looked at the menu.

"Classy and frugal. Thanks, boss!" LaFontaine admired the new wedding band on their ring finger.

"You deserve it; I am able to actually enjoy solid food after three hundred years." Carmilla said off handedly.

"Ha! You are a vampire!" Betty raised her water glass in victory.
"Yeah, sure, I'll fess up. LaFontaine had this theory that it's viral, meaning that it's treatable. Hence why I'm able to eat food, withstand the sun, and..." She ran her finger over the charms on my bracelet, "reduced allergy to silver."

"Your token of being my Mistress is also vampire repellant?" I was impressed at that.

Carmilla's smile faltered slightly. "Yeah. In case I lose control and take too much blood, you can stop me."

*Was she really worried about that?*

"Hold on, you *were* wearing gloves when you gave it to me."

"Yeah, I wasn't certain it wouldn't burn in my fingers."

The waiter cane by and took our orders; of course Carmilla wanted hers ultra-rare.

Our complimentary wine was an '89 Bordeaux that everyone got half a glass as I made a toast to the newlywed couple.

"When I first came to Silas, I was a fish out of water. But you two went out of your way to explain the weird and make me feel welcome."

"It was my job." Perry brushed off the comment.

I shook my head, knowing it was more than that. "You went above and beyond, and between you and LaF, I found my family of choice. When I told my dad about you two-

"Papa Hollis!" LaF raised their glass in salute.

"-he as good as adopted you two as his own. So here's to family of choice."

"Hear, hear!" JP chimed in.

"The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb." Carm added, eyes flickering a moment of sadness. *She's missing Will.*

I look directly into Carmilla's eyes. If I look closely enough, I can see through the contacts and see the cat-slit pupils "We're your family now." Armitage took my hand in his to affirm my pledge to Mistress.

Carmilla nodded, looking to Perry and LaF as it was their night. Perry beamed at us and we knew that it rang true for all of us.

“After dinner, can we please go clubbing?” Betty asks Jamie as she's dancing in her seat excitedly. *I think she must have pre-gamed a bit.* Jame turns and gives her an adoring look. “I think we should ask the newlyweds what they’d like to do.” As one, we turn expectantly to them.

LaFontaine shrugs and Perry is grinning from ear to ear.

"Let's go dancing."

Carmilla strolls to the front of the short line with her arm wrapped around my waist and our entire group is immediately granted access. *Did she just use a vampire mind power or something?* It's not like she owns stock in this cruise line... *or does she?*
Betty is barely gone for thirty seconds as she's back with two glasses of champagne and I politely refuse while her boyfriend Jamie accepts one and they clink in salutation.

“The newlyweds! Congrats to you two!” says a very attractive, leggy blonde in a black satin skirt, matching halter top, and an employee badge that says 'Cheryl'. She smiles broadly, revealing perfect all-American teeth between scarlet lips that steal Carmilla's attention. We got in because of LaF and Perry.

The lighting here is muted, the walls are black, and the furnishings deep red. There are booths flanking two sides of the walls and a large U-shaped bar in the middle. It's busy, given that there's little to do tonight on-board other than gamble, see the same comedian, or watch a family-friendly movie by the pool. LaF takes their wife out onto the dance floor, where Betty is already grinding suggestively on a bemused Jamie who is still holding a champagne flute.

The dress code here seems to be 'dress to impress', and everyone here seems to want to show off how tan they are by flashing as much skin as possible. The floor and walls vibrate with the music pulsing from the dance floor behind the bar, and lights are whirling and flashing on and off. I idly wonder if it's an epileptic’s nightmare. Cheryl gives us her full megawatt smile and, with a final flutter of eyelashes at Carmilla, sashays back from where she came.

I look at my Mistress and see her tilting her head as she's probably trying to figure out if she had a panty line or was going commando.

"Hey, eyes on me." I say shortly, breaking her concentration.

"Sorry cupcake, that girl strongly reminded me of Carol." She tried to put a smile on her face, but it was one of those sad smiles. As LaFontaine and Perry got out to the dance floor with Betty and Jamie, Carm lead us over to the bar where she got a water for us to share.

"Who is Carol?" I ask, working hard to not sound insecure or jealous.

"Number Twelve. Died in sixty-two."

"I assume you mean nineteen sixty-two." JP interjects, getting a jack and coke.

"Died, as in, you two didn't just break up?" I asked, uncertain if 'I'm sorry for your loss' is appropriate over fifty years later.

"Yeah, shot in what I could only assume was a mafia-related drive-by. Nearly winged Dino." Carmilla's eyes went distant before she ordered an extra-dirty Martini. I went for another margarita on the rocks.

She means Dean Martin from the Rat Pack- AKA 'The Summit'. I held to the bottle of water as she smelled the cocktail and clinked her glass with JP's in her memory.

"She was an amazing woman, Laura. Amazing smile, great gams... um, legs... and her style was the cat's pajamas."

"The what?" I asked, puzzled.

"Sorry, language changes over time; did you know that the colloquialism 'macaroni' meant the same thing as 'off the chain'? Now apparently we have 'on fleek' to mean the same thing." Carm apologized, sipping the martini. "In order to tell this story right, I have to give you some backstory. 'Claudia' Karnstein was dismissed from the Army after World War II and found herself- well, myself-back in New York as the Mafia-run gay bars were getting run out of town as the police were
getting tough on organized crime. Sammy was getting hassled—"

"Sammy Davis, Jr.?" I asked for clarification.

"One and the same." She replied with a gesture of the drink in her hand. Her stance became much more relaxed as she continued with her story. "So Sammy was trying to get into a club where his buddy Frank invited him, but he didn't know that it was a whites-only establishment. Frank never gave a flip about segregation laws when it came to Sammy, who was outnumbered by the bouncer and a few of his buddies while Frank was backstage getting ready to perform. By the time Frank came out to the back alley entrance to figure out what the holdup was, I had knocked three guys out while Sammy was sporting one hell of a knuckle sandwich on his face. That's when he decided he wanted some subtle security that didn't look like muscle. I joined up and ran with The Summit as they invested in Vegas and made a mint of it. Carol was a singer and wanted to be a warm-up act before Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr, and thought that I could be her way in."

"Were you?"

"I may have made an introduction, but it was her talent that got her the gig." She took another sip of the martini and exhaled a deep breath, visibly making herself let go of the memory. "We're here to celebrate their nuptials."

We looked out onto the dance floor to see LaFontaine and Perry dancing in a very awkward-and-yet-totally-them kind of way.

Betty and Jamie are back. "Betty and I have to get back to our room. Now." There was a bit of a growl in his voice as he held her possessively.

"I'm not going to walk right for a week." Betty slurred, drunkenly winking at me. *For all the times that she went through random guys at Silas, I'm glad to see one that can keep up with her.* I shake my head playfully at her, smiling at the look she gives him. Betty grins as the pair of them leave.

"Well, I'm going to burn some calories," I say, attempting my own sashay onto the dance floor.

Carmilla just smiles bemusedly at me as I turn and call back at her.

"You coming?"

"Don’t bend over," she purrs, eyes raking over me. The skirt I’m in goes all the way down to my wrists, and I know she's loving every inch of my exposed legs.

JP takes my hand and joins me on the dance floor. His suit is custom-tailored and I it takes a force of willpower to keep my libido in check. The music is pulsing, a techno beat with a thumping bass line. The dance floor isn’t too crowded, which means we have some space. I have never really been a good dancer. In fact, it’s only since I’ve been with Carmilla that I have really tried to dance at all.

I try to copy the moves I see on the dance floor rather than let the music sway me as Armitage gets behind me, puts a hand on my waist, and turns me to face Carmilla.

Even in the dim light, I can see the hungry predator in her eyes as I follow JP's lead and let the music and the moment take me as I let go and dance, resembling something quite unlike the body-spasms and robot-dancing by LaFerry that seems to have caught on nearby. To my surprise I find I’m actually enjoying myself. I begin to move a little more... bravely. Carmilla cocks an eyebrow up, and I beam back at her. I close my eyes as I press back into JP and decide to just give Carmilla a show.
I would have never done this before in my life if it weren't for Carmilla. She has given me this confidence in my body and how I can move it. Suddenly, there are two hands on my hips. I grin as I revel in the moment and grind up against Armitage and expose my neck to him to bait the vampire before me to join us on the dance floor. I find myself becoming aroused at the idea of her coming over and biting me.

That's when I realize that there's something between us, rubbing against my ass. I freeze up for a moment, thinking that the person behind me wasn't JP.

"Um, JP?"

"Oh. I'm wearing a soft pack tonight." I freeze up as I realize what I was doing before their lips graze my ear. "I thought you were wanting to tease Ms. Karnstein."

I shudder slightly as I try to focus on their words. "I was... but I teased myself, too." I can't help but rub myself against him as JP's hands tightened on me and their lips grazed my neck.

"I've teased myself too." Armitage turned my chin and I found their lips on mine, forceful and possessive, making me moan in delight and desperate need. As his tongue probed for entrance, I gasped and shuddered in their arms. I pull away from the kiss, panting slightly as I catch my breath.

"Thought you'd like that."

"Oh yes." I whisper, my brain trying hard to figure this out.

"Stop thinking about how to label this, Laura." JP whispered back, nuzzling my chin with their nose, turning my face away from them and towards a very close Carmilla.

As she gazes at us, I can see the look in her eyes evolve into something else, something darker, something... hotter. Suddenly, she grabs my wrists and pulls me flush against her, pinning my hands behind my back. JP takes hold of my wrists and effectively restrains me on the dance floor as I'm now sandwiched between the pair of them.

“So you wanna dance? Let’s dance,” she growls close to my ear, and as she rolls her hips around into me, I can do nothing but follow, her hands roaming up my hips and waist, left hand weaving into the hair at the base of my skull for a quick, kegel-clenching pull.

She presses against me, and I follow her moves as she slowly, sensually dances with me in time to the pulsing beat of the club music. Oh . . . Carmilla can move, really move. She keeps me close as JP doesn't let me go, her hands roaming all over me. Our lips meet and I hear a moan from JP as he grinds into me again and I've given myself over to sheer hedonism at this point.

I don't care if everyone can see the three of us on the dance floor; I'm beside myself in delight and she makes me graceful, that’s her skill. She makes me feel sexy, because that’s what she is. She makes me feel loved, because in spite of her fifty flavors of problems, she has a wealth of love to give. Watching her now, enjoying herself... one could be forgiven for thinking she doesn’t have a care in the world.

I am breathless when the song morphs to another.

“Can we sit?” I gasp.

“Sure.” She leads us off the dance floor.
"You’ve made me rather, uh, hot and sweaty,” I whisper as we return to the bar. She pulls me into her arms.

"I like you hot and sweaty. Though I prefer to make you hot and sweaty in private,” she purrs, and a lascivious smile tugs at her lips. As I get a bottle of water, I’m vaguely surprised we haven’t been thrown out. I glance around the club. No one is looking at us, and I can’t see Cheryl. Maybe she left, or maybe she’s in the restroom. LaFerry are being ridiculous together on the dance floor, but are having a great time. I take another sip of the water.

All of a sudden I feel overwhelmed. The music is loud, pounding, my head and feet are aching, and I feel woozy. She grasps my hand. “Come, let’s go. I want to get you to bed,” she says darkly. "You're welcome to join or stay here.” Her offer to Armitage sobers me up immediately.

LaFontaine and Perry find us. “You all leaving?” Perry asks coyly. She must have seen the three-way on the dance floor.

“Yes,” Armitage says.

“Good, we’ll leave with you.” Perry replies as they close their tab.

As we wait for the bartender, LaFontaine quizzes me. “What happened out there on the dance floor?”

“Uh, awesomeness?”

“I looked over and gawked in disbelief. You're a regular minx.”

I shrug.

“Well, I just learned to let go and go with the flow.”

“I worried Carmilla would go thermonuclear at you and JP. Instead it looks like you're about to go have a threesome.'

I shrugged again. "I uh, don't know. Nor am I going to kiss and tell."

The three of us made our way back into the stateroom, complete with casual touches and laughter about nothing in particular. Once inside the door, JP locked it with the deadbolt and Carmilla had them pinned up against it as she had done to me just after the auction.

"Moment of truth, Varlet. Make your decision."

JP swallowed and breathed heavily as Carmilla kissed them passionately. "I uh, think I'm good. I wish to stay, but, uh..." they panted again, "maybe watch from the couch?"

"Cupcake?” Carmilla whispers and my name is a question.

"Sure, Mistress. Just come fuck me.” I was quickly taking off my shoes and clothes as Carmilla did the same, the need echoing between the two of us. It wasn't long before she pinned me down to the bed and her lips found mine, her hands curling around my head, holding me, stilling me as our tongues caressed each other. Abruptly Carmilla kneels up, leaving me breathless and wanting more.

“You are so wonderful.” She runs her hands down my legs then grasps my left foot. “You have such lovely legs. I want to kiss every inch of you.” She presses her lips just above my knee and
then grazes her teeth up the inside of my thigh. Everything south of my waistline convulses. Her
tongue glides in the crevice of my hip. I wriggle at the sensation beneath her.

“Be still, Laura,” she warns as I groan.

“Please, I need you in me. I need your magnificent fingers...” I’m wanton and idly remember JP
was watching us, and my eyes dart over to them.

They give me a playful wink as I feel teeth seize upon my nipple, leaving me cry out in painful
pleasure.

“Mine,” she mouths.

“Please,” I beg and she grins... a salacious, wicked, tempting, Sadistic-Domme, grin. She trails
kisses up my right leg this time, until she reaches the apex of my thighs. She pushes my legs wider
apart.

She moans as her mouth is on me. I close my eyes and surrender to her talented tongue. My hands
fist her hair as my hips swing and sway, slave to her rhythm, then buck off the small bed. She grabs
my hips to still me... but doesn’t stop the delicious torture. I’m close, so close.

“Carmilla.” I moan.

“Not yet,” she breathes as she slowly introduces one curled finger with deliberate slowness. I
shudder and my thighs quiver at her sadistic denial of letting me orgasm.

“So impatient, Ms. Hollis. Good things come to those who wait.” Reverentially she kisses my
breasts and tugs my left nipple with her teeth. Gazing up at me, her eyes are dark hurricanes as she
teases me.

“Mistress, I want you. Please.” She looms up over me, her body covering mine, resting her weight
on her knees and one elbow.

“Very well, submissive. I aim to please.” Her lips brush mine.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too.” She works in a second and third finger in quick succession, curling into me and I
scream my release, tears flowing as I shudder from the potent orgasm.

I feel lethargic from all this as I begin to drift to sleep. Carmilla requests a fresh bottle of cold water
to sip and I barely notice the shift in weight on the bed as JP crawls into bed and spoons with us.
I woke up in bed, feeling extremely warm as I opened my eyes to see Carmilla’s curls splayed all over the pillow beside me. I leaned up to see JP spooned into her embrace, and I couldn’t help but smile at tender affection being shown there.

And he had his little unicorn, too.

I got out of bed, realizing that I wouldn’t be able to get back to sleep at this rate. It was seven in the morning, and it was our last day on the ship. I went ahead and got dressed and started packing as I realized that Carm must have fallen asleep naked, too. I idly wondered if they did anything with each other after I fell asleep, and it actually made me smile to think that they might have.

This is… the opposite of jealousy. I grinned at the thought as I went into the bathroom to brush my teeth and start putting away my toiletries as an alarm went off.

“Varlet, let me snooze.” Carmilla muttered, face buried in the pillow.

“Sorry, Ms. Karnstein, I’m under direct orders to-”

“-I’m countermanding that.”

“You said you might do that and to ignore you.” I heard him get up and he must have noticed I wasn’t there. “Laura?”

“In the bathroom.”

“Oh, okay. Can you start the coffeemaker for Ms. Sleepy-head here? I have it all set up, just hit the button.”

“Did you just call me sleepy-head? Laura, your sarcasm is rubbing off on them.”

“Good!” I reply, rinsing out my mouth and moving aside so JP could come in and do the same. I kissed his forehead and gave a small hug, asking if they slept well.

“I slept amazingly, actually.”

“Coffee!” Carmilla whined and the pair of us just chuckled at that. Armitage already began brushing his teeth as he pointed at the coffee machine and indicated one sugar and one cream packet. I understood and prepared Mistress’ coffee for her.

She was tangled in the sheets and looked quite harried as her hair resembled medusa more than greek goddess. “Thank you.” She rolled over to sit up, but the sheets seemed to bind on themselves and she had to work at practically untying herself from the bed before she could sit up and drink the coffee.
“Debarkment is at eleven; we have time for breakfast and to enjoy the ocean air a bit if we hurry.” JP said, coming over with a wide-tooth comb for her.

“Yeah. Okay.” She put down the coffee, looking woozy. “What the hell is wrong with me?”

I looked her over. “Hangover maybe?”

She shrugged at that. “I never get hangovers.” I look around the room and give her the last of the ‘wine’ we snuck on board.

“Here’s some hair of the dog. You’ll want a greasy breakfast and water, not coffee.” I reply as JP started to set out a change of clothes for her.

Carmilla was on her second orange juice (with the “white wine” added) and tore her way through the limp bacon while JP and I enjoyed cereal and fruit for breakfast. Perry and LaFontaine looked absolutely blissful as they joined us and I didn’t want to make any lewd comments about it.

JP, however, was a different story.

“How many times?”

“Just one load.” Perry said non-plussed. Load?

LaFontaine shook their head and chuckled at that. “She’s ahead on her laundry duty now.”

Perry looked around the group curiously. “Where’s Betty and Jamie?” I shrugged, uncertain.

LaF bit their lip to restrain laughing. “I’m sure they are coming soon.” I turned to look in their direction, and the crowd parted as a porter was helping push Betty in a wheelchair while Jamie dealt with the luggage.

“Oh my god, Betty!” As I called out to them, JP automatically went and helped with one of Jamie’s bulky bags.

“Thanks, JP.” Jamie said as I saw an embarrassed Betty try to hide behind her large floppy hat and sunglasses.

Did she get beat up? I wondered idly as Carmilla also tried to stifle her laughter. I turned my head to whisper into Carm’s ear. “You just used your insight, didn’t you?”

“Oh yeah. Worth it.” Betty blushed deep red as I tried to play it off, even while I was super curious as to what she ’saw’.

“Betty?” I asked awkwardly.

“I fell off the bed.” She said sullenly.

“Did you land on your face?” I exclaimed, realizing a second too late that I was right. “Oh, Bets, I’m so sorry-”

Betty laughed at my awkwardness. “Laura, you don’t have to apologize because I fail at reverse cowgirl, okay?”

Carmilla couldn’t keep it in anymore and silently cried tears as she snickered.
JP helped me unpack back at my dorm room alongside Betty as I had stuff to do on campus to welcome the incoming freshmen. It’s kind of odd, how the school’s induction ceremony seems to leave people totally okay with the preternatural just existing around them.

Why not just call it new student orientation?

My mind was trying to tell me something, but as much as I tried to grasp at it, it was like trying to hold water between my fingers.

I heard a knock at the doorway and turned to see Mary there, peering in. “So you haven’t moved out of your dorm room after all.”

I shrugged. “Just spent the summer with my girlfriend, Carmilla.” Wow, ‘girlfriend’ sounds so foreign to me. What we have isn’t just a relationship, but a bond. I’m not even certain JP would call me their ‘girlfriend’ after all that’s happened.

She raised an eyebrow at that in a very fifty-Karnstein kind of way. “You’re dating the reclusive billionaire you interviewed.”

“Millionaire,” I corrected automatically, “she doesn’t want to be a billionaire. Thinks that income inequality is a big problem and that hoarding wealth is part of the problem with the economy.”

“Whatever. I came to tell you that the toilets down the hall are clogged.”

I huffed at that. “I’ll summon custodial services.”

As Mary left, JP looked at me in shock. “Summon? First there’s the blue tentacle phones across campus, now you’re saying you have to summon custodial services?”

I shrugged at the question. “They do things differently here; if you call Campus Security, ‘missing persons’ is the first option on their voicemail, followed by escaped entities or poltergeist activity and then to report bloody visions of Demonic Pandemonium.”

Armitage visibly shivered at that. “So we’re standing on an evil Hogwarts.”

“...with its very own Hellmouth.” I said, nodding. I knitted my eyebrows in confusion at that. “I should be more concerned about that, shouldn’t I?”

Betty shrugged her shoulders at that. “Yeah maybe, but it’s home, you know?”

I agreed with my roommate, remembering how JP fire-bombed the basement of the Lustig Building in order to incinerate Lilita’s shadow-tentacles. “Besides, Armitage here is quite the bad-ass.” He blushed at the compliment as I finished arranging the dorm room.

“Do you want to go back to Carmilla’s place and sleep there?”

“I would; when the school year begins, I’ll probably have to stay here with you.”

“Well, you’re not sleeping on the floor here, you’re sharing my bed. And my stuffed ocelot.” I pointed to the cute plush cat on the bed.

“That reminds me to donate money to the big cat sanctuary.” As they said that, Betty looked at the pair of us in concern.

“Laura… is there something going on here between you two?”
We both shook our heads at that, but she didn’t believe us.

“I uh… you know what? I’m not going to judge.” Betty gave up rather than question it more. It was probably for the best.

When we got back to Carm’s place, I saw a visibly perturbed Carmilla staring out of the massive windows down to the street.

“You can confirm this?” She was asking Natalie.

“I kept up glamour charms and let myself be seen, both at you and as Laura. Had my Golem on stand-by should anyone try to come onto either of the top floors here.” Natalie looked equally upset as JP and I were left standing there, confused.

“And we haven’t heard back from Brody yet?” I sensed the nervous energy in the room now.

“Radio silence, boss.”

“Contact Spencer if we don’t hear from him by tonight.” Carm shook her head, annoyed. “I shouldn’t have let him go by himself…”

“I’m sure he’s fine, Mistress.” I reply as JP goes to the kitchen to make her a drink.

“Well, I hope so too, but James was apparently casing this place all weekend, looking for a way in.” My pulse shot up. James was trying to get in here?!

“My repulsion wards worked just fine. You don’t have to worry.” Natalie soothed.

She looked at Natalie curiously. “How did you key it to him, anyways?”

Nat scoffed at that. “I did a generalized repulsion ward to anyone who means you harm.” JP came back with a bloody mary in hand.

Carmilla looked at the drink, took a sip of it, and thanked their Varlet.

“You can barely taste the blood in there, right?”

Carm nodded gratefully. “You’re amazing, JP. Ugh, this hits the spot.” She points to me with her glass. “Laura, do you need anything? Because right now, I just want to enjoy this drink and maybe play my violin to de-stress after all the crap that’s gone down.”

“Of course. I’m actually going to turn in early, okay?” I say and Carm nods at that. We had an okay vacation, but coming back really did remind us hard about the problems we’re facing here.

Carm and I were sitting at the Chinese place Lana suggested, soaking up the sun on the patio as we were waiting for her to show up. JP was helping Spencer locate Kirsch from his phone's GPS coordinates along with satellite imaging that LaF couldn't promise was entirely legal. It's just really weird that he wouldn't respond.

Carm looked around the restaurant, impatiently looking at the time on her cell phone. "Sure she didn't stand you up?"

“Sorry she’s running late; she’s usually punctual.” I shrug apologetically.
Carmilla didn’t seem to mind as she sipped on her wonton soup. “I don’t care, it’s nice to be out on a normal lunch date with you. We won’t have as much time to enjoy this once your school year resumes.”

I nodded at that, my mind remembering something that Betty said. “You’re a Silas University Alumni, right?”

She nodded absently at that. “Mother arranged it; she’s got pull with the University or something.”

“Did she give Will the same option?”

“No, but he didn’t want any favors from her. He made his way through trade school and worked his way up in construction.”

“He used his vampire power of making friendships.” I marveled at that and how it could be used for good. “That’s pretty neat, even if it is designed to make him a better predatory vampire.”

I glanced down the street and saw Lana making her way towards us, flashing a big smile from behind sunglasses and a black-lace parasol. Combined with her usual boho-chic aesthetic, she looked like she should be on a modeling runway instead of having lunch with us.

“Oh, Lana’s here!” I piped up cheerfully as she strode up, making Carmilla crane her neck in order to see her.

Carmilla didn’t as much get up from her chair gracefully as she scrambled to her feet, trying to stand between us.

“LAURA, RUN!” She cried out, the panic evident in her voice.

“Carm, what’s going on? This is my friend from work, Lana.”

Lana sighed as she pulled off her sunglasses and looked at my Mistress. “I swear on my blood I mean no harm to you or yours, Mircalla.”

Mircalla? I leaned around Carm to see bright silver eyes shine back at me.

“May I sit down in the shade please? I can feel my skin cooking right now, and I have Laura’s final check from Channel Three.”

Carmilla seemed puffed-up, like a cat that is anticipating a fight and was confused by what just happened.

“Laura, this is Matska Belmonde, aka ‘Mattie’. Her vampire power is anonymity.”

I got up to look at Lana again, and it was looking into one of those magic eye pictures, where everything goes unfocused and you see something else that was hidden there all along.

She can change her face. As I tried to lock onto any feature and remember it, Lana/Mattie seemed to morph, ever so slightly, so that you couldn’t describe it. Creepy.

“Are you going to be rude and just keep staring at me, or shall we enjoy lunch? Mir, we’ve got a lot of catching up to do.”
Go back and re-read the second book if you need to; I was super subtle about this reveal.

(Sorry for the delay; my birth mother died of a sudden stroke and it sapped me of my Muse, only to come back in a Hercissa one-shot I wrote named 'scars'. It's also influenced this chapter somewhat)

Lana is Mattie.

My mind was trying to wrap itself around that concept as Carmilla and Lana talked.

“So, little sister, you took a run at Father and killed Mother? I don't know if I should be scared or amused at you.”

Carmilla shrugged as she ate her food. “You didn't want to serve it anymore than I did.”

There was something in the way Lana looked at her eating that made me realize that Lana was jealous.

“Lilith and I had an understanding after she tricked Wilhelm into killing Thutmose during the Decembrist Revolt. We stay the hell out of each other's lives.”

“Thutmose?”

I remembered something Lana said weeks ago. “You're the oldest of 7. Carmilla, Will, and Elladora are three of them.”

She nodded in agreement. "Jodous and Iliana were abandoned by Mother, almost as soon as she made them.”

"Jeez, she really did go around the world destroying lives for her amusement. Glad you told her to cut it out." Carmilla interjected. Mattie ignored the jibe.

“She pried apart the jaws of Death Herself to give us new life, and in turn, we each inherited an aspect of her power-”

“Not that claptrap. She just turned us into vampires-”

"You know it's not that easy. Otherwise, we all would have made vampires of our own.”

I looked between the two of them, and Lana/Mattie caught on too quickly.

"Mircalla, what did you do?" Her voice wavered, and considering that I knew Mattie was supposed to be a ruthless killer, things that make her scared are really bad.

"My scientist proved that the vampirism we all have is pretty much a virus that can be medicated and neutralized in our bloodstream."
"You broke the taboo? Mother always said there could only be seven of us!" Mattie exclaimed in shock, "only she could put the soul back into."

"-she said all sorts of things; remember, she once believed that the world was flat."

"Well, some of us were born before Magellan circumnavigated the world-"

I looked at Lana. "Wait, how old are you?"

Her eyes shifted to me and her features were like ripples in water. "Old enough to know that's a question that shouldn't be answered."

Carmilla rolled her eyes at that. "Oh, don't be such a drama queen. Matska was around when Nefertiti assumed control after her husband's 'untimely' passing-"

"-I had nothing to do with that-" Lana gave a wicked, knowing smile.

"-oh come on, it's not like there's a statute of limitations..."

"You were at the auction!" I exclaimed, figuring out why she seemed familiar. She said she was reuniting with her family that weekend...

"I was." Lana/Mattie raised an eyebrow in challenge at me.

“You were really jealous that Carmilla was... oh, ew! She's your sister!”

“I mean, it’s not incest if we’re not actually-” Lana backpedaled.

“-Oh my god!” I interrupted, more creeped out than anything.

"So what happened to you two staying out of each other's lives?" Carmilla tried to steer the conversation elsewhere.

"She's not the kind of being who takes 'no' for an answer, particularly when we both were trying to protect you."

"Protect me?! As if mother ever wanted to-"

"Oh, please. You were always her favorite. Nothing but the best for dear Mircalla. She would have never sought out Lophiliformes if YOU had never gotten scarred up by the Inquisition!"

"That's not fair, she... It didn't happen that way. She was dumb enough to make that kind of deal with an Elder God."

“Oh, dear sister... mother was crazy, not stupid. Speaking of stupid, how did you break the taboo?"

"I used my Insight to choose the most brutal and deadly of the child-soldiers that worked for the Baron and Z'Klatheggon. I drained them of about about ten percent of their blood, pooled it up for later, and Will injected each of them with one cc of my doped blood with a V-Cell count similar to when I was first made."

"How are you certain on that?" I asked. Carmilla's eyes unfocused at the memory that was playing in her mind.

"I remember the first days. It was... inhuman."
Mattie pressed on.

"And these child soldiers just followed you through the First Gate?"

Carmilla shrugged. "They knew they were serving an Elder God and I told them we could kill them and take on the power for ourselves."

"Again, I ask: they willingly followed you?"

"William may have used his gift liberally on the small army I raised."

"Which means that you didn't fully turn them!" Lana exclaimed in frustration. "Habla khem! At the best you made... revenants!" Her eyes widened at that. "bint il-Homaar, you raised an army of revenants!"

"They got the job done, didn't they?" Carmilla didn't seem as confident as she tried to appear.

"What language was that? Sumerian?" I asked the pair of them.

"Kemetic-" Lana started, getting cut off by my Mistress.

"-Ancient Egyptian to the Millenials."

"I've gone through three millennia!" Mattie scoffed, "and your little army was devoured by the 'hungry light'."

I was confused at what Lana had said earlier. "What do you mean, you and Lilita were trying to protect Carmilla?"

"Lilith, Lilita, Liandra... she liked alliteration like you do anagrams. Mother knew you were here and were being investigated by Jo-James, so-

"-ugh, that asshole, who tried to assault my girl?" Carmilla's eyes narrowed in anger just at the mention of his name.

Lana chortled once at that. "More like kill. He's a vampire."

"What?!" Mircalla and I said in surprise at the same time.

"Ugh, everyone knows you're nose deaf. Couldn't even recognize a werewolf until she was practically on top of you." As Lana said that, details were falling into place for me.

"That 'perfume' you wore at work to repel James..."

"...it covered up my scent around James. Sorry for the deception, Laura." I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, and smelled cinnamon and incense. It was heavenly. I must have lost track of the conversation as I opened my eyes and felt a bit dazed at the pair of them.

"...face it, Mircalla. You're a predator. Always have been, and always will be, despite your proclivities to only feed from willing donors and your attempt to clone blood." My Mistress looked cowed and upset, as if she lost the argument but didn't want to concede.

"What? No, she's not." I interjected, getting a stern look from Mattie.

"Laura, tell me... are you vegan? How many cows, chickens, and pigs have been slaughtered for you to enjoy? Look, I'm not telling you to give up meat," She pointedly looked over to Carmilla
just then, "just to admit the natural order of the world."

"I didn't slaughter Patricia, if you recall. "

"Ne v etot vnov'. YA ne ubival yeye!" Mattie snapped at her in yet another language.

"I didn't say you killed her, and can we please stick to English?" Carmilla chided sharply. She leaned over and apologized quietly. "She was number five; the government 'disappeared' her one day and I found out months later she had been executed."

*Carmilla had fifteen submissives before me, but it seems like a lot of them died tragically over the past three hundred years.*

"I'm so sorry, Carm."

She shrugged at that, and I could tell that it bothered her more than she wanted to admit. "She taught me how to make bombs."

Mattie handed me an envelope and sighed. "Your paycheck, Laura. I need to get back to work and keep up appearances. Mir, we have to deal with Lophilliformes and James, okay?" She handed her a business card. "Stay in touch; you're the only sibling I can stand."

As I drove us back home, Carmilla's phone went off.

"Karnstein." Her face held annoyance, and soured as the person on the other side of the line spoke. "Yeah, I expected something like this to happen." I glance over curiously, before stopping at a red light.

'What's up?' I mouth silently at her. She raises one finger in a 'hold on' gesture.

"Can you enhance the image? I want to know for certain who... hold on." She pulls the cell phone away from her face. "It's Stinson; someone went snooping into the remains of my office."

"Oh." I reply, noticing the green light and accelerating Baby Smaug through the intersection.

"Okay, Stinson, what were you saying?" She continues, moving the mobile phone to see a grainy image on the screen. I try to glance over and see a man with dark hair and pale coveralls. Carmilla puts it back to her ear, and I focus on the road again.

"Yeah, I can't tell much from that image, but there were no construction workers there that day."

*Okay, that's not good...*

"Can you sharpen the picture at all?" she says to Stinson, "Oh, that's just hollywood? Damn." I glance over at the picture again and a chill of recognition sweeps up my spine. There is something familiar in the line of his jaw. He has scruffy short black hair that looks odd and unkempt...

Holy crap! I know who it is.


“You think?” Carmilla asks, surprised.

“That's his jaw.” I nod towards her phone. “And the right build, too.”
“Well, shit.” Carmilla puts the phone back to her ear.

“Did you get that, Stinson?” she murmurs, sounding none too pleased.

“Why would he do this?” I ask Carmilla. She shrugs.

“Envy, perhaps. I don’t know. I had no idea you were going to work with my ‘siblings’.” Carmilla’s mouth presses into a hard, thin line.

I shrug an uncertain apology. *It wasn't my fault they were there.*

“Check the contents of his hard drive, again,” She adds, “Find any address he lived at, any vehicles he owns, hack the traffic feed if you have to!” She ended the call, perturbed as it looked like she wanted to slam the phone down.

“What all was on the hard drive?” I whisper. Carmilla’s face hardens and she shakes her head.

“Nothing much,” she says, tight-lipped, her earlier smile forgotten.

“Tell me.”

“No.”

“Was it about you, or me?”

“I won't burden you with-” She sighs. "No."

I harrumphed as we made our way back to her place. Something on my dashboard caught my attention and it made me curious.

"Carmilla, did you *do* anything to my car when you had it repaired?"

"Yeah; your seats are now heated and you have bluetooth wired in as an additional source after the Auxiliary input."

Looking at the buttons beneath the volume knob, I noticed the buttons for heating up the seats.

"Oh. Thanks."

She shrugged at that. "I thought it was standard for the cabriolet model."

"So, will you tell me more about Mattie?"

Carm sighed at that. "You're not going to let it go, are you, cupcake?"

"Please?"

"Alright; Matska was revived before my time and I'm fairly certain she was the taste-tester for Queen Nefertiti. She was the first of Mother's children."

"-seven children." I interjected.

"Okay, seven. I only really knew of her, Wilhelm, and Elladora. There was occasional mentions of a Thutmose when the three of us were in France when I was turned in 1697. She was around to help me feed as the bloodlust is really strong in the first few months. You know, I'd rather tell you about this charming opera singer who taught me fencing."
"-you're changing the subject-

"-she committed arson in a convent in order to sneak out her girlfriend who was forced to take Holy Orders..."

"Okay, wow. But let's get back to Matska. You said before that she and Lilita would take a guy home together to feed?"

Carmilla nodded at that. "Guys want threesomes, no matter what century. Once I got hold of my bloodlust and power of Insight, I could see into people's minds and feel their desires, hopes, and dreams. I could never see them as cattle like they did. That's why I have refused to kill when I feed whenever possible and to find a willing blood donor who enjoys just a bit of pain so that they would want to bleed for me."

I made the turn to take us into the parking garage under Carmilla's place. "You couldn't just make them want to bleed for you?"

"I wouldn't even if I could. I'll look into someone and seduce them, but I want them to have their own free will." I pulled the car into a spot and killed the engine.

"Well you certainly did seduce me, Mistress."

Carmilla smirked at that. "Good. I'd hate to think that I lost my touch," she says quietly, pressing a soft, sweet kiss on my lips.

"I'm fairly certain I have seduced you too, Carm." I reply as our foreheads touch. She grins and kisses me more forcefully, winding my braid between her fingers and I moan at the subtle pulling she does, deepening the kiss. When we come up for air, my heart is racing.

"Thirsty?" I ask, and she knows what I'm offering.

"Actually, no. I'm hungry." Carmilla seems to be thinking of something. "Let's see what Mrs. LaFontaine is up to."

We get out of Baby Smaug and make our way up to her apartment on the top floor, her fingers trailing the small of my back and I can't help but feel like a plant growing towards the sun. She gives me light and life, and I know I'm hers.

As the elevator doors open, JP is humming contentedly as they are wearing a long, curly pink wig with a matching white-and-pink cupcake-themed lolita outfit as they seemed to be repairing kevlar vests. Upon seeing my startled expression, they shrug and mention that they felt in a retro mood and wanted to be girly for a bit.

"While you're mending bulletproof armor." I say with a smirk.

"The irony didn't escape me." JP replied, and I noticed their impeccable liquid eyeliner.

"Okay, definitely need you to show me how do you wingtip eyeliner."

Carmilla smiled at the exchange as she went to see Perry. "You two can stay up and do makeovers if you want-" Her phone vibrated and she read a text message. "Damn it. Perry, pack me a lunch to go. Natalie and I have to go to New York."

"Something wrong, Ms. Karnstein?" Armitage asked concernedly. Carm waved away the worry.
"No, just have to sign the paperwork there and temporarily become a billionaire before I reinvest it." She flashed a grin from ear to ear. "They are investing in lab-created gemstones."

LaFontaine gave a whoop in adulation. "So, about that bonus you promised?"

Carm shook her head as a layer of stress I didn't realize she was holding dissipated. "Oh, yeah. And we're going to reduce the mining industry in the conflict region." She walked over and kissed JP on the forehead tenderly. "Take care of her while I'm gone."

"Of course, Ms. Karnstein."

"And-" Her phone rang and she was annoyed as she picked up. "What?!... Oh. Okay, yeah... take all the time you need. My condolences."

Her lips pressed thin as she mouthed the phrase 'prepare a guest room' to JP.

"You want me to what?! Uh, okay... Yeah, Brody. I'm honored." Carmilla hung up and took a few deep breaths.

"Brody's mother had a stroke; he's having her cremated and bringing his little sister Tara to live with us."

"Oh wow, is he-" I start to ask. Carmilla seems bewildered at this.

"-yeah, taking it like a champ. He's making a will and wants me as Tara's legal guardian if something happens to him. I could be a step-mom."

Perry handed Carmilla a sealed container of food. "You won't be doing this alone."
“Do you think we should eat?” I ask.

“No. We should drink,” Betty says.

“Why are you in such a drinking mood?”

“Because I don’t see enough of you anymore. I didn’t know you’d move in with the first girl who chained you to a bed.” She pouts again. “Stupid lesbian stereotypes.”

I giggle.

“Yeah, seems like,” I mutter.

“So what’s it like, being Mrs. LaFontaine?” I ask Perry as she shows off the ring at the bar. Some Zetas were nearby playing with the life-size jenga and were doing the strange dares written on the blocks that they pulled out. Surprisingly, none of them seriously harmed themselves yet, though one had to serenade the baby octopus at the bar, which rewarded him with a squirt of ink.

Perry shrugged at that. “It’s not much different, I imagine. I mean, I’ve been ‘Perry’ as long as LaFontaine has gone by their surname. If anything, putting a ‘Mrs’ in front of LaF’s name sounds weird.”

I thought about that for a second and realized that we just assumed she’d take their last name. “Do you prefer to be Mrs. Perry, or would you two hyphenate?”

She laughed and rolled her eyes at that. “No to hyphenating; that’s too much to say. We agreed to keep our own names as we’d always be known as Perry and LaFontaine.”

Betty uncharacteristically spoke into her drink rather than make eye contact. “Can I ask a personal question?”

Perry shrugged at that. “Yeah, sure.”

“Do you two think about having children? You’re like the only person I know dating a non-cis person, and uh…”

I nearly choked on my drink as the concept of ‘Betty’ and ‘children’ were put near each other.

“Um, Betty, are you-”

“I’m not pregnant, Hollis, just… I always thought I’d settle down with a guy, uh… you know, who could get me pregnant.” She chewed on her bottom lip a bit. “Oh I don’t think I’m saying this right.”

Perry patted her hand in a comforting manner. “You expected a future with babies and everything,
and now you can see that change slightly because of Jamie?”

She nodded. “I love him, and want our kids to look like us, you know? And short of the Alchemy Club inventing a sex-change potion so that he could impregnate me, I don’t know how to bring it up.”

I looked at my roommate and saw her concern. “Do you think you’re at that point of your relationship?”

“Not now, no… but he is looking like a really strong candidate.” She replied, her eyes flicking over to Perry’s ring.

*Oh wow, she’s never been like this before. This was why she was so scared of commitment before.*

“Well Laura, what about you and JP?”

“What about me and… I mean, nothing is going on there.”

“Sure, whatever you say.” Sarcasm dripped from Betty.

“You two are pretty chummy.” Perry piped in.

“They are my driver/bodyguard, and only because Carmilla tasked them to.”

Betty shook her head at Perry. “She doth protest too much.”

“Indeed.”

I took a long breath and a longer sip of my margarita. “We’re just friends who share a common bond.”

“You both have sex together?” Betty asked.

“No!” I felt offended at that.

“You both date Carmilla?” Perry inquired.

“No…” I wasn’t exactly sure if that was correct. “We both love her, and kind of love each other.”

Betty crossed her arms and raised a blonde eyebrow at me.

“You don’t have to sleep with everyone you love.” My voice was too petulant for my own liking.

“And you two have more chemistry that my spouse does calculating moles.”

I tried to make a retort, but I knew deep down that it was true.

“So, we already know that Carmilla can’t carry the baby because she’s a vampire, so that leaves you and JP.” Perry’s matter-of-fact voice finally got me to speak up again.

“They refused point-blank to carry a fetus to term. JP did mention being willing to breastfeed if needed… but we weren’t talking about future plans, just trans issues and top surgery.”

Perry frowned at that. “LaF has talked about it occasionally. I worry the scars won’t heal right.”

Betty was uncharacteristically supportive. “Oh, they will. I could barely tell with Jamie. He even pointed it out to me and then I could see it.”
Perry nodded gratefully. “So it just takes time to adjust.”

“...and apparently tubes to help drain fluid.”

Perry looked horrified at that. “LaFontaine is going to leak into tubes?” Her face went incredulous. “They are going to find that so cool, though.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at that, imagining the bad dad jokes LaF would make about needing an oil change or being a soylent factory.

“So that leaves you as having the babies, then?” Betty said with a sadistic grin.

“Me, babies? No. I’m still in college, dad will literally kill me.” I had no idea if he would or not. I had no idea how we’d do it, or if we wanted to. *I’m barely 21 drinking at a dive college bar where Zetas are doing shots of the aquarium water because they read it on a piece of wood.*

“After college, in a few years. You know you could pick out a donor who would look a lot like Carmilla.” Betty said helpfully.

“And now that Kirch is moving his little sister in, you and Ms. Karnstein will be like the cool step-moms.” Perry added, and it took me back a second.

I’d have to be an example around a young, impressionable child. I didn’t even know how old she was. I look at my watch, and it’s already nine pm. The specials have ended and soon the frat bros will start looking for companionship like starving sharks circling the lone oblivious fish in the sea.

“Betty, it’s late. We should go.” I am definitely feeling the effects of the alcohol, warm and fuzzy.

“Sure, Laura. It’s been so good to see you. You just seem so much more, I don’t know… confident. BDSM obviously agrees with you.” My face warms. Coming from Miss Betty Spielsdorf, this is indeed a compliment.

“It does,” I whisper, and because I’ve probably had too much to drink, tears prick the back of my eyes.

_Could I be any happier?_ In spite of all her baggage, her nature, her Fifty Flavors of Issues, I have met the woman of my dreams. We make our way out of the bar and down the block to where we had parked. I quickly change the subject to stem my sentimental thoughts, because I know I will cry otherwise.

“I have really enjoyed this evening.” I grasp Betty’s hand. “Thank you for dragging me out!” We hug. As she releases me, the heavy scent of incense and cigarettes hits my senses as I pull away, panic already in my throat.

Perry’s arms are restrained behind her back as James’ hand wrenched her head at a neck-snapping angle.

“Aren’t you glad to see me, Laura?” His eyes were pure silver and I saw his fangs gleam in the street light.

Perry whimpered in fear as she couldn’t fight to get out of his grip, and forgot how to scream for help. All of us were struck silent in shock.

“Come on, you _teasing little slut, smile!_” As Betty looked for the nearest blue octopus phone, I ripped the silver charm bracelet off of my left wrist and wrapped it around my right hand as I made
a fist.

_Vampire. Silver. Krav Maga._

Time seemed to slow down as James’ fangs sank into Perry’s neck, making Betty run to call for help. As he was focused on the biting and blood, I resorted to my training and exploded with speed.

_Spear hand into eye cavity, blind the opponent._

I used all my force and weight with my left arm, adrenaline and panic not allowing me to hold back nor think about the sensation as warm was on my left hand.

James released Perry, stunned at getting blinded in one eye.

_Throat punch to carotid artery._

The smell of burned flesh was acrid as James staggered and coughed, hands flailing at the burned flesh.

_Palm strike to nose, full force into upper sinus cavity._

I felt something break as my hand came back bloody and James tumbled onto the ground, and I instinctively followed him with my foot landing harsh in his crotch, making him roll over in pain.

“FUCKING WHORE, YOU BROKE MY NOSE!” As he staggered to get up, I was ready to keep fighting. I knew he was faster and stronger, so I wasn’t about to let him have a fair fight as I swung to punch at him with the silver charm around my fist again. Before my knuckles hit his head, he was already gone.

_Damn, he’s faster than I can track._

I turned to see Betty asking for an ambulance as the Zetas came over to try to tend Perry. She had a hand clamped to her neck, trying to stop the bleeding as the flesh turned necrotic and black.

_Oh, shit._
I wake with a start. It’s light and my head is aching, throbbing at my temples. Oh no. I hope I don’t have a hangover. Cautiously, I open my eyes and notice the bedroom chair has moved, and Carmilla is standing at the doorway. She’s wearing a suit, and shirt is unbuttoned so that I can see her bra. I wonder if I’m dreaming.

In the early morning light, her eyes burn with grave intensity but her general expression is completely unreadable. My heart almost stops. She’s here. How did she get here? She must have left New York last night. What woke me up?

She slammed the front door to the apartment.

“Hi,” I whisper. She regards me coolly, and my heart stutters once more. I half expect her to kiss me, but she doesn’t. She sits back, continuing to regard me, her expression impassive.

“Hello,” she says finally, her voice hushed. And I know she’s still mad. Really mad.

“You’re back.”

“I am.” Slowly I pull myself up into a sitting position, not taking my eyes off her. My mouth is dry. “You’re still mad.” I can hardly speak the words.

She gazes at me, as if considering her response.

“Mad,” she says as if testing the word, weighing up its nuances, its meaning. “No, Laura. I am way, way beyond mad.”

Holy crap. I try to swallow, but it’s hard with a dry mouth.

“Far beyond mad... that doesn’t sound good.” She gazes at me, completely impassive, and doesn’t respond. A stark silence stretches between us. I reach over to my glass of water and take a welcome sip, trying to bring my erratic heart rate under control.

“Are you going to be monosyllabic for long?” Her eyebrows move fractionally registering her surprise as if she hadn’t expected this question.


“I’m sorry I went out.”

“Are you?”

“No,” I mutter after a pause, because it’s true.

“Why say it then?”

“Because I don’t want you to be mad at me.” She sighs heavily as if she’s been holding this tension for a thousand hours and runs her hand through her hair. She looks beautiful. Mad, but beautiful. I drink her in—Carmilla’s back—angry, but in one piece.

“I think Detective Clark wants to talk to you.” My mind flashes back to the hospital last night, and the officer who was trying to make a report of the assault. I didn’t say anything about vampires, but the assault on Perry was pretty convincing.
And, after all that James has done now, Carmilla’s getting put under scrutiny.

“I’m sure she does.”

“Carmilla, please...” I trail off, uncertain what to say.

“Carmilla, please,” She mimicked, “Please what?”

“Don’t be so cold.” I didn’t like how she was acting.

Her eyebrows rise in surprise once more. “Laura, cold is not what I’m feeling at the moment. I’m burning. Burning with rage. I don’t know how to deal with these”—she waves her hand searching for the word—“feelings.” Her tone is bitter.

Oh shit. Her honesty disarms me. All I want to do is crawl into her lap. It’s all I’ve wanted to do since I came home last night. To hell with this. I start to move and she shakes her head slowly.

“I don’t want that right now.”

A frazzled and half-asleep JP runs into my bedroom, panting. “Ms. Karnstein, I can expla-”

Before the word ‘explain’ is out of their mouth, Carmilla’s hand is around their throat and Armitage is choke-slammed up against the wall, gagging for breath. Their feet dangle inches above the ground.

“I ought to cane you until you bleed!”

“CARM!” I screamed, shocked in the moment.

“YOU. WERE. SUPPOSED. TO. KEEP. HER. SAFE.” Carmilla seemed to force herself to say calm as JP’s face went red and then blue. I scrambled out of bed, knowing I would be useless at physically making her let go.

“Carmilla! Stop this! They were making up Tara’s room like you asked!” I yelled as JP’s hands instinctively clutched at my Mistress’ wrist.

“You could have died!” She turned her head towards me, fear and anger choking her.

“I defended myself!”

Carmilla’s facade of anger collapsed as they let JP land on their feet, coughing and gasping as they dropped into a submissive kneeling position.

“I could have lost you. I don’t know what I’d do.”

“I’m sorry, but I was just as worried when you went after Z’Klatheggon.”

“How is Perry?” Carmilla’s eyes teared up and she angrily wiped it away.

“Stable, but the bite isn’t healing; it looks like the flesh itself is rotting—” I shuddered at the memory of it.

“I’ve seen this before. Herr Plague Doktor. JP, tell Nat we’re going to need the Brotherhood’s help.”

As JP leaves the room, I walk over to her and she looks broken.
“Laura, I was so scared that I was-”

My hand struck her cheek so hard that it stung.

“Carmilla Karnstein, I don’t give a fuck about your feelings right now. I do not care that you own JP,” I said flatly as cold rage made my voice quiver, “but I love them and you will NEVER raise your hand in anger against them. Am. I. Clear?”

“Yes.” Carm knew what she did was wrong. But it’s wrong to lash out at a subordinate in anger.

I put my arms around her and she lets herself cry a bit. She smells of Carmilla, minus the usual incense and clove that I once remember. I wrap my arms around her neck and nuzzle her throat, and she sighs once more, deeply this time.

“I’m still mad at you.” She says sadly.

“I know.” My hand rhythmically strokes her back. “And I’m mad at you. But we love each other and will work through this because we’re worth it.”

She pauses at that. “When I think of what might have happened-” Her voice is barely a whisper. Broken, raw.

“I’m okay.”

“Oh, Laura.” It’s almost a sob.

“I’m okay. We’re all okay. A bit shaken. But Perry is going to recover, right?”

She nods her head. “Thanks to you,” she mutters.

I nestle into her some more. Her fingers move to my hair and start playing with it. “I want to punish JP,” she whispers. “Really cane the shit out of them,” she adds. My heart leaps into my mouth. Fuck.

“I know,” I whisper as my scalp prickles.

“Doesn’t that make me a monster?”

“No. Once you’re not angry, I’ll let you. JP’s been mentally beating themselves up all night and maybe the caning will give them the penance they need.” I didn’t believe in corporal punishment on children, but consenting adults who do live this kind of lifestyle? Yeah.

“Let me?” She hugs me tighter. “I thought I was the Mistress here.”

“Everyone knows that submissives are the ones with the true power.”

“Hush. Let me have my lie.”

“Of course, Mistress.”

“I will say that I’m glad you two will stick up for each other.”

I shrug slightly at that. “I love them. And you.” JP was at the door and saw the embrace.

“Ms. Karnstein, Nat’s getting the cure now.”
“Thanks, Armitage.”

“Request permission to join in group hug?” They asked as I felt Carmilla’s tears roll down her cheeks.

“Get in here.” The three of us held each other and cried together as we worried about each other’s safety.

I made breakfast for everyone and let Carmilla and JP have their time alone in the dungeon as I knew they would have a lot to work out between them. Once I saw Carmilla’s tears, I knew she wasn’t going to raise her hand in anger to them. But JP needed release/closure/whatever you call it, and a caning would help my Mistress let off some steam.

I was unloading the dishwasher as the front door unlocked and I instantly grabbed the chef’s knife from the block nearby.

“Bulldog!” I called out, now knowing the proper response. I came around the kitchen to see Brody carrying a passed-out girl on his hip who looked almost too big to be carried that way.

He had a finger raised to his lips to quiet me. “Shh. ‘Chesty’, by the way. So everything went to hell while I was gone?”

I nodded, sheepishly putting away the knife in the kitchen. “Yeah, James tried to attack us, but I beat him off.”

Kirsch’s eyes widened in shock, as he wanted to cover his little sister’s ears somehow. “Dude, language!”

Tara couldn’t be older than eight years old as she started to wake up. She looked like she could have been his daughter, with the same color hair and similar nose.

“Brody,” She said sleepily. It sounded more like bro-die, and I could tell that the girl said it in place of ‘Daddy’. My heart seemed to skip a beat at that.

“Yeah, pumpkin?”

“Are we at the castle yet?”

“Yeah, Princess. We’re here.” He helped set her down and she stood on her own and faced me. “I told her we’d be living at the top of a tall building and she’s been convinced that it’s a castle. Tara, this is Laura.”

“Hi Aunt Laura, I’m Tara.” She rubbed her eyes with the back of her knuckles as she looked around. “This place is huge.” I’m an honorary aunt?

“Where is everyone?” Kirsh asked as Tara climbed up to the bar stool to face me. We were practically at the same height, though I tried to not let it get to me.

“LaFontaine is at the hospital with Perry, waiting for Natalie to show up with the medicine, and Carmilla and JP are uh… in the dungeon.” My face went red at saying that. I never realized how soundproofed that room was until now.

“Cool. I told you this was a castle, Brody! Can I go see it?” Tara asked.
“Sorry, munchkin. It’s not a place for children.” Tara rolled her eyes at that and huffed.

“Okay. When I’m old enough, I’m going to go see it, just like bars and rated R movies.”

Kirsch tousled her hair playfully. “Sure. And not one day before. Hey Laura, can you watch her or a minute? I gotta bring up her bags from the car.”

“Uh, sure.” I reply, looking at the young girl before me.

“Thanks. I’ll be right back, okay? Be good for Laura.” I tried to hide a grin at that.

“Do you want some juice, Tara?”

“Apple, please.” As I grab her the drink, I try to think of small talk. “So how old are you?”

“Eight. I’ll be in the third grade. What about you?”

I bit my cheek to stop a laugh. “I’m 21, and I’m in college.”

“Nuh-uh!” She said, eyes wide in surprise.

“Eeyup. Here you go.” I handed her the juice and she thanked me as she carefully took a sip.

“Do you go to Silas with Brody?”

“I did; I’m going back for my senior year in journalism.”

“I wanna be a doctor and help people.”

“Oh, then you and LaFontaine will get along great!”

“Is that the one who doesn’t use ‘he’ or ‘she’?”

I nodded, surprised at this. “Yeah. You know everyone here so far?”

She grinned in pride at that. “I asked Brody to tell me about everyone who lives in the castle. LaFawntan has short red hair and is the science-y one, just like me, and their wife is Perry, with the long curly red hair. You’re Laura, with straight brown hair, and you’re my Fairy Godmother’s girlfriend, Caramel-Carmilla. She has black curly hair and a ‘don’t-mess-wit-me’ attitude.”

_Fairy godmother? I’m sure she’ll get a kick out of that._

“That sounds about right. There’s one more.” I hinted.

“Umm…” She screwed up her face in concentration. “Oh! JB, the butler. Also not a boy or girl.”

“Very good, but it’s JP. And they don’t mind being called a boy, but they are less of a butler and more of a... “I didn’t know how to explain a Varlet to her. “Butler-meets-knight’s page kind of person.”

“Okay.” Tara took it all in as Kirsch entered with a backpack and two suitcases. “But Brody’s still the knight who protects us, right?”

“Yeah. Let’s go see your new room, okay?”

We put Tara to bed as Kirsch and I made our way over to the kitchen, where he grabbed a beer for
himself and unscrewed the top.

“She’s being one hell of a trooper right now.” He looked to me and felt embarrassed. “Sorry, you also want a beer?”

I shook my head slightly. “No, thanks. How are you holding up?”

“I’m just existing at this point. Kinda feel like I’m in shock and it hasn’t hit yet.”

I nodded, remembering when my own mother passed away. “It hurts, but it gets easier.”


He looked at Armitage like they had grown a second head. “You okay bro? Have a seat.”

JP sluggishly nodded then shook their head. “My ass iss… prolly purple right now.”

He looked at JP and then saw a svelte Carmilla sweep through around the room and go into her office. Kirsch looked down at his beer as he addressed me. “Laura, I think um… this is your area of expertise.”

As he tried to get up, JP stopped him with a hand on his arm. “Gotta debrief. But let me grab a beer too.”

Kirsch stopped JP and brought a beer to him instead as they both caught up with each other. I smiled at the bro-mance between them and decided to check in on Carmilla.

“Tara’s in bed, and the dungeon is amazingly soundproofed.”

“Ms. Hollis,” she purrs at me. It’s then I realize that she’s having a type of post-orgasmic glow. 

*She can get off from giving pain.*

Between everything that’s happened lately, I am glad she was able to do that with someone we know and love. The music playing overhead is… stunning.

“What’s this?” I ask.

“Fauré’s Requiem. One of the few things I missed while I was... interred,” she says, distracted. “You look different.”

“I’ve not heard it before.”

“It’s very calming, relaxing,” she says and raises an eyebrow. “Have you done something to your hair?”

“Brushed it,” I mutter. I’m transported by the haunting voices. Abandoning the plans on the table, she walks toward me, a slow saunter in time to the music.

“Dance with me?” she murmurs.

“To this? It’s a *requiem*.” I squeak, shocked. “A song about the dead.”

“Yes.” She pulls me into her arms and holds me, burying her nose in my hair and swaying gently from side to side. I wrap my arms around her and she smells like her heavenly self. *Oh... I’ve missed her.*
“You were right; thank you,” she whispers.

“You’re welcome. I’m glad you recognized you were being an arse.” She chuckles and the captivating sound reverberates through her chest. She tightens her hold on me.

“Arse?” She asks playfully.

“Ass.” I correct myself.

“I prefer arse.” Her hand slides down and grabs a handful.

“Of course you do.” She laughs once more and kisses the top of my head.

“Why the requiem?” I murmur a little shocked that we are dancing to it. “Does this have to do with your reminiscing about the past?”

“Yeah. I’m barely over three hundred, but I feel like I lived so many lifetimes when I think about Patricia, Li-Juan, and Mary…” There are so many girls in her past, and possibly even more in her future...

We swayed with the music, and I started to find the beauty in the somber tones. Is this a vampire thing, to find beauty in death?

“What was the longest length of time you kept a girl?”

She shrugs.

“Why do you want to know?”

“If I have an expiration date.”

“I’m not going to drop you for a younger model, if that’s your worry.”

“I’ll age and die, Carmilla. You can’t find me attractive when I’m all tiny and walking funny.”

She smiled at that and arched an eyebrow. “You’re already tiny and I’ve make you walk funny before.” I rolled my eyes at her witty retort.

“Don’t avoid this, Carm.”

“Fine. A decade; Eleanor. Beginning of the 19th century, until 1814… no, 1815. Why do you ask?”

“I had wondered before if you would ever, you know… turn me.”

“I wouldn’t, cupcake. Even if I could. Only Mother had the power to put the soul back into us so that we were more than just mindless fiends.”

“I’m scared you’ll no longer want me as I get older.”

She rolled her eyes and kissed me. “Have you tasted your blood? You’re a pixy stick; I’m never getting rid of you.”

I rested my head on her, oddly comforted by her talking about me as a flavor. “What about JP?”

“Warm copper pennies, the way blood is supposed to taste. I don’t want to feed from them too
often; it is too closely linked to sex with me. If I’m slipping fangs into you, I wanna slip something else, too.”

“Okay.” I mumble contentedly into her neck. “So tell me about James... he’s your brother?”

“Every vampire I know calls Lilita ‘Mother’.”

“But there’s only seven of you?”

“Well, five now. Thutmose and Will were killed.”

“Lana, um, Mattie said each of you had a power. Any idea what they all are?”

Carmilla shook her head. “I’m not sure, but if I had to guess, Thutmose could possess the dead. If each of us got one of her powers, that’s one I haven’t seen. It also explains a lot about vampire lore; back then it was only Thutmose, Matska, and Mother. They must have tore a bloody swath through history and the humans tried to rationalize what they saw.”

“Who are the others?”

“I don’t know. They came after my time.”

“Don’t you think-”

“I really try not to, when it comes to my ‘family’. Why stress over something that you can’t fight.”

She kisses my neck, and I melt into her.

Her embrace is home; her lips are the salvation that I have sought all my life.

“Carm…” I moan as fingers run through my hair and I return the favor, tugging her hair hard enough to make her gasp and moan in pleasure.

“Hey, who is in charge here?” She whispers, soft eyes focusing on my own.

“I am, Mistress.” I unbutton her shirt and reach around to unfasten the clasp of her bra. I reach up and push her shirt and jacket off of her shoulders, letting them fall to the floor. I trail my fingers down her arms and the bra falls off as well.

“This okay?” I whisper.

“Do whatever you want, Laura.” My eyes stray from her eyes to her lips. They part as a slip of her tongue wets them slightly. I can’t think of the right term to describe these kissable lips; sculptured, chiseled, whatever, it is a beautiful mouth and she knows exactly how to use it. I find myself leaning up to kiss her.

“No,” Her eyes are round and raw for some inexplicable reason. It’s disarming.

“Why?” I whisper. She stares at me for a beat, and her eyes grow wider.

“Because it’ll make me feel cherished.” My heart practically lurches to a halt. Oh, Carmilla... my Fifty Flavors of Issues. And before I know it I’ve circled her in my arms, and I kiss her chest before nuzzling my cheek against her cross-shaped scar.

“Laura. My Laura,” she whispers. She wraps her arms around me and we stand immobile, holding each other in her office. Oh, how I love to be in her arms.
“You really want to do this?” She gives me her shy smile. I grin back at her and step out of her embrace.

“Yes, because you’re mine as well.”

“I am.” Carmilla’s eyes blaze, hot and full of promise. My mouth goes dry as I forget speech.

*I get to be in charge of the sex tonight.*

“Answer me, Laura. Here or the bedroom?” Her fingers trace the bottom of my jawline and I can tell it’s going to be a struggle to stay dominant.

“Here,” I whisper frantically. She smiles slowly, her lips curling into a sensuous smile full of licentious promise.

“Good choice, Ms. Hollis,” she murmurs against my lips. As she says it, I realize in that moment that I want to be called Mrs. Karnstein. I shake the thought off, knowing we shouldn’t play into the lesbian stereotypes and get engaged before we’ve been together for at least a year.

She releases my chin and her hand moves to my waist. I unfasten her slacks and let them slide down with her panties as I trail kisses down her chest and stomach. As her hands follow my movement, I shake my head no.

“Hands behind your back, Carmilla.” My lips kissed the sensitive crevice between her leg and hip, causing her hips to flex automatically.

“Oh, you bloody tease!”

“Mhm.” I concur, purring and making my warm breath play over her sex. “Whatever shall I do to you? We’ve done your desk before, but I was on it that time.”

“Gods Blood, Laura, if you don’t touch me in the next-” I flicked my tongue over her hood, silencing her instantly.

“Behave, Mistress. I get to play with you tonight. I want you bent over your desk, face down and hands behind your back.”

“Ooh, I like the sound of that.” She purred, and I was delighted to hear she liked it.

“This doesn’t require talking.” I replied gently.

“Can I at least step out of my clothing around my ankles?” She asked.

“Nope. Hobble your way over. It amuses me.” I said, grinning mischievously. She turned and shuffled her feet towards the desk as I asked.

“I’m going to get you back for this.” As she moved, I smacked her ass playfully. It was a sharp sting, and I swear my hand hurt more than her backside would.

“Threaten me later, get fisted now.” I keep my voice pleasant and in a sing-song tone.

“Oh, shit. I’m uh… going to need, uh…” Carmilla stammered uncharacteristically, “…some preparation.”

As she bends over the desk, I remember the move that always got me wet. I lowered my lips to about an inch away and behind her ear, and whispered as seductively as I could.
“If I’m going to fist you seven ways to Sunday, I will need you to keep still.”

“Make me,” she challenges, her voice soft and breathy.

I inhale sharply, grabbing her wrists and pinning them behind her back. She gasps in surprise and pleasure, and I’m absolutely loving this.

“Oh, Ms. Karnstein. You only have to ask. *I live to serve, you know.*” I suck on two fingers and play with her labia, making her squirm and try to get my fingers on her clit.

“Are you goading me?” She asks, amused but aroused. It’s a seductive combination. I give her cunt a sharp spank, and her entire body quivers as she goes up on her toes and give a toe-curling whimper. *Hey, she actually did curl her toes at that.*

“Yes. What are you going to do about it? Now, clasp your hands together behind your back.” She complies and I realize exactly how arousing being the ‘Top’ in such a scene can be.

I reward her obedience by slowly inserting two fingers and curling it with careful attention. All of the anticipation has left her needy and I have no trouble getting a third finger in.

“Who is a good, needy little vampire?” I say playfully.

“I am, Laura. Please…” she begs. I pull my fingers out and listen to her beg.

“Vampires are good at *sucking,* right?” I ask, putting my moist fingers by her lips. “Get to it.”

She complies and tastes herself on my fingers, and she’s eagerly sucking without abandon.

*Oh… I like this game.*

I pull out of her mouth and she wiggles her bum and vagina… *her cunt…* in obvious need for me. This is hot. Consuming, possessive passion, and I love it.

I lick my fingers again, savoring her taste, and moisten my pinkie finger as well. I dive right in and she makes a moan of painful pleasure that tells me to be careful, but to proceed.

Carmilla’s frustrated whimpers is at odds with my teasing, even-tempo rhythm of my deft fingers.

“Still, kitten, still.” She moans at the nickname. “I think that’s what I’m going to call you when I Top you. Do you like the name, kitten?”

“Yes. Please.. Pleasepleaseplease…”

I rotate my hand so that my thumb can press and play with her clit as I have four fingers working in and out of her, and I grin as I see her thighs clench and shake from what I’m doing.

I change up the order between circles and flicking the clit and pressing down on it over the hood, and I find the technique that works best pretty quickly.

“Oh god Laura, god, please let me…”

I slow down, wickedly enjoying her frustration.

“Let you what, *kitten*?”

I look down at her as she needs me, all thought evaporating as her body tightens and
clenches...ready, reaching... pining for release.

“I want... I need...” She’s almost at a loss for words. I increase the pressure and speed to match her wanton desire and she’s left breathless.

“Let go, kitten,” and she does, loudly, her orgasm convulsing against my fingers as it tears through her body, and as she begins to still I pause my sweet torture on her as she starts to come back.

That’s when start flicking her clit again and lets out a strangled cry. “FUCK.”

“Oh, should I stop, kitten?” I dive three fingers in and curl it hard on her G spot. I remember her doing this to be before and I want to pay her back in full.

“NO PLEASE GO ON PLEASE...” She grunts more than whimpers as she climaxes again and I’m grinning from ear to ear. She lets go of her wrists as she’s spent, her entire body like cooked spaghetti.

I pull out and gaze down on my Mistress. “I love to watch you come, Carm.”

Her voice is full of wonder. “That was...”

“I know.” I lean over to kiss her, and she dazedly accepts it.

“I owe you a good, hard fucking... soon as I regain control of my limbs.”

“Of course, Mistress. Whatever you say, Mistress.”

She stands up and collapses into her leather chair by her desk, hair looking tousled in that ‘just-been-fucked-rotten’ look. She reaches out for me and pulls me into her lap.

She leans forward and kisses me, one hand at the nape of my neck, holding me just so, angling my head so she can kiss me deeply—with love, with reverence. I am lost in her kiss. She pulls away to draw breath, her eyes the color of a tropical storm.

She’s watching me intently. We’re face to face and I’m helpless, and though I’m fully dressed and she’s naked, this has to be one of the most intimate times we’ve had—me sitting on her lap, staring into her beautiful dark eyes. It makes me feel wanton, but also so connected to her—I am not embarrassed or shy.

This is Carmilla, my Mistress, my lover, and despite her being Fifty Flavors of Fucked Up—the love of my life.

“You smell like heaven, Laura.”

“So do you, Carmilla.” I nuzzle her again and inhale her Carmilla smell, which is now mixed with the heady scent of sex. I could stay wrapped in her arms like this, sated and happy, forever. It’s just what I need after a full day of her ‘family’, arguing, and bitch-slapping. This is where I want to be, and in spite of everything else going on, this is where I belong. Carmilla buries her nose in my hair and inhales deeply. I let out a contented sigh, and I feel her smile.

“I want to spend the rest of my life with you.” I confess, perhaps too soon.

“As do I; I want to grow old with you, too.” Her lips meet mine as if sealing a vow.

And we sit, arms clasped around each other, saying nothing.
I shuffle into the kitchen to see Kirsch and Tara having cereal for breakfast and I pout at the lack of eggs or freshly cut fruit being available. JP is fussing over the coffeemaker and rolls their eyes at me in a knowing way. They are back in a smart suit and matching vest, and now that I know what I’m looking for, I can see they are carrying the pistol and short sword on them.

“Sorry, Laura, you’re on your own for breakfast.” I nod at that and scavenge the fridge for breakfast cupcakes. As I spy some and pull them out, Tara shakes her head and points to the lucky charms box at the table.

“If I can’t have cupcakes for breakfast, neither can you, Aunt Laura.” Tara said, her feet swinging under her chair.

I’ve never wanted to scowl at a little girl before.

“I hope Perry recovers soon.” I say darkly as I grab a bowl and the gallon of milk from the fridge.

“Me too.” Kirsch says, “I loved her bacon pancakes.”

“Um, Kirsch?” JP begins to ask, “where’s Carmilla’s ‘soy milk’?”

“Should be in there, bro.”

“No, it’s empty. Got a key to LaF’s lab fridge?”

“Yeah.” Kirsch tosses the keys to Armitage. “It’s labeled.”

JP catches the keys in mid-air and makes their way downstairs as I pour the milk into my cereal and go put it away.

“Why does LaFontaine keep soy milk in a laboratory fridge?” Tara asks as I sit down.

“Oh, because it’s special soy milk.” I hedge.

“The scientist making cloned blood for a vampire keeps soy milk in their lab fridge?” She asked, sounding a lot older than eight years old. I shot Kirsch a why does she know that glare.

Kirsch shrugged at that. “What? She knows magic is real and I don’t like lying to my little sis.”

“Besides, Carmilla sounds like a vampire’s name. Fairy godmothers can be vampires.” Tara said as my Mistress zombie-walked into the kitchen and took a sip of her coffee, wearing her sunglasses indoors as if the light is too bright for her. Armitage sheepishly showed up a few seconds later and tried to add some of the blood to the coffee without being seen.

“So the munchkin knows I’m a vampire.” She peers over her sunglasses to look at Tara. “Who’s your favorite princess?”

“Merida. She fights her own battles and can shoot a bow!”

Carmilla cocked her head to the side, sizing up the girl. “I think we’ll get along great.”

Tara’s eyes lit up in excitement. “So can I have my own practice area?”
Kirsch looked like he had been put on the spot. The way Tara looked at him and back at Carmilla told me that she was going to win this.

“Tara, why can’t you just want a pony like other little girls?” He groaned.

“Brody, it’s 2014. I’ll just get a motorcycle.”

Carmilla grinned at that. “Tell you what, squirt. I’ll get you a real bow with suction-cup targets and you can use the white erase board I have in my office.”

Tara cheered as the doorbell rang, Carm called out to let Natalie in, and JP went to answer it.

“Um, it’s Nat and Detective Clark.” JP answered from the door.

“Hey, boss,” Kirsch interrupted, “I gotta take Tara and get her enrolled to school here, I’ll be back in an hour or so.”

Carm nodded, “take all the time you need.” She turned towards the entryway. “We’ll give you some privacy, Detective. Nat, my office.”

My meeting with Detective Clark is uneventful. She is less growly than the night before, maybe because she’s managed some sleep. Or maybe she just prefers working during the day.

“Thank you for your statement, Ms. Hollis.”

“You’re welcome, detective. Is Stevenson in police custody yet?” Because I’m pretty certain you all can’t handle him.

“No ma’am. If you think of anything, you can call me. Here’s my card.” She wrestles a card out of her wallet and hands it to me.

“Thank you, detective. I’ll do that.”

“Good day to you, Ms. Hollis.”

“Good day.” As she leaves, I wonder exactly what all James can be charged with. No doubt Carmilla won’t tell me. I purse my lips.

The doors to her office open as soon as the detective is gone. Damn vampire hearing; she probably eavesdropped the whole thing. I then recalled the internal security cameras in the apartment.

“She’s gone.”

My voice is wry, and she narrows her eyes, suppressing the amusement that sparks there momentarily. Are we going to fuck or fight? I take a precautionary step back. I must physically distance myself from her—from her smell, her look, her distracting body in that painted-on skirt around her delicious legs. She frowns as I move away.

“If something were to happen to you—” Her voice is barely a whisper.

“It didn’t,” I manage to say. “You gave me a silver bracelet and I used it like brass knuckles.”

She gave a lop-sided smile that faded instantly. “But it could have. I’ve died a thousand deaths thinking about what might have happened. I was so mad, Laura; mad at you, mad at myself. Mad at everyone. I can’t remember being this angry... except—” She stops again.
“Except?” I prompt.

“Once in your old apartment. When Sarah-Jane was there.” Oh. *I don’t want to think about that.*

JP stands beside me, and it give me the courage to speak up.

“Carmilla, we need to talk.”

“Later,” she urges softly.

“Carmilla, please. Talk to me.”

She sighs.

“About what?”

“You know. You keep me in the dark.”

“I want to protect you.”

“I’m not a child.”

“Oh, I am fully aware of that, cupcake.” She runs her hands down my body and cups my backside. Pulling me in, she brings her lips millimeters away from my own.

“Carmilla!” I scold. *Talk to me.*

She huffs in resignation as she releases me. I miss the contact with her, and find Armitage holding my hand for comfort. *Et tu, brute?*

“Ms. Karnstein, she stood up for me, and I must respectfully stand up for her as well.”

She sighs once more with exasperation. “What do you want to know?”

“Lots of things,” I mutter, as she makes her way to the couch.

“Sit,” she orders. *Some things never change*, I muse, *doing as I’m told*. Carmilla sits beside me, and leaning forward, puts her head in her hands.

“Armitage, kneel.” They comply as well, and I realize that this is extremely hard for her.

She sits up, tousles her hair with both hands, and turns to me, at once expectant and reconciled to her fate.

“Fine. Ask me,” she says simply. *Oh. Well, that was easier than I thought.*

I can’t think of what to ask. Instead, Armitage asks something that I wasn’t expecting.

“Why the additional security, Ms. Karnstein?” *What additional security?*

“James Stevenson is a bigger threat than we expected,” she said simply.

“Okay, yeah, we know he’s a vampire, but, I kicked his undead ass.” As I said that, JP gave a tiny flash of a smile.

“It’s not just that, but finding out he’s a vampire does actually bother me. It’s a Jubilee year.”
Natalie was standing nearby. “Lophii is supposed to get fed this year.”

“Well that explains why your ‘Mother’ was back in town, right?” I looked at her, and there was something else in her eyes. “What else aren’t you telling me?”

“The files on his computer… he was a fan of Ell’s ‘work’.”

“The torture porn? Do you think he knows her?”

“I don’t know yet. If they are in contact with each other though… I can’t even imagine what they might do together…”

“You didn’t ramp up the security when you first found out he was stalking us. So what happened? Why now?” Carmilla narrows her eyes at me.

“I didn’t know he was a vampire, or—”

“So James must be one of your siblings,” I prompt, “Maybe she lied about only making seven.”

“James isn’t family. William is, even Mattie is, but not him. Not even Ell.” She stops. “As Mattie told you, nobody but Mother could create vampires”—she shrugs —“the best I could do was mindless revenants, which Will still had control over. I was once told that we couldn’t use our powers against each other. But Lilita lied to me; Ell could control me. She was the one who not only buried me alive, but convinced Lilita that it was her idea.”

“Oh, shit.”

“Oh shit, indeed. Ell was more powerful than Mother, and now we’ve killed her, clearing her path to Father.”

“What does she want with-”

“I DON’T FUCKING KNOW!” Carmilla shouted back at me, eyes wild in despair. “Okay? I don’t fucking know what her game is, and whenever she’s in town, my girl gets killed!”

Whoa.

“You mean to say-”

“Eleanor, number three, lasted for ten years. Killed by Ell one day because her name was too similar. Patricia, number five, disappeared by the government and found dead later. Pretty certain she had something to do with that as Mother had us running some sort of scheme with Nikolai and Trovotzkoy. Mary, number seven, killed right after she forced me to dig my own grave and be buried alive. Barbara, number eleven, a supposed suicide during the war. Her body smelled of incense and lilies. And you saw what Ell did to Sarah-Jane.”

Her stare was distant, and JP and I exchanged a glance and were uncertain as to how we could respond.

"What about the others?" JP said quietly.

Carmilla shook her head, "life. Just... stuff happens." She frowned slightly before mentally moving on. “So, I’m not that scared of James, as you’ve been able to kick his ass. But Ell once made a hobby of finding those near me and killing them as some sort of twisted payback for Mother killing and turning her all because I onced loved her and wanted us to be together.”
I shrugged at that. “So we go and kill your crazy ex.”

Carmilla snapped out of whatever trance she was in and looked at me like I was crazy. “Have you not been hearing what I’ve been saying? She was more powerful than *Momme Dearest*, and forced me to dig my own grave and hop into a coffin and tell her that I loved her as she buried me alive. No, if anything, I want to run, far away, and maybe avoid her for another century or two.”

She looks at JP and sees their resolve. “You too?”

“You ordered me to take out your Mother, and I recall how she manipulated me and made me use my dead name.”

“Well, we had the drop on her. Kinda.”

Armitage shrugged at that. “I won’t lie and say that I wasn’t scared, but I still did my job. After shooting her directly in the head and she was still moving? I was terrified. Grabbing the incendiary grenade was pure improvisation on my part, Ms. Karnstein.”

“We’re not running away, Mistress.”

Carmilla took a deep breath and shook her head incredulously. “Alright, you only die once.”

“What did you mean earlier, when you said ‘or’?” I ask.

“Or?”

“Something about James.” She looks at me.

“You don’t give up, do you?”

I shake my head. “Give up? I want to be a journalist. So, tell me. I don’t like being kept in the dark. You seem to have some overblown idea that I need protecting. Do you think I can’t handle whatever it is you won’t tell me, Carmilla? I’ve had your stalker ex-sub pull a gun on me, your pedophile ‘mother’ harass me—and don’t look at me like that,” I snap when she scowls at me.

“Anyway, James. What about him?” Carmilla looks away briefly and gazes at me, her expression unreadable. Sighing, she puts her head back into her hands and rubs her temples.

“James’ bite on Perry reminded me of the plague.” My mind reels as I try to absorb this information.

“So, James’ ‘vampire power’ is a plagued bite? That seems like a crap power to have.”

“Yeah, but that’s not all. My family, my *birth* family, died of a plague. The whole city did.”

Oh.

“You think that James killed your birth family? That would mean he was turned around the same time as you. Why wouldn’t you know about him?”

“Well it was either him or Mother. But killing an entire city was never her style. And if I’m right, I know who he is and why Lilita abandoned him. He’s Jodous, my brother-by-birth.”

“Oh. So he *is* your brother.”

“He’s not family. You all are.” She leaned over and kissed both JP and myself on the forehead.
My mind went back to the discussion with Lana/Mattie/Matska.

“Wait, what about Iliana? You didn’t have a sister, too, did you?”

She shrugged at that.

“I barely recall having a brother; it was over 300 years ago and…” Carmilla shook her head. “My birth family and the town they lived in was slaughtered by my brother. And he seems really interested in my ex.”

I grimaced at that. “That’s not creepy at all.”

Carmilla shook her head at that. “So, James has a thing for mass murders and he might hook up with my ex, who became so powerful she could manipulate me to bury myself and convince Mother that it was her idea. And it’s the year that Father is supposed to be fed. And my humans want to fight this.”

JP looked distantly. “The alternative is letting that thing become even more powerful and unleash the Old Ones. We’ve got the Brotherhood of Paracelsus coming, right?”

Nat nodded nervously. “They should have already made it here; but something may have happened. The Hohenheim was scheduled to arrive with two of his top Wardens.”

I scrunched up my face at that. “What’s the difference between an Adept and a Warden?”

“I know my stuff and can hold my own in a fight. Wardens can end fights instantly, not to mention walk through the realms if needed. That’s what’s got me worried; if they aren’t here yet, something is up.”

Kirsch and Tara return, and he’s gotten her a new backpack full of school supplies and she’s ready for the new year at school. It’s almost surreal to see him in a pseudo-father role.

Around four in the afternoon, Kirsch ushers back in Detective Clark, who looks more bad-tempered than usual. She always seems to look bad-tempered. Perhaps it’s the way her face is set.

“Ms. Karnstein, Ms. Hollis, thank you for seeing me.”

“It’s Ms. Hollis I wish to see,” Clark says pointedly to Carmilla and to Kirsch stationed beside the door. Carmilla glances then nods almost imperceptibly at Kirsch who turns and leaves, taking Tara with him.

“Anything you wish to say to me you can say in front of her.” My voice is, for once, cool and businesslike. Detective Clark turns to me.

“Are you sure you’d like your... girlfriend... to be present?”

I frown at her, almost wanting to correct her and say she’s my Mistress.

“Yes, ma’am.” Wow. I’ve never been ma’am ed before in my life.
“I’d like her to stay.” Carmilla sits beside me, radiating tension.

“All right,” murmurs Clark, resigned. She clears her throat. “Ms. Hollis, Mr. Stevenson maintains that you sexually harassed him and made several lewd advances toward him.”

I almost burst out laughing, but put my hand on Carmilla’s thigh to restrain her as she shifts forward in her seat.

“That’s preposterous,” Carmilla splutters. I squeeze Carmilla’s leg to silence her.

“That’s not true,” I state calmly. “In fact, it was the other way around. He propositioned me in a very aggressive manner, and he was fired.”

Detective Clark’s mouth flattens briefly into a thin line before she continues. “Stevenson alleges that you fabricated a tale about sexual harassment in order to get him fired. He says that you did this because he refused your advances and because you wanted his job.”

I frown. Holy crap. James is even more delusional than I thought.

“That’s not true.” I shake my head. “I’ve already quit that job to go back to school!”

“Detective, please don’t tell me you have driven all this way to harass Laura with these ridiculous accusations.” Detective Clark turns her steely blue glare on Carmilla.

“I need to hear this from Ms. Hollis,” she says with quiet restraint. I squeeze Carmilla’s leg once more, silently imploring her to keep her cool.

“You don’t have to listen to this shit, Laura.”

“I think I should let Detective Clark know what happened.” Carmilla gazes at me impassively for a beat then waves her hand in a gesture of resignation. Without saying anything like ‘vampire’ or ‘bite’…

“What Stevenson says is simply not true.” My voice sounds calm, although I feel anything but. I’m bewildered by these accusations and nervous that Carmilla might explode. What’s James’ game? “Mr. Stevenson accosted me in the office kitchen one evening. He told me that it was thanks to him that I had been hired and that he expected sexual favors in return. He tried to blackmail me, using e-mails that I’d sent to Carmilla, and seemed unwilling to accept the fact that I am in a relationship with her. I didn’t know Stevenson had been monitoring my e-mails, which, by the way, is creepy. He’s delusional—even accused me of being a spy sent by Carmilla, presumably to help her take over the company. She didn’t know that Carmilla had already bought a controlling interest in Channel Three. Heck, I didn’t even know when I applied.”

I shake my head as I recall my distressing, tense encounter with James.

“In the end, I-I took him down.” Clark’s eyebrows rise in surprise.

“Told him down?”

“My father is a cop, and sent me to Krav Maga at age eight. Stevenson… um, touched me, and I know how to defend myself.” Carmilla glances at me with a brief look of pride.

“I see.” Clark leans back on the sofa, sighing heavily. “He looks like he was recently beat up. As in, again. You might need an alibi and a lawyer.”
“Have you spoken to any of Stevenson’s former PAs?” Carmilla deflected almost genially.

“Yes, we have. But the truth is we can’t get any of his former assistants to talk to us. They all say he was an exemplary boss, even though none of them lasted more than three months.”

“We’ve had that problem, too,” Carmilla murmurs. Oh? I gape at Carmilla as does Detective Clark.

“What?” I ask her, surprised.

“My security chief. She’s interviewed Stevenson’s past five PAs.”

“And why’s that?”

Carmilla gives her a steely glare.

“Because my girlfriend worked for him, and I run security checks on anyone I get a bad gut feeling about.”

“I see,” Clark murmurs. “I think there’s more to this than meets the eye, Ms. Karnstein. We are conducting a more thorough search of his apartment tomorrow, so maybe something will present itself then. Though by all accounts he hasn’t been there for some time, judging from the empty refrigerator.” Or he doesn’t eat food...

“You’ve searched already?”

“Yes. We’re doing it again. ALS, electrostatic dust lifts, the whole nine yards this time.”

“You’ve still not charged him with the attempted murder of Natalie and myself?” Carmilla says softly. Wait, what?

“We’re hoping to find evidence in regard to the bombing of your office, Ms. Karnstein. We need more than a partial print, and until we get more facts that implicate him, we cannot fingerprint him to build a case.” Why is Carm trying to accuse James of the bombing?

“Is this all you came down here for?”

Clark bristles. “Yes, Ms. Karnstein, it is, unless you’ve had any further thoughts about the note?” Note? What note?

“No. I told you. It means nothing to me.” Carmilla cannot hide her irritation. “And I don’t see why we couldn’t have done this over the phone.”

“I think I told you I prefer a hands-on approach.” Clark remains stony faced and unfazed by my Mistress’ bad temper.

“Well, if we’re all done, I have work to attend to.” Carmilla stands and Detective Clark follows her cue.


“Can you believe that cur?” Carmilla explodes.

“The Detective?”
“No. My brother, Stevenson.” she shuddered at the mention of ‘brother’.

“No, I can’t.”

“What’s his fucking game?” Carmilla whispers through gritted teeth. “Be a little *bitch* and try poaching my black swan?!”

“Black swan?”

“Blood donor. Sorry, I’m just-” She runs a hand through her hair in frustration. “And if Ell is in town, and Lophii is to be fed this year… what’s his endgame?”

“I don’t know. Do you think Clark believed me?”

“Of course she did. She knows Stevenson is a fucked-up asshole.”

“Insight?” She nodded to confirm.

“But she doesn’t suspect he’s a vampire, thank goodness,” Carmilla huffs, “The last thing we need is another Burning Times.”

Unexpectedly she grins and sits down beside me, pulling me into her arms.

“Don’t think about that fucker. Let’s go see Perry at the hospital and tell her that we let JP do the laundry.”

“That’s the quickest way to get her out of a hospital bed.” Carmilla gazes at me, and for a moment, I think she’s going to kiss me. “Oh, so what’s it like being a Fairy godmother?”

I smirk playfully as Carm rolls her eyes at that.

“Kirsch has himself a great kid there.”

“You’re pretty much going to be her new stepmother.” I say, shrugging into her embrace. “Explaining the birds and bees, how to take care of her ‘monthly visitor’…”

“Oh, is that the new term you humans are using?” Carmilla said in mock disgust.

I cocked an eyebrow at her. “Do vampires even have periods?”

Carmilla sighed at that. “Yeah, I’ve had like, four thousand in my lifetime. And no, it’s not drinkable blood.”

“Oh, EW!” I shot out of her embrace and looked disgusted at her.

“What? I’m a vampire, drinking blood is kinda the thing we do…” Carmilla said jovially. “What?”

“I just… three hundred years of periods. What did you use back then?” I asked incredulously.

“Rags. It was like the dark ages. When I got out of the coffin in 1918, the nurses figured out to use the medical bandages to help deal with the bleeding. The technology has gotten a lot better to the point now I use Diva cups… less harsh to the environment.”

Nat spoke up them. “Do you recall the first advertisements for tampons in the 1930’s? They literally had to explain that it was endorsed and approved by the AMA because women thought it was dirty.”
“Oh I used Nunaps! Do you remember how hard they were to remove?” Carmilla lit up as she remembered a time before World War II.

“I was a ‘Moderne Woman’ girl. It seems classy yet exotic.”

I looked at the pair of them. “Should I leave you two alone so you can wax poetic about the good old misogynistic days?”

“Sorry, creampuff, let’s go visit Perry.”
Daggers and Cigars

Chapter Notes

I must tell you all about the end of an era. One Step Left, my Narcissa/Hermione fic, has reached an end after 8 years. I cannot believe how long it took me to write it, but it is definitely novel-length and a culmination of so many things I've always wanted in a story.

Armitage took us into the campus hospital, eyes darting every way as in on high alert.

“Carm, what’s the added security?”

She shrugged as she also glanced around, making me feel jittery. “I’ve added motion and thermal cameras to our home and my workplace. Hired an outside security agency to test what I have now. And I don’t want you out alone–”

“Carmilla, no!” I flatly rejected her overprotectiveness, “You’re not my father!” I sounded petulant, and it bothered me.

“-unarmed.” She finished. “Geez, Laura, daddy issues much?”

“Sorry,” I apologized, “I thought you were going to assign me full time bodyguards outside of JP.”

“I know you can handle yourself, tiny terror, but I want you wielding something a bit more lethal than allergy-inducing silver.”

We made our way to where Perry was laid up, and it dawned on me how unusual it was for a university to have a fully-fledged hospital on-site.

“Hey boss, Perry looks like she’s out of the woods now. Thank you.” They nodded to both Carm and to Natalie.

Perry turned her head slightly, and I could see her neck was now looking blue and bruised rather than black and dead.

“Just tell me that I won’t become a vampire; I’m pale enough already.” She joked weakly, and we all chuckled at her strength at facing her own mortality.

“You should be fine; only Mother could truly turn anyone.”

LaFontaine pointed a thumb at Carmilla. “See? I told you this wasn’t like her V-cells; this was a completely different strain, meaning that it could be completely cured when caught in time.”

I looked at her neck and remembered how fast it turned black.

“That was definitely a mystical malady of some sort.”

LaF shook their head at that. “No such thing as paranormal; just stuff that science hasn’t figured out yet.” The pulled out a small vial of something and I turned green realizing it was a skin sample.
“Put it away, LaF.” Perry scolded gently.

“What? I’m going to grow a culture from-”

“Love, don’t show them the rotting flesh you took from me.”

“But it's neat.”

Perry decided to change the subject. “So we have a new person with us?”

Armitage nodded at that. “Tara Kirsch. Brody’s little sister. I’m amazed she's handling the loss of her mother so well.”

“She's still in denial. She can say the words and understand what's happened, but deep down she's going to need time to accept it.” I replied.

“How long did it take you?” I heard the concern in Carmilla’s voice. I knew then that she'd do anything to protect her god-daughter, and I entertained the idea of us having a family together. A vampire holding a newborn and bottle-feeding her?

“Hey, Earth to Laura…” LaF called out gently.

“Oh, sorry. It took me a few months. I had a counselor at school help me through it. She was the first ex-wife.”

“I remember psych 101,” Carmilla added, “children who lose a parent early become over-achievers, have a hard time making personal attachments, and might engage in risky behavior or alcoholism.”

I gave her a telling look. “Or we over compensate and date cougars .”

“Hey, I'm a panther.” Carmilla tried to play it off. “Okay, other than our 305-year age gap, I'd like to think I'm not robbing the cradle.”

“Is there anything we can do to help Tara have a normal childhood?” Perry asked.

“When I was human, it was common for the wealthy to marry girls half their age, as well as wealthy women to have younger suitors as lovers.” Carm shrugged. “I think we can enroll her in some sort of extracurricular hobby with others her age.”

“Well, she likes science and you've promised her an archery set. I really hope she doesn't mix the two.” I inject, watching LaFontaine go from excited to horrified.

“Yeah, let's get her into some sport or martial art.” Carmilla decided.

“I think we should ask her,” I remember how everyone tried to make choices for me and I hated it. “By the way, she figured out Carmilla is a vampire. So don't try to fib about your injury, Perry.”

“I thought we were trying to give her a normal childhood!” Perry matched LaF’s horror-stricken face.

“Yes, but Wilson apparently doesn’t believe in lying to her. Besides, she seems cool with having a vampire godmother. We’re just going to make certain the dungeon stays locked.” I blushed as Carmilla said that. “Now, when am I getting my housekeeper and personal chef back?”
“Well, the doctors here are surprised to see how quickly-”

My phone went off, and I apologized to the group as I went into the hallway to take the call.

“Hello?”

Jordan’s voice spoke up excitedly. “Laura? I hoped to see you last weekend; there was this women-top’s only class on rope suspension that I was hoping to ask if I could take you to… if that’s okay with Christina.”

“Um, who?”

“Your Mistress.” She reminded me. “It’s mostly a learning, educational setting so it wouldn’t be like doing actual scenes.” My mind went back to seeing her and Lady Hotpants do the Bellamione interrogation scene. That was really intense and totally not my thing.

“Oh, I uh, would have to ask her.” I hedged uncertainly. I might enjoy rope suspension, but I’m not certain how experienced Carmilla is and if she’d let me get tied up by someone else. At least Jordan’s a submissive…

“Well, that’s not why I called. My group, the girls of Leather, will be serving during the Cigar Social at the convention this weekend. If you were interested in joining, this would be a good time to do some volunteering.”

“Um, maybe. I’m starting school soon, how much time does the club take up?”

“All of our stuff is on the weekends, no more than a few hours. And the cigar service is for tips that go towards funding the local LGBTQ homeless shelter.”

“Oh, that’s great! Wait, what convention lets Leather girls do cigar service?” I bet JP could teach me what that entails.

“The Styria Leather and Bootblack convention. I could have sworn that I told you about it during Karaoke.”

“I’m sorry, I must have been distracted by the singing.” I apologized. “So it’s this weekend?”

“Yeah, check local events on FetLife for the details. I sent you a message, too.”

“I haven’t been online lately; Mistress took all of us out on a quick cruise and I quit my job.”

“Okay, well, dress code for serving is black skirt and red top. I’ve got this retro, 1920’s candy-and-cigarette girl outfit to go with our trays.” Jordan seems excited over the outfit.

“I’m certain there’s something in the submissive’s closet I can wear. Mistress keeps it pretty well-stocked.”

“You have your own play room AND she has a closet of clothing for you? No wonder you quit your job.” She chuckled at that.

“Oh yeah, she keeps me chained up between corporate conference calls.” I joke back.

“Well, I hope to see you there. Ms. Grey and JP, too.” She hung up and I grinned, flipping over to the internet on my phone to see how much it would cost to go to the kinky convention. It would be a nice thank-you for the cruise, and a final hurrah before school resumes.
Blood… There was blood everywhere. I was in the middle of the room as blood rose up all around me, filling the room I was in until it began to drown me and I was standing on the tips of my toes, and the thick blood was slippery and cresting in small waves as I kept struggling to breathe. Above me there was this light.

The light was unnatural… Nothing should shine like that. Like… the rotted heart of the world.

I screamed for help, but nothing came. The light began to fade and eclipse behind two girls holding hands. One seemed familiar while the other scared me. I couldn’t see their faces as I fought to breathe.

“HELP ME!”

“Why? You killed Mother.”

“I haven’t killed anyone!” The ocean of blood was choppy and some got into my mouth and I fought to spit it back out.

Recognition hit me as Carmilla stood by the girl’s side, unable to speak.

“CARMILLA!”

“She won’t respond to you; she’s mine now. She’s back where she belongs.”

The blood continued to rise, and I had to fight to stay afloat in the blood as it hit me who she was.

It was Ell, Carmilla’s first.

“Father is Hungry.” Carmilla said flatly, as if under some sort of spell.

The blood all around me sank for half a second as I realized that there must have been a trap door somewhere as something thick and massive wrapped around my ankles and pulled me under, the Light above me growing bright at it grew hungrier and hungrier.

“Laura! It’s just a dream!” I shot my eyes open to see JP next to me, concern on their face.

“BLOOD! THERE… Dream?” I asked, looking around my dorm room as a visibly agitated Betty was trying to bury herself under her pillow.

“Shutup!” she said into the pillow, “Some of us didn’t sleep much last night.”

JP nodded his head towards her. “Someone stayed up late with their boyfriend.”

I sat up, panicked and sweating. I embraced Armitage and they were automatically comforting me.

“It’s okay, Laura. It was just a dream.”

It really didn’t feel like a dream, though.

“Why are we here?” I asked, still confused at what was going on.

“Rehearsal for New Student Orientation.”

“Right!” I hopped out of bed, looking for my supplies. “Have you seen the ceremonial dagger?”

Armitage cocked one eyebrow up at me. “Your ceremonial WHAT?”
“It’s just for formalities when you have to abide by the Student Handbook and the Silas Charter.” I shrugged their concern off.

“Okay, Laura, I didn’t go to college but I am pretty certain that most colleges don’t require ceremonial daggers as part of the new student orientation.”

I had to think about it for a few minutes and ask myself if this was normal or not. *It was weird to see a university refuse any and all transfer students, wasn’t it?*

“Well, if I’m not there, someone else has to do the initiation for my dorm floor, and I’ve always wanted to be the one putting on the blindfolds there.”

“Yeah... I’m coming with you.” Armitage said, checking the magazine clip in their pistol.

“Pretty certain you can’t get past the wards. I’ll be safe once I’m inside. Just... protect the perimeter.” I said, kissing their cheek and making them blush.

"Call me if there's anything strange, okay?" They asked as I put a pair of pop tarts into the toaster and went to start my makeup.

"Of course." I rolled my eyes at their cautious nature, but glad to have their support if needed.

I decided to check my desk drawer in case I put it there, and there it was... next to Sarah-Jane's gun. I recognized it as a Ruger 9mm as I ejected the magazine and worked the slide to clear the chamber. Looking at the bullet that popped out, I was surprised that she had one in the chamber and a full magazine.

What really surprised me was the bullet itself. The jacket was silver rather than copper, and the hollow-point appeared to be sealed in with a bit of metal solder that would easily melt from the temperature of firing the bullet. Curiously, I shook the bullet and wondered if it was filled with something designed to make this even more lethal to vampires.

*I will need LaFontaine to help me dissect this, or fire it at a range and then test what was inside.*

Carmilla's words came back to me; that she wanted me armed just in case. I decided to text my dad to help me figure out the right kind of concealed carry harness that would work for someone my size, knowing that he'd be proud that I'm taking the initiative on this.

For now, I put the Ruger back into my drawer and locked it, hoping that I'd never need to use it while JP and Kirsch were around.

After the rehearsal, I met back up with JP and was excited to get back and tell Carmilla about snagging the tickets for us to go to the kinky convention this weekend. I got her to promise me to clear her schedule for the whole weekend as I looked over the brochure online for the various classes.

"So what's the big surprise, Laura?"

"Not telling you yet; you get to hear it when Carmilla does." They drove us back to Carm's place and were greeted by an exuberant Tara and a proud Kirsch.

"I hit the bulls-eye three times today!" She motioned pulling back a bow with a look of enormous concentration. Perry was re-arranging the kitchen in her absence, quietly muttering about how quickly it all got disorganized.
"That's great! I bet you're going to love hunting with..." I choked up, forgetting that Danny had died to save her fellow Summer Sisters.

"Who did you lose?" Tara asked, understanding the look on my face with acute clarity.

"A friend of mine; Danny Lawrence. She was a good woman and hunter."

"Was she your girlfriend before Carmilla?"

I shook my head. "I liked her, but nothing happened. She died a warrior."

"Was she special?"

"I'd like to think so; she was the leader of the Summer Society."

"Oh! She's the werewolf. I didn't think werewolves used bows."

I chuckled at the mental image of a wolf trying to string a bow. "No, but in her human form... she was apparently the best. I'm looking for Carmilla, have you seen her, Tara?"

"In her office with her sister. She didn't want to be disturbed."

My heart was pumping ice-water through my veins.

Elladora was here.

I was slamming the doors to her office open, ceremonial blade in my hand as a surprised Mattie and Carmilla lounged with blood martinis in their hands.

"Nobody expects the sapphic inquisition." Carmilla dead-panned, making Mattie grin into her glass.

"Come in, Laura. And please lower the blade." Mattie said once she regained her composure.

"I uh.. I thought..." I stuttered, feeling terribly embarrassed.

"You thought barging in here with a weapon out would help you against a vampire with supernatural reflexes?" Carm asked.

"I thought it was Ell." I replied sheepishly.

"Oh, the one who can make you slit your own throat as fast as look at you." Carmilla replied.

"See, that's exactly why I'm saying we need to deal with it now!"

"You knew James was a vampire but didn't do anything even while my girlfriend was working right under his nose!"

"I wasn't about to tip my hand. Besides, Laura took care of herself it seems."

"And now James is in the wind and my housekeeper got bit!"

"All the more reason to not play with kid gloves, little sister. We know what he wants-"

"We actually don't know that for certain. And if he's in league with Ell, then that's not just a no, but a hell no."
"What are we talking about?" I ask the pair of them.

"Using you as bait to lure him out." Mattie replies, matter-of-fact. "For some reason, he either wants you for himself or to punish Mircalla here. Seeing as he was abandoned by Mother while the rest of us lived as a semi-functional family, I think he's out to punish her."

"I'll do it." I replied automatically as Mistress and JP both turned angry eyes to me.

"No you won't!" Carmilla snapped, and I saw genuine fear in her eyes. "I trust you to defend yourself, and to have JP alongside you, but walking into a trap I forbid."

"You can't control me like that, Carm." Bitterness was in my voice. I wanted - needed - a way to strike back, to be helpful, and she was trying to stop me.

"No, Ell can. And that's why I say no." She blinked away tears that left Mattie looking at her in fascination. "I can't lose you."

"Mir, you're crying." Mattie said softly.

"Yeah, shut up." Carm wiped her eyes dry. "I'm quite attached to my black swan."

"I get that, it's just..." She seemed at a loss for words as she lifted her martini glass and drained it, wincing slightly. "It's not as good cold, but you've done it. We'll never have to hunt to survive again."

"I'll have LaFontaine send you 10 liters; keep you from robbing the blood bank."

"Expired blood is still blood, sis. Please heed my warning about James; even Mother didn't want him for a reason. I'll call you soon." She replied carefully as Brody escorted her out. The stress level in the room downgraded significantly.

"So what's the sitch, cupcake?" Carmilla asked as Perry knocked on the door to her office.

"Sorry to interrupt this way, but I can't clear my throat without pain. Or talk much." Perry said with a wince.

LaFontaine was by her side and spoke up for her. "Are you two staying for dinner?"

Before I could say yes, Carmilla already nodded to confirm. "If there's any leftovers, pack it up with them to stock her mini-fridge. She can't subsist on pastries and cupcakes."

Perry nodded her thanks while LaF replied again for her. "Glad to be back. And I think Tara's pretty awesome." Perry nodded in agreement again as LaF helped her back to the kitchen. I tilted my head a bit and realized that she was shuffling away with a bit of a limp.

"Is she okay?" I asked, not fully understanding the injuries Perry had.

"She will be, she's got some massive bruising and the pain meds leave her a bit dizzy." Carmilla's eyes were distant and she forced herself to come back. "She's essentially stuck here out of health and safety reasons; so that's at least one worry off my plate."

I heard the unsaid 'please don't become another one' in her tone.

"So, this weekend, there's a convention I want to take you two to... if that's okay."

"Will I be expected to dress up? I don't speak fluent Klingon, by the way." It took a second before I
realized she was joking.

"Jordan told me about a kinky convention and boot black thing; apparently there's a title contest and everything."

Armitage's eyes lit up at that.

"Oooh, it's been awhile since I got a can of Huberd's." As JP said that, a spark of recognition crossed Carmilla's face.

"They are still around? I used that for my uniform shoes in the war." Carm said as she reflected on a memory decades before I was even born.

"So, there are classes, a Top/bottom track over types of kinky play and a Master/slave track for the lifestyle and D/s dynamics. I kind of wanted to volunteer with Jordan and the girls of Leather for the cigar social. It's a fundraiser for a good cause, too." I hedged, hoping they would want to join me since security would have to be raised.

"I'll want Natalie there as backup." As soon as she said it, I was jumping for joy.

"Thank you Mistress! I'm looking forward to doing cigar service."

"Oh, you're doing that? Armitage, get the kit by my humidor. And bring me one of the Hondurans." JP went over to a cabinet and pulled out a few items as well as an unmarked cigar.

"You know how to serve cigars?" I was surprised at that.

"All part of the ruse of being security with the Summit. Now, there are different ways to prepare a cigar; either you punch or cut it. It's usually self-explanatory, if the tip is pointy, you use a cutter. I have a guillotine style that was big back then. Now the more preferred style is rounded, and there are punch-cutters that press a hole in the end for smoking. Whichever method you use, it serves the same purpose; to get a good draw."

"Seventy percent humidity, Ms. Karnstein." JP said as he presented the cigar at her left side, similar to how a Sommelier would present a bottle of wine.

She took the cigar and smelled it, turning it to show me the end. "So here you see the rounded end? You'd use a punch for it." JP held the punch and pantomimed how to cut into the rounded end.

"Armitage, close the door and open the window please."

"But before you do that, you find out how they would like it lit; historically, there were cigar matches that might leave a small whiff of sulfur if you didn't let it burn for a second or two beforehand. Even worse was cedar sticks; it guaranteed no flavor being imparted, but they could be impossible to light at times. I prefer a modern torch, it gets plenty hot and there's almost no taste, even with my vampire senses."

"What about a plain old lighter?" I asked.

"Those would take forever, and some uncultured swine swear by zippo lighters. That doesn't just impart a smell, but the taste of the zippo fluid itself. I don't even have one in my kit. Now, you see how JP presented the cigar at my left? I'd check it to see the wrapping and overall moisture. They would then ask...?" She trailed off as to challenge JP to know the answer.

"How they would like it punched or cut, toasted or not, and how they would like it lit?" They answered as a question, hoping they got it right.
"Pretty much. Also to know if they want you to light it or let them. JP, please do the honors. Punched, toasted slightly, and use the torch." As JP began to comply, they punched the end with a deft twist of the wrist, brushed the end of the cigar with the torch to dry it slightly near the end, and stopped before putting the cigar into their mouth.

"Shall I draw on it or would you like to, Ms. Karnstein?" Armitage caught themselves before assuming they should just do it. Mistress politely took the cigar and drew in a breath through it, judging that the draw was fine.

"Laura, take a puff of this so that you know what a decent draw should be. This is more of an issue when cutting; if you don't cut enough off, it is harder to draw through."

I put the cigar to my mouth and breathed in. It wasn't lit yet, and I was able to breathe through it just fine. It had a mellow flavor already and I knew that Carmilla wouldn't have a cheap or nasty-tasting cigar. I handed it back and JP used the cigar torch to light it, looking for a reflection in the small mirror to ensure the tip of the cigar was evenly lit.

The end was glowing red as the cigar was fully lit, and Armitage handed it over to Carmilla who looked way too natural with the cigar between her teeth and her feet up on her desk. It was assertive, Dominant, and relaxed all at the same time. It was, in a word, hot.

"So there was this one time, I just lit a cigar for Dean Martin, and he noticed that I was giving Angie Dickinson the once over." She pulled the cigar out of her mouth, blowing the smoke out without a care in the world.

"Who is Angie?" I asked. She grinned and took another long draw of her cigar before exhaling again.

"Gods, these are mild and potent all at once," Carmilla marveled, "So everyone remembers Marilyn Monroe, but Angeline had the better smile over Norma Jeane. Sammy and Frank knew which way I swung, but they decided to not tell Deano and see if he could figure it out himself."

"He didn't know how to handle it?"

"Worst case scenario, I'd get called names. But Frank didn't let anyone talk like that around him. So I wound up having this silent bonding moment as we checked out all the women in the area. He puffed on the cigar and gestured if I could use some small talk to bring a certain redhead over to the table so he could meet her. I think the term is now called 'wingman'. Problem was, or course, I kind of accidentally picked the girl up for myself as I was wearing a suit and hat and smoking cigars with the men-folk. I mean, I was setting off every lesbian's gay-dar that night.

"I come back with the dame in tow, and we're chatting amiably when Dean tries to say hello and expects the usual star-struck behavior. That's when she kept talking to me and he realizes the way she was touching me wasn't just a casual girl touch. That was the day he quit trying to use me to bring over women for him to talk to." She grinned with the cigar between her teeth, and it vaguely made me think of the roaring 20's and mobsters like Al Capone.

I had to ask.

"Did you know Al Capone?"

Carmilla shook her head. "He was Chicago, sweetheart. But tales of the roaring 20's will have to be for another time."
Carmilla was detained on an international business call, so she promised to join us at the convention as soon as she could while I drove with JP in Baby Smaug.

“How come we’re not in your Audi?” I wondered aloud as we made our way down the highway to the convention center.

Armitage shrugged. “Ms. Karnstein said that all of the vehicles needed routine maintenance, and it was the Audi’s turn. Oil changes and stuff, I guess.”

Something didn’t feel right about that. “Well what about mine?”

“Yours was in the shop for repairs. I’m guessing they did it then.”

_I glance at the dashboard, knowing Carmilla somehow installed Bluetooth here._

My cell phone rings, and I hit the button on the dash to connect the call through the speakers. Glancing up, I see the built-in microphone as I’ve never used the feature before in this car.

“Hey Laura.” My dad answered with a yawn, “Just got off of graveyard shift.”

“Don’t you have a deputy to do that for you?” I ask, shaking my head.

“Am I on speakerphone? Are you driving?”

“Yes I am, but don’t worry; I’m using bluetooth and it’s entirely hands-free.”

“Oh, I’ll have to thank your girlfriend for her consideration to your safety.” Dave mentioned off-handedly. “So I got your text and wanted to know why you needed a shoulder rig.”

“So I could carry for self-defense?” I asked.

“Sweetheart, you don’t own a gun. I know I trained you to shoot pistols, shotguns, and rifles… so why are you asking me for this?”

I had to think fast. “Oh. It’s for my bodyguard.”

“Uh-huh. And they can’t get their own because?”

_Armitage shot me a shut up glare. “Mister Hollis, this is JP Armitage, Ms. Karnstein’s Varlet. I’ve been temporarily assigned bodyguard duty for Miss Hollis here as my boss is undercutting the international jewelry industry by trying to market lab-created gemstones as a cheaper, ethical, environmentally-friendly alternative to mining. She may have angered a few African warlords in_
the blood diamond industry.”

“Oh. That’s brilliant and understandable. Does she have a vest yet?”

“I’ve repaired a dragonskin body armor and tailored it down to our size for her to wear.” Armitage replied, business-like.

“You’re my daughter’s size and her bodyguard? I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but-”

“I’m genderqueer, trained in the Bushido Path, and certified for concealed carry as a bodyguard when the situation arises.”

“But that won’t matter if a gunman-”

“I’ll take the bullet for her, and I know she’ll unholster her weapon before a second shot goes off.”

“You mean that, don’t you?”

“Of course.”

“Ah. Well, I take it you two are taking care of each other?”

I exchanged a look with JP as a moment passed.

“I’ll take that as a yes; Laura always wanted to fight her own battles. Well, if she respects and trusts you, then so do I. Laura, what type of gun do you have, and do I want to know how you got it?”

“Ruger LC9… 9mm, and no, not really.” I could hear him sigh at that.

“Okay, babygirl. You know I wanted to get you Glock 42, though.”

“I know. Thanks, dad.”

“I’m also going to want to talk to you some more about what all is going on there. JP, do you also go by only gender-neutral pronouns, or…?”

“I’m fine with male ones, Mr. Hollis.”

“I think I’m going to need to meet you, Mr. Armitage.”

Oh, crap.

“I look forward to it.” JP said politely, not understanding the dread on my face.

“Bye daddy.” I said in a fluster as I hung up.

“What just happened?”

“Dave knows. I don’t know how, but he knows.” He always knows!

“Knows what?”

“About us! He always knows!”

Armitage tilted his head in confusion. “There really isn’t an ‘us’, right? He knows you’re with Carmilla?”
I pull off of the highway at our exit and make our way to the parking garage of the convention center. “Yeah, but he also knows I’m pansexual, so…” My phone beeped once to alert me that a text message came in.

Yeah, real smooth, dad.

“...did he just text you?” JP reached for my phone to read the message out loud. “I hope you’re not cheating on Carmilla with your bodyguard.”

I grimaced at how I could reply to that. Admit that I do love them, but that it’s purely platonic?

“And reply sent.” JP sent, making me jerk the car as I panicked.

“No, you didn’t! What did you write?” I exclaimed, glad we were at the convention center and I was pulling into the parking lot.

“That you loooove me, you wanna daaaaate me, you wanna kiiiiiiiis meeeeee…” They quoted Miss Congeniality to me and I just rolled my eyes as I parked Baby Smaug and reached for the phone.

“Give me… my… phone!” I reach over and struggle for it, but they are too quick even in the cramped vehicle. I change tactics and grab their tie, pulling them in and kissing them.

Armitage was stunned at that and blinked a few times as I let go of the tie and took my phone back. He didn’t send a message after all.

I grinned, grateful that JP didn’t text Dave.

“So, what are you going to say?” JP asked.

“Well, obviously I’m not going to tell him Carmilla is my Mistress and you’re her other submissive…”

“And if he asks if there’s anything between us?”

“Uh… maybe that it’s complicated? I mean, I don’t have to answer to him.”

“You’ve never stood up to your dad before, have you?”

“Well, once. When I came out as pansexual and he confused it for bisexual. He’ll just have to settle for what I tell him and no more.” I replied, killing the engine as we got our bags out of the trunk.

“Do you think Ms. Karnstein will remember the toy bag? I packed one for her if she wants to play in the dungeon tonight.” JP asked wistfully.

“You want another flogging?” I asked, and it surprised me how easily that sentence came out of my mouth. Hey, would you like my girlfriend to beat you happy again?

“Dominants are coming from all over the area; I’m fairly certain she’ll want to show off somewhat.”

“That means showing us off, doesn’t it?” I took a breath, remembering the casual nudity I saw at the TNG night.

“Yeah, and you’ve got a great body to show off.” I shot them a curious look. “What? I’m asexual, not blind.”
I thanked them for the compliment as we made our way inside and checked into our hotel room for the weekend before getting our convention goodie bag with schedule.

Once we finished unpacking and got our wristbands and convention bags, JP started to flip through the booklet to read the schedule while I made a beeline for the vendor’s area.

“Laura, hold up, I’m staying with you, remember?” They called out as I realized I was feeling eager like a kid in a candy store.

“But… they have a selection of paddles and furniture here!” I pointed, “And books!”

“Yeah, hold your horses, Belle… let’s not buy anything without Ms. Karnstein here because she might already have it.” JP cautioned as we made our way into the room full of various vendors showing off their wares.

One of them near the end caught my attention. His short buzz cut made me think he was only in his 20’s, and I could tell by the leather collar around his neck that he was not just a salesman but someone in the community. It took me another second to realize that I was admiring his beyond 5 o-clock shadow that suggested a very well-trimmed beard that wasn’t fully grown in.

“Come on over, and bring your handsome friend, too.” He called out, and I picked up a trace of English accent.

When I got there, I saw the sign over his head said REGULATION.

“My Sir relented and said I could come as long as I made decent sales and kept the singing to a minimum.”

“Singing?” I asked.

“Uh, long story,” He hedged awkwardly. “I’m Hunter.”

“Oh, I’m Laura, and this is JP Armitage. They go by JP.” I drop the hint to use gender neutral pronouns to see if he rolls with it.

“Very glad you two stopped by today. So, are they… yours?” Hunter points to his collar to get the point across.

“Oh goodness no!” I exclaim, laughing nervously. “We’re both in service to the same woman who’s busy—”


“She’s correct; we both serve the same person.”

“Lucky woman to have a bubbly girl like you and such a snazzy dresser. Was that custom made for you, or just tailored? Because I would love to know where to shop.” Hunter made JP blush slightly at that.

“Some parts were simply tailored, but yes, custom designer. My former Sir liked making me dapper and handsome.”

“So what are you two looking for? A gift for your Mistress?”

I nodded, thinking that a present for Carmilla couldn’t hurt. Hunter made a sweeping gesture to his table as he pointed out the collars hanging on the wall behind him.
“Look at this stuff, isn't it neat?
Do you think that your collection's complete?
What can you get for the girl
The girl who has everything?

“Look at my shop, treasures untold
How many dildos can one toy chest hold?
Thinking of back home you'd think
Sure, she's got everything

“She’s got handcuffs and paddles a-plenty
She’s got floggers and ball-gags galore
You want weighted nipple clamps? I've got twenty!
But who cares? No big deal,
I’ve got more…”

He’s perverting The Little Mermaid, and I can’t help but keep listening...

“You wanna be seen, where the people are
You wanna impress them with your playing
Wobbling around on those…
What do I call 'em? Spreaders...

“Showing up plain doesn’t get you far
Dress to impress is my Joie de vivre
Turning all heads when you’re
What's that word again?
Fleek!

“Here we all talk, puppies will run
Tonight we’ll all be having some fun
Openly true
This could be you, may I help you?”

I applauded, impressed with his ability to sing on the spot.

He gave a slight nod in thanks. “I’m still working on the second half. My Sir can custom-build you anything out of leather.”

My ears perked up at that. “Can I get your card?” He whipped one out for me before I noticed it as my eyes were locked onto a metal ring that didn’t seem to have a latch anywhere.

“You’re looking at the Eternity Collar, aren’t you?” Hunter pulls it off the wall and hands it to me.
“You’ll need an allen wrench to take out the hidden screw to put it on and take it off.”

As I hold it, I wonder what kind of metal it is. “It’s pretty light. What kind of-

“Titanium. Hence you can wear it anywhere, and never have to take it off.” I look and am shocked at the 115 tag.

“Well, I guess a hundred and fifteen dollars isn’t much if it’s a lifetime item you never need to remove.” I say, mostly to myself.

“Laura, that’s in British Pounds.” As I calculate the amount, I realize that it’s much more
expensive than I originally thought.

“But this is more something that she’d be buying for you.”

JP gave a tight nod at that. “I don’t know if she’s the collaring sort.”

I turned to them, surprised. “She shelled out a lot for you, though.”

Armitage pointed to my bracelet. “You might be number sixteen, but I’m just her Varlet under contract.”

Was JP jealous? I hadn’t even thought that they might want a collar.

“Hey, there you two are.” Carmilla called out as she approached us as I returned the metal ring to Hunter.

“You must be the lucky woman. I’m Hunter.” Carmilla looked at the shopkeeper and I noticed her eyelids tighten for a split second before she smiled and shook his hand.

“Christina Grey. Regulation… aren’t you based in London?”

“Indeed! Have you visited us there?”

“Ages ago; back when The City of Quebec club was still the new bar on the block.”

He looked at her in confusion. “But that was-”

Carmilla cut him off. “-I’m older than I look. Did you get his card, Laura?”

“I did, Mistress.”

“Good. See you around, Hunter.”

The three of us were up in our hotel room for the weekend as I changed into the uniform for the Cigar Social that night. JP had picked out stockings with cuban heels, black three inch heels that made me Carmilla’s height, and a blood-red halter top to go with the black a-line skirt that only made it halfway to my knee.

Standing before a full-length mirror, I was hot.

Carmilla made a moan of appreciation from behind me while JP circled classes that we all wanted to go to.

“Ms. Karnstein, tomorrow I’d like to go to the service submissive course for 24/7 household duties, the traditional Japanese Tea Service, and the history of Leather.”

Carmilla looked towards them and nodded. “Any classes you’re not with Laura, I’ll have Natalie watching.”

“Oh yeah, where is she?”

“Embedded with convention security; apparently they had someone drop out and were offering free entry to a volunteer with security experience.” Carm shrugged.

“Does she have any?” I wondered.
“She can alter the natural elements themselves. Checking wrist-bands at the door isn’t over her head.”

“Laura,” JP began, “What do you want to do?”

“Um, Mistress, if it’s okay, I was going to join Jordan for a Shibari rope class. Is that okay?”

“Knock yourself out; if a Dominant wants to play with you, though, I’d like them to come to me.” She said, “If they don’t have the balls to come to me, then that’s an automatic no.”

“Thanks!” I replied, “I uh, also wanted to go to the polyamory workshop, to get to know how that works better, as well as the bootblack class.”

Carmilla smiled at that. “That doesn’t conflict with my schedule; I’m taking you to the cunt torture class. I was promised clothes pins.”

My thighs clamped shut at the thought of that. “You’re a cruel Mistress…” I whimper at the thought of clothespins pinching my sensitive parts.

She dropped her voice into a sensual purr. “But you like it.” A shudder went through me as I knew that I did indeed like her being cruel… in such wonderfully sweet ways.

When I got down to the pool area, Jordan was there with two other girls with matching trays and each of them had a cell phone with a square attached to it.

“Laura! So glad you could make it!” She exclaimed, reaching out to hug me. It was awkward with the tray in the way, but I was glad to be welcomed. She looked like she should be Dr. Girlfriend, complete with the pillbox hat. “Okay, turn…” I spun around for her to see my outfit.

“Yeah, Armitage made sure to pack the cuban seam stockings.” I reply, trying to contain my excitement.

“Oh yeah. Definitely a good choice.” I turned back to face her.

“Were you checking out my butt just now?” Her grin was all the answer I needed.

“Yeah, everyone will be. So, do you know how to do cigar service? Onyx can show you, or you can pair up with me or Sadistic Cupcake. We only have three trays for now.”

I turned my head and realized she meant the other two girls in her club. I already knew Sadistic Cupcake, and determined who Onyx was because of her skin tone. “Isn’t Cupcake a Dominant?”

“The girls of Leather doesn’t care what side of the slash you’re on in your own dynamics; we’re here for the community.” Jordan replied.

“I’ll stick with you; Carmilla told me the basics and I watched JP prep her a cigar.” I replied. “Which, by the way, I’m all yours for the shibari class if you’re interested.”

Jordan smiled at that. “Okay, cool.” Her smile fell slightly as her eyes and mouth widened in shock.

“What?”

“You meant to say Christina, right? Your Mistress is a freaking CEO!” She whispered hoarsely. “No wonder you have your own closet…”
“Oh shit. Yeah, Mistress doesn’t want people to know about that.”

“My lips are sealed, Laura.”

“Thank you.”

“So, tonight we’re ‘taking donations’ of at least $10 per cigar. These were all donated or purchased from a local cigar shop; they had a collection of overruns of decent quality that just didn’t get labeled and sold as the name-brand.”

“So these all kind of just fell off a truck?” I thought back to Carmilla’s mafia days and how they probably did the same thing all the time.

“Legally, but sure. Let’s go see if Christina wants a cigar.” As Jordan and I made our way to where my Mistress was chatting amiably with JP standing behind her like the well-disciplined servant he was, some Domly-Dom put his arm around me and asked if I’d like to sit in his lap and call him daddy.

Jordan paused, shocked at the guy’s action as I grabbed his pinkie finger and pulled it backwards, forcing him to let go and grunt in pain.

“There’s a class tomorrow on Manners and Respect. I hope you attend it.” I said through clenched teeth.

Carmilla was already standing, teeth bared as I let go of his finger and he recoiled.

“Geez, girl, I was paying you a compliment!” I smelled the alcohol on his breath more than I heard his slurring.

Sadistic Cupcake was delicately making her way over to intervene, but I knew I could handle this.

“Hey, dude, don’t touch what isn’t yours.” I said, using my best ‘disappointed mom’ voice. He apologized immediately and sat back down. I waved to Carmilla and to Sadistic that everything was fine, and they settled down.

“Okay, that was impressive.” Jordan said as we made our way over to the table where Carmilla was chatting with Lady HotPants.

“Mistress, would you like a cigar to help support a local homeless shelter?” I asked sweetly.

“I would never have pronounced that right. Thank you.” I say to her, looking at the pointy end of the cigar. I can’t punch this one.

Carmilla sat up straighter at that. “Montecristo for ten? That’s a steal.” Jordan handled the sale while I unwrapped and presented the cigar to Carmilla, who smelled it and looked like she went to heaven.

“Oh, this is definitely a robust cigar, as opposed to the one from last night. Go ahead and smell the difference.” I smelled it, and the only term I could think of was that the tobacco smell was… heavier. I went over the script in my head, knowing that there’s no need to ask if she wants it
punched or cut.

Before I could ask, Carm had her guillotine cutter out from her jacket pocket and handed it to me.

“Thank you, Mistress. Would you like your cigar toasted?” I asked, feeling the wrapper. It wasn’t dry and brittle, which I found out online means that it wasn’t cared for properly and will be a harsh smoke, and Carm nodded at that.

“Just a light toasting, after the cut please. And I don’t need any fancy v-cut to increase the draw.”

I held the cutter in my hands; it was a flat device that would cut from opposite directions, like scissors but only through the hole in the middle that exposed the pair of blades. I put my thumb and forefinger into the two holes on either end and worked the device, remembering the odd line from Robin Hood: Men in Tights.

_I take my machine here. I take your little thing, I put it through this hole, and then...
I nip the tip! Whose first?

_I giggle quietly to myself as I put the tip of the torpedo-shaped cigar into the guillotine and Jordan looks over.

“Better to cut too little at first than too much.”

“How will I know?” I ask.

“Try drawing through it.” I pinch my fingers together, cutting off the tip of the cigar and then put it to my mouth and try to breathe through it. It’s like breathing through a coffee-stirrer straw.

“Yeah, needs a bit more.”

“Uh, cupcake, you’re supposed to ask before putting your mouth on it. Your customer might not like that as they don’t know where your mouth has been.”

“Mistress, you know exactly where my mouth has been.” I replied as Sadistic Cupcake came over.

“Did I hear my name?” She sized up Carmilla and myself and shook her head slightly. “Everyone wanted to be called some form of ‘kitty’ in the scene, now is the new trend going to be ‘cupcake’?”

Carmilla arched an eyebrow at her. “Christina Grey; I didn’t know you name. I apologize; I’ve just always called Laura ‘sweetness’ and ‘cupcake’ because she tastes so damn good.”

Sadistic Cupcake mirrored Carmilla’s expression. “Oh, is that so? Was that an invitation?”

_Oh crap I think they are going to have some sort of Domme-off.

The sooner Carmilla has her cigar, the quicker their little tête-à-tête will end. I cut the end again, took a decent draw and realized it was good, and I took out my three-flame cigar torch, flipped the top open, lit it, and gently brushed the end of the blue flame over the cigar, rotating it all at the same time. Once that was accomplished, I saw the little mirror in the top as I put the cigar into my mouth and aimed the hottest part of the blue flames at the cigar and started puffing.

I expected some sort of weird flavor, but all I got was cigar. It was just as heavy as I thought it would be, but knew not to inhale as I was just puffing it. The tip of the cigar glowed red and I moved the lighter around a bit to make sure it was evenly lit, closing the lid to the lighter and presenting the cigar to my Mistress.
“Here you go, Mistress. The first cigar I ever lit.” She took it with a gracious nod and puffed on it.

“Good girl, now go out and make some money.” She dismissed me as Sadistic Cupcake handed Armitage a card to give to Carmilla. Jordan grinned at me and congratulated me on a job well done.

“Looks like you got the hang of this.”

I cocked my head back to Carmilla. “Do Dommes usually go after each other like that?”

Jordan nodded. “It’s all in good playful fun; we’re the minority here, and doubly so if you’re a femme lesbian. You only have to worry if they decide to conspire together against you.”

“Did Lady HotPants and Sadistic Cupcake do that with you?”

She nodded. “Oh yeah. Blindfolded and naked on a legit rack, and I knew it was going to be fire and wax play. It was when they started with the Team Rocket saying, you know, *Prepare for Trouble, and Make it Double?*

I laughed at that as we made our way around the cigar social, talking about our relationships with our Dominants and I wound up pairing with Onyx for awhile as she was in need of a runner to get change from the bar for cash transactions.

It turned out that Onyx was a single hetero submissive who totally identified with the girl dynamic. Apparently it was hard to find a black Daddy-Dom in this area, and she wasn’t necessarily into blatantly playing with interracial themes.

“It’s like nobody wants to offend me because of my race and heritage, you know?”

I nodded in understanding. “Does your family know you’re kinky?”

“Oh, hell no! If they knew I liked wearing collars and hung out with people who wanted to get flogged and beat, they’d think I went crazy.” She pointed out an older white gentleman a few tables away with a blonde girl in pigtails in his lap. “And the only Daddy Dom worth anything in this area already has himself a baby girl.”

It took me an extra second to change the expression on the girl’s face and pull the hair back into a no-nonsense bun to recognize Detective Clark!

“Have we sold him a cigar yet?” I asked eagerly.

“No, actually. Do you want-” I was already on my way over there, remembering the practiced script we made explaining the group and the fundraiser we’re doing.

“Hello Sir, would you like a-” Onyx caught up with me, seeming nervous.

“-cigar? Sure. Have any that are mild?” Detective Clark was in his lap and looked nothing like the emotionless mask I saw days ago. She seemed content in his arms with a pacifier hanging around her neck.

“Daddy, may I be excused?” She asked. Even her voice had a different intonation as she kissed his cheek.

“We have the Romeo and Julieta Reserve, I’m told that it’s pretty mild and only ten-” Detective Clark had her lips next to my ear and I heard her voice drop into her usual bossy self.
“-Come with me, please.”

I excused myself and let Onyx finish the order and followed the Detective to a secluded area. JP had left Carmilla’s side and was rushing to join me.

“I’m going to ask you to not disclose the fact that I’m-”

“-same here! Well, more for Carmilla’s sake.”

The Detective bit her bottom lip slightly as she nodded in understanding. “I knew you two were hiding something when I came over; I just didn’t think it was this.”

JP was beside me and his eyes lit up as he also understood who she was.

“Same for you? Don’t reveal my… muggle day job… around these people, nor let the Precinct know that on my off time, I unwind with age regression and having a Daddy?”

It sounded so odd to hear her say ‘having a Daddy’ with her no-nonsense, business-like voice.

JP and myself both nodded, and the Detective looked at my bracelet again and at Armitage’s poise.

“You’re her submissive, and the bracelet is a temporary collar?” I nodded as she looked to JP.

“You’re… I want to say slave, but that doesn’t seem right.”

They nodded once. “Certified bodyguard; we’ve had information that James was a serial harasser of his underlings. Once he got a whiff that Laura here was a lesbian, dating a wealthy CEO, I think that got under his skin.”

Not to mention he’s her brother from over three hundred years ago…

“Not to mention Laura here reeks of ‘virgin sacrifice’...” the Detective added, making JP stifle a laugh.

“I’m not…” I sighed, knowing that I was still pretty naive just three months ago. Has it really only been that long?

Detective Clark put her hand out to me, and I shook it politely.

“Call me Didi here.”

“I’m uh, still Laura.” Do I need a ‘scene name’?

“Glad to meet you, ‘Still Laura’.” She winked at me playfully as I rolled my eyes.

“You too, Didi.”

“So what’s your honest opinion about James?” She asked as I could see the gears turning in her head.

“He tried doing some of the Domly-Dom tricks on me that pale in comparison to my Mistress.”

“I haven’t met the guy in person yet; only have reports from other officers, all male, so I have to take their reports with a grain of salt.”

I started to replay the conversation we had before. “What was the note you mentioned before?”
“No idea; it took all of my resources just to find out it was written in Sumerian instead of Egyptian.”

She saw the look of surprise on my face. “So if it were James who left the note at the bombing of Carmilla’s office, how and why would he know that dead language?”

It took all of my acting ability to look clueless there.

“No idea.”

She nodded at that. “I need to get back into Didi’s headspace. Be careful around this creep.”

I thanked her and made my way back to my Mistress, who apparently used her vampire senses to eavesdrop on the conversation.

“That went well.” She said as cigar smoke rolled from her lips.

“Can you do smoke rings?” I asked, and she took another pull from the cigar and executed a perfect triplet of smoke rings.

“Cool.” JP said, “Ms. Grey, may I have your ash?”

People at the table turned to look at them in surprise. “Oh, you do ashplay? Damien!” Sadistic Cupcake called out to an eager-looking submissive 20-something blonde guy, who scurried over.

Carmilla arched an eyebrow at Armitage. “Sure. Kneel and present.” She turned in her seat as JP knelt before her, eyes looking up at her, head back, and mouth open.

“Um, what’s this?” I quickly add a “…Mistress?” at the end so as to not seem rude. Carmilla was totally enraptured in the moment and didn’t even seem to hear me.

Lady HotPants nodded to them. “So some people enjoy being a human ashtray; they like the power dynamic, or the heat of the cigar ash, or in this case, the potent tobacco high from consuming the ash.”

JP looked like he was chewing for a moment before sticking his tongue out.

Lady HotPants continued. “They just worked up enough saliva to help ensure they don’t get burned. It will be hot, and in more ways than one.” Carmilla brought down the cigar that had about an inch of burned ash that hadn’t fallen off yet, held it parallel to the ground, and rolled the tip gently on JP’s tongue. The exchange looked completely innocent and pornographic at the same moment, as an enraptured Carmilla gazed down at their Varlet who closed their eyes and mouth slowly, apparently savoring the flavor and sensation, before swallowing.

“I love watching them swallow.” Sadistic Cupcake said, getting more than a few chuckles from the group.

Carmilla puffed her cigar again, delight dancing in her eyes. As JP seemed to come to from that, he thanked her and began to get up as she used her free hand to cup him by the back of the head and pull him in for a deep kiss.

Okay, yeah, that was hot.

I wasn’t certain I’d ever want to do that myself, but I could see how sensual-but-not-exactly-sexual it was for them.
“Get me a Glenfiddich on the rocks.” She said, dismissing them.

Seeming still slightly dazed, JP muttered a “Yes, Mistress.” as they went to the bar.

“Laura, if you want anything, go join them. JP looks a bit wobbly on their knees.”

As we went to the bar, JP seemed to be a bit steadier on their feet.

“You okay?” I had a playful smile on my lips as grinned back to me.

“Yeah. I don’t smoke, so I really enjoy the nicotine and tobacco high from cigar ash.” Armitage replied as we got in line for drinks.

“Okay, you have to tell me—”

“She’s the better kisser, sorry.”

I felt momentarily stunned at that. “No, that’s not what I was going to ask.” She’s better? A part of me did agree with them, though. “I wanted to ask what it tastes like.”

They shrugged at the question. “No real taste; it’s ash. What really makes it work, besides the chemicals, is the dynamic and the connection. The trust and the way you look into each other’s eyes when they drop the ash into your mouth…”

“Oh, I’m just going to say it. It looked both completely innocent and like you just finished giving a blowjob at the same time.” I blurted out.

“Well, I have done that before, you know. I was really glad to see Ms. Karnstein look at me the same way she does at you.”

“Like how?” I wasn’t certain what they meant by that.

“Cherished. Loved. Desired. Like I was, for the moment, the most important thing in her world.” I wasn’t certain how to respond to that.

“I know she loves both of us, but did JP feel like they weren’t getting enough?”

“You are loved, JP. By both of us.”

“Oh, I know. And I’m glad I get date nights with her. But the connection I had on my knees and she looked straight into me… oh, cherish that feeling, Laura. I had it and lost it with my previous owners.”

“Well, you’re stuck with us for life now. You’ve been adopted into your forever home.” They smiled back at me as the couple before us turned around to notice us.

“Armitage?” The tall blonde guy said. The woman by his side had the same features, though a few inches shorter.

“It’s you! Oh my god, you’re here?!?”

I looked at the two people and had to ask JP for an introduction.

“Um, Laura, meet Courtney and Craig… they were at the… same place Ms. Grey got me from.” They introduced us to the pair. “So you two got sold off as a brother/sister pair?”

“You’re not really brother and sister…” I trailed off.
“Oh god no! I can’t stand my family.” Courtney replied, “But we pass for fraternal twins and work at an amazing fantasy ranch. We get to ride horses rather than be the horses.”

JP smiled and nodded, obviously replaying a memory in their head. “Oh, Jack’s a piece of work.” They looked at Craig’s shoes and necktie. “Looks like you took my tutoring to heart.”

“Yeah, you were amazing at that! So you left the program pretty quickly…” Craig pointed to me, “sister sub?”

“Kind of; I’m a Varlet; think Majordomo Chris with bodyguard duties included.” Craig and Courtney lit up at that name and it must have been pretty impressive. “What happened to Lucas, Amanda, and Marie?” JP asked.

Craig bit his lip to stifle a chuckle. “Uh, well, Amanda got sold to a Shibari expert in America who wanted a tall redhead amazon for suspensions and modeling, so she’s happy. Lucas got sold to a young widow heiress who wants a loyal companion who does massages… he got specialized training for it, too. Mary…” He rolled his eyes there and let Courtney tell the tale.

Courtney’s eyes were lit up; she wanted to divulge this really badly. “Nobody wanted her in the first round of auctioning! We were told to stay silent and only talk if we were asked a direct question. But you know her and how the rules never applied to her, right?”

JP’s jaw dropped at that. “She didn’t…”

Craig nodded silently as Courtney continued. “She saw this wealthy Asian man who wasn’t speaking any English and she tried to explain why she would be the best pleasure slave for him. Spoke loudly and slowly as if he were stupid.”

“Oh my god…” I muttered out loud. Even I knew not to do that.

“So he looks her over, acts like he didn’t understand a word she said and pokes at her body as she’s standing naked on the auction block…” Courtney looks to me and raises an eyebrow in question to JP.

“Laura knows I was bought from an auction house.” They assure her.

Courtney continues, mollified, “and she’s only now realizing that they are treating her like nothing more than a piece of meat. He started getting measurements of her body and she smiled, thinking she was going to go for a lot of money due to her high opinion of herself.”

Craig spoke up. “Since we all were going through the contract phase, we were sitting in the next room over and Chris permitted us all to peek through the doorway to see that she was getting fitted for a-”

“-Bridle!” they both said at the same time, causing the three of them to laugh.

“Oh, that’s karma.” Armitage said, face red from laughter.

“I missed something.” I said, trying to get the joke.

“Mary hated being a pony, and she was the worst slave I ever saw. It’s like she was spoiled all her life and decided that she wanted to be spoiled some more by taking advantage of some besotted old rich Master who wanted some eye-candy to fuck and nothing more. When they put the bridle into her mouth, the buyer said in perfect english that he didn’t need to hear her talk ever again.” Craig explained.
Courtney continued, “JP, you should have seen it; after you left, we all had to start taking over the house duties, and she refused to clean the bathrooms. So we had to in order to not get in trouble!”

Craig shook his head at the memory. “We were ready to go Full Metal Jacket on her with soap bars in our pillowcases, too.”

“So Mary’s a pony over in Japan?” JP asked with a wry smile. “Doing laps, jumping barriers, everything?”

“No. Just broodmare.” Courtney replied. “Getting fucked by a fellow pony-guy wearing a strap-on in the shape of a horse’s… you get the idea.”

“And she’s putting up with it for the money. So, good for her, I guess.” Craig finished, putting his arm around Courtney. “Well, it was good to see you and catch up, JP. Sis and I have to go find our owners.”

Courtney’s eyes lit up at that. “Oh, yeah… we belong to a married couple that run a kinky B&B, so there’s always service during the day, and all sorts of fun at night.”

Armitage grinned at the pair of them. “I’m glad you two are doing so well together. Um, my Owner is the curly raven-haired woman smoking the cigar by the pool. See if you can give her your owner’s card; I’m certain we could enjoy a Kinky bed-and-breakfast that includes horseback riding.”

Craig’s eyes sparkled at that. ”Do they know how much we control them?” He winked at the pair of us. ”Yeah, I'll give her my Owner's card.
The Kink Convention, Part One

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the brief hiatus; but real-life issues are building up on me so I'm going to have to post when I can.

By the way, I HIGHLY recommend "The Hunter Carmilla Karnstein" by StrappyCat295. (http://archiveofourown.org/works/7012222)

It's a great action-driven piece that's loosely a crossover of Hitman and Assassin's Creed.

Back at the hotel room, Carmilla held me in place with a smoldering gaze. She cocks her head to one side, wearing her classic arrogant, amused expression.

“What shall we do tonight?”

“Something new.”

She blinks to hide her surprise. “New?”

“Please.”

“You trust me?”

I nod slowly.

“How rough can I go?” she breathes, her eyes darkening. I gaze at her, thinking it over.

“I trust you. Really rough.”

She closes her eyes for a moment, and then grabs my hand and throws me onto the bed, crawling over me like a predatory lioness approaching her prey. When Armitage sees the look on her face, they blush as they make their way back to the door.

“Armitage, come back in an hour,” Carmilla purrs.

“Yes, Ma’am.” Nodding, JP leaves us alone in the hotel room.

We have an hour, what is she going to do with me?

Carmilla glances down at me. “Really rough?”

I nod.

“Well, Ms. Hollis, you’re in luck. I definitely can do that for you.”

I gulp down the anticipation that is building in my throat, and she notices it.

“Did you have anything in mind?” Carmilla murmurs, pinning me with her bold gaze. I shrug,
suddenly breathless and agitated. I don’t know if it’s the adrenaline, seeing the detective, or being at a kinky convention—I don’t understand, but I want this, and I want it badly. A puzzled expression flits across Carmilla’s face.

“Kinky fuckery.” I manage to say as I want to be taken and used by her.

“Kinky fuckery?” she asks, her words a soft caress. I nod, feeling my face flame. *Why am I embarrassed by this?* I have done all manner of *kinky fuckery* with this woman. She’s my Mistress, damn it! Am I embarrassed because I want this and I’m ashamed to admit it?

“Carte blanche?” She whispers the question, eyeing me speculatively as if she’s trying to read my mind. *Carte blanche? Holy shit—what will that entail?*

“Yes,” I murmur nervously, as excitement blooms deep inside me. She smiles a slow sexy smile as she’s straddling me.

Inclining her head to one side, she regards me thoughtfully and then shakes her head, amused.

“What do you want, Laura?” she asks gently.

“You.” My response is breathy. She smirks.

“You’ve got me. You’ve had me since you fell into my office.”

“Surprise me then, Mistress.” Her mouth twists with repressed humor and carnal promise.

“As you wish, cupcake.” She folds her arms and raises one long index finger to her lips while she appraises me.

“I think we’ll start by you ridding yourself of your clothes...” she says and gets off of me, helping pull my top off and flinging it past the dresser.

She taps on her phone and a lone piano starts, muted and soft, as mournful chords fill the room. *It’s not a tune I know.* The piano is joined by an acoustic guitar. What is this? A woman’s sultry voice sings and I can barely out the words, something about not being frightened of dying as lovers. I sense Carmilla’s Domme presence rising as the woman starts to sing . . . wail . . . sing?

“Rough, you say?” she breathes in my left ear.

“Hmm.” I nod my agreement.

“You must tell me to stop if it’s too much. If you say stop, I will stop immediately. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“I need your promise.” I inhale sharply. *Shit, what is she going to do?*

“I promise,” I murmur breathlessly.

“Good girl.” Leaning down, she plants a kiss on my naked shoulder then hooks a finger beneath my bra strap and traces a line across my back beneath the strap. I want to moan. *How does she make the slightest touch so erotic?*

“Take it off,” she whispers at my ear, and hurriedly I oblige and let my bra fall to the floor. Her hands skim down my back, and she hooks both of her thumbs into my skirt and panties and slides
them down my legs.

“Step,” she orders. Once more I do as I’m told, stepping out of my panties. She plants a kiss on my backside and stands.

I sit up and get naked quickly, only to see her holding a chrome butt plug and a clear plastic bottle. *Holy bejeezus, that’s an enema.*

Her intention is clear.

“Go prep while I get ready.” I take the two items and make my way to the bathroom, noticing the fake ruby at the end of the plug.

“Why is it red?” I ask, curiosity getting to me.

“I thought I would appeal to your Gryffindor sensibilities.” She joked as she was already naked and stepping into a harness. “Now let me slither into this.”

I gulped, realizing what I just got myself into. “Okay, Mistress. Did you want me to um, put it in, too?” *Wait, did she just make a Harry Potter pun??*

She shook her head slightly. “No, just clean it. I’ll be out here with the lube when you’re ready.”

*Girl up, Hollis.* I mentally kicked myself as I took the toy and the bottle into the bathroom and closed the door.

“Oh, and Laura? Don’t use the saline solution in the bottle. Pour it out and just use tap water.”

“Yes, Mistress.” I called through the door and began to prepare myself.

It was odd, feeling myself *full* in a way that I’ve never felt before, but once I was done I felt a lot more comfortable with the idea of Carmilla putting the plug in. I washed the toy as I washed my hands, making certain to wipe it dry along with my hands before getting back out to her.

“Ten points to Gryffindor.” Carmilla joked as she took the toy from me and motioned for me to turn around.

“I am going to blindfold you so that everything will feel more intense.” She slips a leather eye mask over my eyes, and my world is plunged into the darkness. The woman singing continues her haunting, heartfelt melody. “Bend over and lie flat on the table.” Her words are softly spoken. “Now.”

Without hesitation, I bend over the side of the table and rest my torso on the highly polished wood, my face flush against the hard surface. It’s cool against my skin and it smells vaguely of beeswax with a citrus tang.

“Stretch your arms up and hold on to the edge.” Okay . . . Reaching forward, I clutch the far edge of the table. It’s quite wide, so my arms are fully extended.

“If you let go, I will spank you. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want me to spank you, Laura?” Everything south of my waist tightens deliciously. I realize I’ve wanted this since I arrived to this convention.
“Yes.” My voice is a hoarse whisper.

“Why?” Oh... do I have to have a reason? Jeez. I shrug. “Tell me,” she coaxes.

“Um—” And from out of nowhere she smacks me hard.

“Ah!” I cry out.

“Hush now.” She gently rubs my behind where she’s hit me. Then she leans over me, her hips digging into my backside, plants a kiss between my shoulder blades and trails kisses across my back. She’s taken her shirt off, so her hard nipples graze my back, and her strap-on presses against me, making me shiver with anticipation.

“Open your legs,” she orders. I move my legs apart. “Wider.” I groan and spread my legs wider. “Good girl,” she breathes. She traces her finger down my back, along the crack between my buttocks, and over my anus, which shrinks at her touch.

“We’re going to have some fun with this,” she whispers. Fuck! Her finger continues down over my perineum and slowly slides into me. “I see you’re very wet, Laura. I’m glad.” I groan as she eases her finger in and out of me, over and over. I push back on her hand, relishing the intrusion.

“Oh, Laura, I think it’s both. I think you love being here, like this. Mine.” I do—oh, I do. She withdraws her finger and smacks me hard once more.

“Tell me,” she whispers, her voice hoarse and urgent.

“Yes, I do,” I whimper. She smacks me hard once more so I cry out, then sticks two fingers inside me. She withdraws them immediately, spreading the moisture up over and around my anus.

I clenched and gulped slightly as I felt some lube get applied to me . . . there! I squirm as my fear collides with my excitement of the unknown. She smacks me once more, lower, so she hits my sex. I groan. It feels . . . so good. “Keep still,” she says.

I struggle to stay still as her fingers are so close to me.

“Breathe, sweetness.”

Carmilla runs the cool metallic plug down the parting between my buttocks. Oh my. “I am going to push this inside you, very slowly.” I gasp, anticipation and anxiety charging through me.

“Will it hurt?”

“No, baby. It’s small. Once it’s inside you, I’m going to fuck you real hard.” I practically convulse. Bending over me, she kisses me once more between my shoulder blades. “Who knows? Maybe in time you’ll want me to fuck you there, too.”

This time I did shudder and convulse at the idea that she’d want to do that to me.

“Ready?” she whispers. Ready? Am I ready for this?

“Yes,” I mutter quietly, my mouth dry. She runs another finger down past my ass and perineum and slips it inside me. Fuck, it’s... her thumb. She cups my sex and her fingers gently caress my clitoris. I moan as it feels... good. And gently, while her fingers and thumb work their magic, she pushes the cold plug slowly into me.
I gasp slightly at that as her fingers gently caress my clitoris. I feel really full as she deliberately uses her magic fingers on me, pushing the cold plug ever so slowly into me.

“Ah!” I groan loudly at the unfamiliar sensation, my muscles protesting at the intrusion. She rubs my clit with firmer pressure and pushes the plug just a bit harder, and it slips in easily, and I don’t know if it’s because I’m so turned on or if she’s distracted me with her expert fingers, but my body seems to accept it. It’s heavy, strange, and… well, there.

“Good girl.” And I can feel all of it… where her fingers press upon me while the plug presses against… ohmygod.

She presses the head of the strap-on against my folds, eliciting a long drawn-out whimper of yearning from me. Eventually I remember how to speak.

“Carmilla,” I mumble, her name a garbled mantra, as she slides inside me and I adjust to the sensation of having two things going on at the same time.

“Good girl,” she murmurs as her hands grab my hips and works her way in and out, fucking me with building pressure.

“Don’t let go of the table, Laura,” she warns.

“No,” I gasp.

“So you want rough? Tell me if I’m too rough. Understand?”

“Yes,” I whisper, and she slams into me and pulls me onto her at the same time, jolting the plug forward, deeper-

“Fuck!” I cry out. She stills, her breathing harsher and my panting matches her. I try to assimilate all the sensations: the delicious fullness, the tantalizing feeling that I am doing something forbidden, the erotic pleasure that spirals outward from deep within me. She pulls gently on the plug, and I don’t know what I’m feeling anymore. I think I moan, and can I hear her sharp intake of breath—a gasp of pure, unadulterated pleasure. It heats my blood.

“Again?” she whispers.

“Yes.”

“Stay flat,” she orders. She eases out of me and rams into me again, making the strap-on vibrate for the pair of us. Oh… I wanted this.

“Yes,” I hiss. And she picks up the pace, her breathing more labored, matching my own as she thrashes into me.

“Oh, Laura,” she gasps. She moves one of her hands from my hips and twists the plug again, tugging it slowly, pulling it out slightly and pushing it back in. The feeling is indescribable, and I think I’m going to pass out on the table. She never misses a beat as she takes me, again and again, moving strong and hard inside me, my insides tightening and quivering.

“Oh fuck,” I moan. This is going to rip me apart.

“Yes, Laura,” she hisses.

“Please,” I beg her and I don’t know what for—to stop, to never stop, to twist the plug again. My
insides are tightening around her and the plug.

“That’s right,” she breathes, and she slaps me hard on my right ass cheek, and I come—again and again, falling, falling, spinning, pulsing around and around—and Carmilla gently pulls the plug out.

“Fuck!” I scream and Carmilla grabs my hips and keeps pumping into me as she shudders and climaxes loudly, her hands gripping my hips with a vice-like grip. The woman is still singing, something about offering up your daughters as I melt onto the table beneath me.

*Carmilla must have put this song on repeat. I am now in her arms as we cuddle in bed. When did we get here?*

“Wellcome back,” she says, peeling the blindfold off me. I blink as my eyes adjust to the muted light. Tipping my chin back, she plants a soft kiss on my lips, her eyes focused on and anxiously searching mine. I reach up to caress her face.

“I love you, Carmilla. Holy fuck.” My Mistress grins as she realizes that I disassociated from reality from the amazing sex.

We had breakfast in the hotel room (courtesy of Armitage making an early morning trip to a nearby gas station for fruit, coffee, and a sausage-and-egg muffin) before we dressed for the day and went off to our first class.

As we made our way past the checkpoint and showed off our paper wristbands to security, I noticed that Carmilla had hers on her left wrist while JP and I had ours on the right.

“JP, the wristband—”

“-yup.” They replied without missing a beat. “It’s pretty much second-nature to us. Don’t you remember putting your wrist out for it yesterday?”


Carmilla turned and stopped, pointing to the classroom that she was at. “This one’s mine. *Family and D/s*’. Now that we have Tara, I should probably hear from other households who have children around.”

She leaned in and kissed the both of us, leaving me a bit dazed as Armitage reminded me we were blocking the hallway.

“Sorry, last night was great.” I mumbled, blushing.

“I can tell; who do you think cleaned up?” I winced in realization.

“Sorry.”

They shrugged. “Don’t be. You two are happier because of it.” They stop at a classroom and gesture for me to go in. “Nat’s already inside. Enjoy your bootblacking!”

I turn to see a bunch of chairs in a circle as a femme-looking dyke was opening up a massive toolbox of supplies and laying them all out for people to peruse.

“Hey, where are you going?”
“24/7 Household duties. Can’t hurt to get a refresher on being a majordomo.” They reply as they leave.

As I enter the room, the instructor for the class introduced herself.

“Hey, I’m Frankie, come take a seat and pull up some leather if you have any.”

I smiled awkwardly and shrugged. “I don’t, actually.” Frankie tossed me a boot and I caught it, impressed with my reaction time.

“Now you do. So first off, we’re going to go over the basics of boot and leather care. There’s Fiebings saddle soap and then there’s Huberd’s shoe grease. I prefer Huberd’s as it’s all natural and…” she blushes slightly, “something about the smell just turns me on.”

A few of the others in the circle smiled knowingly at that as they each took a small rag and began rubbing in the shoe grease to condition their leather items.

“So as you all know, the Leather community loves their boots and their vests… even their Sir caps… and we’re the ones that know how to take care of all that. Sometimes a relationship can occur… you know, between the bootblack and the boots.”

“Uh, what do you mean?” I asked as the shoe grease and a rag was passed to me and I started to copy what the others were doing. The boot seemed to go from a dry, grey look to dark moist.

“What’s your name, honey?” Frankie asked.

“Uh, Laura.”

“You using your real name, too?” Frankie grinned at that. “Good. You shouldn’t be ashamed of liking Leather. That boot belonged to an Old Guard guy; died of AIDS a few months ago and his boots went to shit in the closet all this time. His boy passed away years before, and nobody wanted to take over for him. Some of us can get really possessive of our leather.”

“But it wasn’t your boots, right?” I asked, “or do you own them now?”

Frankie shook her head. “These boots marched on Washington in 1987 to demand the American President to admit that AIDS existed. ‘SILENCE=DEATH’. These boots saw history, and we’re going to donate them to the Leather Archives and Museum.”

A gender-queer person who wasn’t wearing any leather spoke up. “So you shoe-shine for the community out of obligation?”

Everyone who looked natural as they worked on their respective leathers looked slightly scandalized. The person who asked the question recoiled awkwardly.

“It’s okay, Bryce. To us, this isn’t… a chore,” Frankie said with some patience. “It’s not like taking serving my Sir a cigar, cleaning up our toys, or even putting out the trash. For me, it’s a… calling. My military background and having to ensure everything is wired properly, keeping my shoes so shiny it looks like black glass… this just feel ‘right’ for me in the community.”

“And the smell and feel of the leather just… resonates on a primal level for me.” A dark-skinned woman said, lifting up her vest and taking a deep whiff of it.

“Usually, you never polish empty boots like this,” Frankie added. “Serious no-no, in fact, we have specialty chairs designed to pamper the person getting their boots worked on.”
“So it’s a fetish?” Asked Bryce. Frankie nodded brightly at that.

“Sure, for some of us. By the sheer nature of how we do it, it can be very intimate. I mean, if you think about it, we will wear our leather every day if we could, and definitely whenever representing the community. So when you’re wearing them, you wanna look good, right? And you usually find yourself gravitating to one particular boot black because the person who you go to is just as important as your hairdresser. They get into your intimate space by touching you and serving you. Some of us can tell by a pair of boots what kind of person you are.”

“Really?” Bryce asked before I could.

“Bootblacks notice people when they have a clean, polished pair of boots,” replied Frankie. “You see, it’s like how you can judge someone on if they didn’t put enough time in their morning routine to fix their hair. It’s all about how people project themselves. Not to mention, leather care is almost a lost art in our culture. People just buy it and throw it back in the closet like a pair of jeans or whatever. You don’t treat a pet that way, and buying and wearing leather is kind of like that. It’s an investment, one that you should learn how to take care of. Boots like these aren’t disposable; you clean it, repair it, and keep it looking good. That’s why I’m here and teaching this class; you all need to respect leather in order to keep it looking shiny and new for years.”

“So what else can you tell from someone’s leather?” Bryce asked as someone came around to inspect their work.

“Well, sometimes we can see trouble in a relationship that way. Sometimes a submissive gets jealous over their Dom wanting to play with others, and you can see it when they half-ass the boot care when it’s usually spectacular. Kind of their way to keep them from looking 100% and maybe keep their Dom, usually a man, from looking elsewhere.”

I seemed puzzled at that. “So there is jealousy in the community?”

“We’re still people, Laura. Who was the dapper person who dropped you off? That wasn’t your Dominant, I can tell.”

“Oh, that’s Armitage. They are my Mistresses’ Varlet.”

Frankie nodded at that. “I haven’t heard the term Varlet in years. She trusts you two together, it seems. But you… you’re new to the scene. How did you feel about having to share her with another?”

“At first I felt betrayed and mortified, but when I understood the dynamic and got to know JP Armitage a bit more, I bonded with them and even defended them towards my Mistress Ca-um, Christina.”

“See? Now if you were responsible for her boots, and judging by your work today you’re not, you’d have probably not given it your 110% to make her look perfect, right? See how we can sometimes get upset?”

I nodded at that, knowing that I could sometimes be petty.

“Not to mention us bootblacks talk to each other. When people get up in our chairs, they lean back, get quality service on one of the things that they value a lot… and you know what? It makes them feel like they are walking on cloud nine. Even the bottoms and submissives we serve in our chairs. Of course, that usually relaxes them and we can talk about anything.”
As she said that, I looked at the whole boot polishing in a whole new light. It was about connection, service to leather and the community, and getting lots of information that a reporter would kill to have.

“I once got to service a pair of knee-high riding boots on this Domme who did the whole dressage thing. Damn she was sexy, and I mean the boots. She was telling me about opening up a kinky bed and breakfast with her husband and needed some quality slaves who would be willing to work there and serve the guests if needed. I got them in contact with the right people and scored a few free passes there for me and my boy.”

*Frankie was the contact to get the Kinky B&B people to the auction house where Armitage was?*

“Really, that’s where my Mistress got Armitage from.” I winked at her conspiratorially and she grinned in response.

“The genderqueer asexual one, right?” Frankie asked. “I heard they broke a contract with their last Master and it nearly got the pair of them blackballed from the market… um, that community.”

I nodded. “Yeah, apparently he thought some hard limits could be broken.”

She rolled her eyes at that. “Which is stupid since he was getting something better than sex.”

Bryce looked confused at that. “What’s better than sex? I mean, I’m here to get tied up, beat, and fucked.”

“You can go to any club and pick up someone for a night, that is just sex. Even kinky sex. But what we do here is much more intimate,” replied Frankie, “It’s service… which isn’t something you can just do with a random stranger like giving a blow job in a bathroom. You build a connection and open up to each other. You get regulars.”

“I think that’s what JP was trying to tell me early on when I seemed jealous and then changed my mind and said that they could have sex with my Mistress,” I shrugged as someone passed a tin of Kiwi black polish and a new cotton rag. “They explained that the intimacy they like doesn’t involve what’s between their legs.”

“Buff that polish in with small circles and keep it warm,” Frankie advised me, “use your breath and keep it moist. Some people swear by saliva, I like having a bottle of warm water nearby. Spit-shining with actual spit just seems gross and not everyone is okay with the bootblack spitting on them.”

We continued to work on our boots and vests with the various leather conditioners and just chatted about the lifestyle, our dynamics, and life in general. It vaguely reminded me of the stitch-and-bitch events that housewives would do, and I couldn’t help but smile at the correlation.

*We are all just people, we just do things slightly differently.*
The Kink Convention, Part Two

As I left the boot blacking class, Nat gave me a subtle nod of acknowledgment as she took up our class review slips. I had given Frankie full marks and recommended she come back next year, and was looking into possibly getting into boot blacking myself.

Carmilla and JP were in the main hallway, chatting amicably as I arrived.

“Hey cupcake.” Armitage was blushing slightly and I wondered what they had been talking about.

“Mistress. What are you two talking about?” I asked curiously.

“Oh, you know there’s a play party tonight too, right?” Her eyes were dark and full of unspoken promises. “We were just talking about how to mark up my Varlet here during a scene.”

“Ms. Grey, our next class—” JP cut in apologetically.

“Of course.” The three of us moved as one and I noticed JP stay in step with Carmilla, but one pace behind her and to her left. Before I could ask, she put her arm in mine and had me walking on her right side.

We get to the classroom and Carmilla goes in first, looking over the room and nodding to a set of chairs as she requested JP get water for us. Carm and I go sit next to each other as JP brings us the cups of water and kneels by her feet.

“Okay, what’s going on? First you two seem to be in some sort of formation and now this?” JP spoke up, looking up at me. “I asked for more formal protocols today. Hence me taking the position that I did.”

“And why they are kneeling at my feet now. Others may do this as well, you’ll see. You, however, I have as my right-hand girl and equal in social situations.”

“Thank you.” As I saw them kneel for her, I was slightly jealous but didn’t want to publicly kneel for her here like JP did. That’s a private thing, something I’ll do at home, in our play room, or during a scene.

More people came into the room and sat near us; and an older-looking large, bald man wearing a leather vest with a back patch with younger guy in his late 20’s in a similar outfit and a matching patch pointed to a seat in front of us where we were and then did the ASL hand sign for ‘thank you’, touching his flat hand against his lips and then lowering it it a forward motion.

“Where’s my other boy?” He wondered quietly to himself, craning his neck back to the doorway and grinned as he waved them over.

“Sir, I had the best class today, there was this inquisitive young… oh, hi!” The voice sounded familiar and I turned to see Frankie there, making her way to her Sir and sitting by him. “Laura, right? Just ran back from putting all my boot blacking gear in our hotel room.”

She looked to the younger looking man and started signing to him at a speed that I could barely keep up with. Apparently it impressed him and he turned around to wave hello.

Frankie beamed at us and made introductions. “So I’m Frankie, Sir Stanley’s boy and this is
Marcus. He can read lips.”

She must have seen the confusion on my face as she said she was his boy. “Boy with a ‘y’ or an ‘i’?”

Stanley chuckled at that. “With a ‘y’; long story, but I’m as queer as a $3 dollar bill and identify as gay.” His voice had the stereotypical gay man inflection and Frankie seemed to beam at him.

Carmilla introduced all of us, using her pseudonym ‘Christina Grey’. “So you’re a gay man involved with a woman?”

He shrugged. “Yeah, she’s such a boy in my eyes though; it’s strange, I know, but it works. In fact, we’re expecting our first child in about 6 months. You take your folic acid, Frankie?”

“Yes, Sir.” she automatically replied. He nodded once in approval.

“Good boy, come sit.” As Frankie sat beside him, I leaned forward towards her.

“Which pronouns do you prefer?”

“Female are fine.” She looked at me speculatively. “I… thank you for asking. So did you like the class?”

I nodded excitedly. “If I wanted to get my own starter set, where would I go?”

“Horse tack stores will have a lot of what you need, but the best advice I’d give is find a local and work with them and see what they have in their kit. You’ve got a leather bar here, right?” Marcus waved for Frankie’s attention and signed rapidly to her. “Oh, right! He goes by Soulless Bastard. He’s been the regional bootblack title holder so you probably haven’t seen him around since he’s been on tour at other Leather conventions.”

“I’ve been a polyamory and safer sex advocate for the past decade, and I’m here with my Master this weekend, so I am indeed a part of the BDSM community. Now let’s do some quick introductions and we’ll get straight to the 6 tips to strengthening a poly relationship and then take questions.”

As we all went around the room and introduced ourselves, I found out that a lot of us have very different relationship and play dynamics. Some keep their kink sex-free, while others require sex to be a part of it. Couples, Triads, and even a Quartet talked about having a stratified chain of command BDSM dynamic versus an ‘only in the playroom’ type that I thought I was going to have with my Mistress.

It didn’t work out that way, did it? I wondered to myself as Carmilla spoke up, breaking me out of my own inner thoughts.
“My name’s Christina Grey, and we didn’t have a name for it back then, but I was involved with two amazing women during the- I mean, my 20’s. I’ve somehow found myself again in a multi-partner relationship with Laura and JP here. I love them both dearly, though my dynamic with JP is more platonic as they are asexual.”

Playful Cougar nodded in understanding. “JP, are you okay with that?”

They grinned and nodded with a soft chuckle. “Ms. Grey has been amazing with my physical boundaries, actually. I love being a part of her household and family.”

The speaker’s eyes twinkled at us. “That’s compersion right there; being happy for someone else’s happiness. Laura, what about you?”

I shrugged, uncertain what she was getting at. “I’m good. We love each other, I um… I don’t understand the question.”

She pressed her lips thin as she looked the three of us over. “Oh, okay. I just… sorry, you know how sometimes you get a new sweater and you love it, except for one pesky thread that’s sticking out of place, and you want to pull or clip it?”

*Is she psychic or something?* I wonder as I remember my insecurity about being mortal and loving someone who won’t age or die. Apparently Playful Cougar decided to let the thread go and moved on.

Sir Stanley was now introducing his household and I was glad to have the spotlight off of me. It was another few seconds before I saw Carmilla’s sculpted eyebrow raised in concern towards me as if to say ‘Do we need to talk about it?’

I shook my head slightly at her, eyes downcast in hopes that she couldn’t just use her form of Legilimency to look inside my mind. The class went on, and I vaguely heard discussion and questions over online dating, when to meet your partner’s partner, and if and when you should come out as poly to your family.

Class was over before I knew it, and I was being unusually quiet when Jordan found us and asked if we wanted to get sushi for lunch with her Lady Hotpants.

“Yeah, that sounds great.” Carmilla answered for me as Jordan grinned and scampered away. “Laura, what’s going on?”

I bit my lip in hopes to not bring it up, and I knew I was being dumb about it.

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

Carm looked me over with a pained expression before sighing loudly. “I’m here when you do want to talk. Let’s go get lunch.”

Sushi was amazing, even if I did fumble with the chopsticks while Carmilla and JP were completely at home with them.

“So, I hear you two are off to some shenanigans in rope while I’m in history of Leather with Christina and JP.” As Lady HotPants said that, I saw a conniving look in her eyes that made Jordan and I both look to each other in worry. They were going to the same class together?

“Jordan, is that a good look to get?” I asked my fellow submissive.
She shrugged. “Fifty-fifty chance it’s going to be fun, or really scary.”

Carmilla gave a warm, knowing chuckle that seemed more appropriate to a villain who sits on a swivel chair while petting a cat. “I guess you’ll find out tonight.”

“Oh, crap. We just got volun-told, didn’t we?” I asked the table in general as I took a sip of the warm sake.

“On the plus side, Sadistic Cupcake isn’t plotting with them?” Jordan offered helpfully, which only made her Mistress’ eyes widen in delight.

“Christina, why aren’t we doing that? We should totally ask her to help out tonight!”

Carm nodded, playing along to a game that I wasn’t certain that I would like. “You have her number, right? We’ll need a tarp, it’s gonna get really messy.”

“Wait, a tarp? You’re actually planning something, aren’t you?” I looked at the pair of them, incredulous.

“Of course not. Why would we say we’re planning something and ruin the surprise?” Carmilla’s voice was sweet and light, and I could imagine that was the same tone she used when hunting to feed.

“Oh, and baby wipes afterwards. JP, you should probably make a list.” Lady HotPants said off-handedly.

JP dutifully pulled out their smart phone with stylus and started using it like a notebook. “Tarp, baby wipes, may I suggest some bottled water?”

Jordan went from playful to flat in no time. “Oh hell no, JP can’t help. Slaves are the worst.”

Armitage kept making notes, barely lifting his head in response to her. “You mean most creative.”

Okay, is he playing around with us or are they actually planning something?!

“JP, you’d tell me if you were plotting against me, right?”

He looked at me, face expressionless. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

Armitage just threw my words back at me. Are they joking, or pissed off at me?

“Has she ever hurt you accidentally?” I asked Jordan as she unstowed her rope from her bag as the instructor pointed out the pulse points that you shouldn’t ever wrap rope around a body unless you’re making a tourniquet.

“...those are your pulse points, do not ever wrap a rope completely around them unless you want to lose that limb from lack of circulation. Always check on your bottom, feel to see if they get cold, or if the skin turns purple or if they complain about tingling or numbness. Which brings me to safety scissors, like the EMT’s have. Keep that within reach at all times. Cutting a rope is better than permanent nerve damage.” The salt-and-peppered man said as he pointed on his speedo-wearing partner.

“Like, missed her mark with a cane and didn’t hit my big ass?” She said flatly.

“Your ass isn’t big.” I rebuffed her critique of her own body as she held a length of rope in two
hands, flipped her wrists around a few times, and there were a pair of loops in her hands ready to tie onto my wrists. “What’s that?”

“Variant of the Lark’s Head. Works well in a pinch to extend your rope. Now let’s pay attention to the instructor.” Jordan undid the loops and handed me the rope as she pulled out another length.

“Okay everyone, fold your rope in half and find the midpoint. That’s called the bight, with that we’ll start off with a basic single-column tie. Meaning we’re tying one item; an arm, or a leg.”

I looked at Jordan’s rope and saw she had the bight already marked on hers. “How come yours is marked?”

“Paid a bit more for it. I like jute over hemp.” As she said that, I realized how scratchy the rope I held was.

“Now you wrap the rope around the column, either a wrist, or ankle, or any part of the body… No, not the neck. On my boy here, I’ll do the wrist. See me take the rope by the bight and lead it around the wrist a few times, no more than three. Make certain the rope lays flat and doesn’t cross over itself here.”

Jordan proceeded to do this to my left wrist and the look of concentration on her face reminded me of Hermione Granger for a second, which instantly made me remember her scene with Lady HotPants.

“So why did you want to tie me up?” I quipped as she continued to follow the instructor.

“Pretty certain I can do a suspension and lift you by myself.” She replied with nonchalance as she turned back to the front of the room.

“Now that you have that done, you’ll want a few extra inches on the bight side to cross over the top and tuck under all of the rope wrapped around your column. You there? Good. Now we’re going to tie the bight to the other side of the rope. The type of knot doesn't really matter, it's all about the wrapping and how the rope works against itself.”

Jordan completed the knot and grinned at her success.

“Cool.” She tugged on the rope and it made me move my arm slightly. “Ha, now I can kidnap you and make you buy me a mocha frappe!” She made a comical villain laugh that make me almost lose my skeptical composure.

“Your big villain thing is that you want ice blended coffee?”

She shrugged. “I’m not made for the villain life.”

“I also don’t see you kidnapping me and trying to make me fall in love with you.”

“Nah, I love my Mistress and I’m going to propose to her…” She bit her lip as she untied the knot. “Don’t tell her yet. I’m saving up for a ring worthy of her.”

“I um… actually might have a hookup for you if you’re okay with lab-created gems.”

“Thanks. That one of Ms. Moneybags’ projects?”

“Kind of. I don’t think it’s public knowledge yet, but the blood diamond industry came to an all-too-soon end.”
“No, I heard about that. The cult leader and his child army disappeared overnight.” Her eyes shot open in realization. “Fuck, she was behind that?”

I shrugged like it was nothing. “I cannot confirm nor deny. But some really bad people are no long doing bad things.”

“Remind me to never piss her off.” She replied as she untied the knot.

The instructor looked around the room and seemed pleased with our progress.

"Did everyone get that okay? Good, now let's try this same idea but on two wrists at once. The first knot was a single column tie, so this one is a double column tie. First we'll make a bight just like before..."

As he showed us what he was doing, it looked elegant and smooth, much better than Jordan’s attempt to copy it at first.

“You got the ropes crossing over here.” I nod with my head as she’s wrapping both of my wrists.

Another practicing couple spoke up. “Can we use this on the same limb, just folded over?”

“Yes you can; a lot of people like having their legs hobbled that way for sex while tied up, actually. It’s a bit more difficult to finish up, but you’ll see what I mean in the next step. So everyone has their 2-3 wraps around the two columns with excess length on the bight side? We’re going to take that and wrap it around the gap between the columns to help bind the ropes together to be more like handcuffs, then we’ll tie it off with the other end of the rope. You only need a short length for this, but if you use a longer one, you can incorporate it into a more intricate body harness, but that’s the next lesson.”

Jordan finished the knot, and ran her finger under and around the rope to make sure that it wasn’t too tight. “Not bad for a first time.”

The class continued and we briefly went over a simple body harness by modifying a single column tie to have multiple wraps around the hips which are the center of gravity. It wasn’t designed like the harness that people wear when repelling, and he told us to make certain that if we use it for a suspension to have an experienced person look over the rope and to be a spotter.

“Now another way you can do a suspension harness is by the chest and shoulder area. It depends on if your rope bottom is wider at the hips or at the shoulders. A shoulder suspension harness is a lot different because you’re going to need to go over the shoulders, clavicle, and the trapezius. You do this wrong and it can really hurt and injure them. If you’re wearing a bra with an underwire, I suggest you remove it if you try this harness.”

Jordan looked at me nervously and blushed slightly. “I didn’t plan on you having to remove clothing.”

I shrugged it off, reaching behind my back and undoing the strap. “No problem; I wore a strapless one today.” I slipped the bra out from under my shirt, glad to be part of the IBTC.

We watched carefully as the instructor showed us how to start the chest harness by going around the chest, right where the underwire and bra was at a moment ago. “Now a lot of you might get too bogged down with the details and trying to make it look perfect. Try to remember to engage your rope bottom and have fun with it, because if you’re not having fun, why do this?”

As she slipped the rope through the bight and began winding it around me to weave back and forth
at my spine, we decided to quit making her walk all the way around us and instead just reach around and do the rope-work. It pretty much kept us within hugging distance and the close proximity got very apparent as the energy between us started to change.

“So what class did you go to before lunch? My Mistress and I were in the silent auction room looking at the various gift baskets.” Jordan reached around me and brought the folded rope over my left shoulder to dive into my almost non-existent cleavage and weaved it through the bands in front by my solar plexus.

“We were at the poly workshop.” I said as the rope harness was now lifting up my breasts slightly like an awkward over-the-shirt bra. Jordan fumbled the rope as she was trying to take it over my right shoulder, obviously surprised at that.

“Oh? I uh…” Jordan continued creating the rope body harness, now avoiding closeness whenever possible. “I should have talked to your Mistress.”

“Oh, don’t worry, I did.” She finished tying the chest harness and held it tight as she pulled on the rope to see if it could hold my weight. I jerked around slightly and nodded that the knots seemed secure.

“You did?” She took the rest of the rope between us and motioned for my hands. I raised them up, wondering what she was going to spontaneously do.

“Yeah, she’s fine with it.”

“She is? Just like that?”

“Yes, she said if you were a Domme, then you’d need to talk to her. Apparently her big limit on me is that she’s the only one I call Mistress.”

I looked down to see my wrists tied in a modified single-column tie without a bight.

“Wow. Okay. So you’re okay with uh…”

I was pulling at the restraints to see if I could slip my way out of them. She did a great job.

“Sure, why not? You seem pretty awesome; why not come to rope classes with you?”

Her expression dimmed slightly. “Rope class. Yeah.” She looked down at my wrists and checked the ties again. “Not too tight?”

Jordan was pointedly avoiding eye contact with me now. Crap. I replayed the conversation in my mind and realized what she was talking about.

“It’s fine. And…” What’s the term for this?

“You’re in a closed poly relationship. That’s cool. I shouldn’t have assumed.”

“-I’m flattered, Jordan. But I never knew you could love more than one person at a time until I… did.” She started to untie the ropes as the instructor went around to inspect our work.

“I get that. And if you’re still cool with me doing rope and suspensions with you, I’d love that.”

The instructor came by and saw how I was in a body harness and had my hands tied together. “Going to kidnap her?” he joked, “don’t forget the ankles. She looks like a kicker.”
Jordan played it off easily. "We already decided that I'm not the kidnapping type."

We laughed it off as it helped ease the tension of the misunderstanding and we made our way to the final class of the day.
The Kink Convention, Part Three

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Cunt-torture class. Extreme humiliation. Religious play. As someone who doesn’t use trigger warnings often (remember the epilogue to 50 FBs?) this one means that it’s very much needed.

Jordan and I were heading down the same direction to the final class of the day as two scantily-clad girls wearing collars passed us, looking shocked and horrified.

“I can’t believe they brought this guy back!”

“I’m telling my Sir that I can’t sit through that. I SOOO need a cookie right now.”

I looked to Jordan in confusion. “Um, what’s that about?”

Before Jordan could reply, a man wearing religious garb spoke up loudly like any carnival barker would.

Oh, it’s some anti-sex religious nutjob, isn’t it? I rolled my eyes at what was to come.

“Cunt-torture class starts in 5 minutes! Get up, get close, and watch out if you’re in the first row. My girl’s a squirter. Don’t worry, you all will have clear plastic tarps like it’s a Gallagher comedy show…but I get to eat the watermelon.”

Carmilla was beside us now and I recognized her using her insight power now. “That’s ‘The Good Reverend’. He likes being flashy and edgy with his kinks, hates his religious upbringing, and does a lot of what he does for the shock value. And really loves his submissive.” She cocked an eyebrow at that and motioned that we should continue on.

Jordan nodded knowingly as she broke away from us. “I’m off to learn Japanese Tea service with Armitage. Later!”

I turned to look my Mistress over, curious as to what her Insight said about me.

“Someday I might tell you,” she said as if she could read my mind, “but not today. Come, let’s see what horrible things he has planned for us today.”

“What’s a Gallagher comedy show?” I asked nervously.

“He’s a prop comic, wears a beret and dissects the english language while smashing watermelons with his giant sledge-o-matic mallet...” Carm sighed at that. “Okay now I feel old for knowing that.”

“You’re over three hundred, Carmilla.”

“Yeah, but it’s one thing to sound all cool and say that I met Frank Sinatra, but it’s another to realize you don’t know who Gallagher is or get blank stares when I want to wax poetic about hearing music from a phonograph for the first time.”
As we made our way to the doorway of the classroom, Nat was there with clipboards and another liability release form for us to sign.

“Seriously?” I asked, glancing over the document.

‘...to viewing acts including, but not limited to, crude language, explicit sexual contact, objectification, and human degradation, and apostasy. Signing this release form means that I have been informed of the content of this class and will not engage in any lawsuits or seek reparations for any mental anguish encountered by staying and watching this class of my own free will...’

“I think he means blasphemy instead of apostasy there.” Carmilla said as she signed it. “I’m certain that I’ve seen worse in my day.”

As we finally get into the room, there’s a naked girl trussed up and tied down onto a spanking bench with a speculum in her, exposing herself entirely to the room. Beside her was a coffee can with a sign: “SPIT INTO MY CUNT.”

“Oh my god. Ew.” I cringed as someone went up, put money into the coffee can and proceed to expectorate into her.

“$5 recommended donation, proceeds go to the Leather Archives and Museum.” Carmilla read the fine print from across the room. The girl in question thanked the donor as others looked around, realizing that it wasn’t a joke.

The Good Reverend ducked his head into the class and chastised the room. “Seriously, you won’t spit into my spit receptacle for a good cause? That’s what it’s there for!”

“I’ll donate without spitting.” I mutter to nobody in particular.

“That will make my girl’s cunt unhappy though.” He replied, before heading back out into the hallway and making a three-minute call.

There was a tarp laid out on the ground, and a nearby table was covered in various medical play devices as well as the more normal toys that I’ve seen before: weighted nipple clamps, floggers, a violet wand, and a bucket with what must have been dry ice in it. I was grateful that we weren’t in the front row, where they did indeed have a clear plastic sheet to lift to keep a barrier between them and whatever was going to happen.

“Mistress, may I be excused if it goes too far for me?” My throat closes up, dry in anticipation.

“Of course, sweetness.”

“You don’t think this will bother you?”

“Mother forced me to watch my ex do torture-snuff porn, remember?” She shuddered at that. “So glad JP killed her.”

“Me too.” I replied, and I knew in that moment that I meant it. I didn’t want to dwell on that, and glanced over to the implements on the table and wondered why there was a long wrought-iron thing next to the dry ice.

The Good Reverend made his way up to the front of the room, looked into the coffee can, and nodded in admiration.
“Not bad haul. I said you could make money with that thing.”

“Yes, Reverend.” He slapped her ass playfully before untying her from the bench as she got up, wiped herself off, and turned to face us as she had a beaming smile on her face.

Okay, she’s not disgusted at what she had done to herself.

She cleared her throat and pulled out a sheet of paper from inside the bench she was on. She was completely naked and completely casual about it.

“Now that you all have signed a waiver, I’m going to tell you, with my own words and my own mouth, that I have consented to this class and that none of you domly-doms have to ‘save me’ from my Master. I, Harleen, know that The Good Reverend here is a sick bastard and that’s why I married him a year ago. You’d think that most people would understand this, but no. That’s why I’m up here, letting you all know, that what you’re about to see has been pre-negotiated.”

As she read off the paper, Reverend was setting up his equipment and putting on a pair of gloves. That’s when I noticed how they were working as a team and could understand their dynamic better. They are the same wavelength of fucked-up crazy.

“Good girl.” As he said that, he put a lampshade over her head which made her freeze instantly.

“Hey-”

“-lampshades don’t talk.” He turned to us and finally made his introduction.

“The whole innocent-yet-naughty school girl thing has been played out. The future is forniphilia, and I plan on making this bitch here a walking IKEA.”

“Furniture can’t walk or give blowjobs, Sir.”

He turned towards the human lampshade. “What did I tell you about lampshades? They don’t talk!”

“Lumiere did in Beauty and the Beast!” Harleen replied cheerfully.

“I swear to God, Harleen, I’m going to beat you!” As they continued, I could tell that this was all scripted and in good nature.

"Beatings will continue until morale improves... once morale improves, why quit when you're having a good time?" From the tone of her voice, I knew she was grinning under the lampshade.

“As you can see,” The Good Reverend continued, facing the audience again, “we play with RACK and not SSC because nothing you see today will be safe or sane. But it is consensual. RACK, on the other hand, means risk-aware consensual kink. We're adults here and that means we understand what we do has risks and will do our best to mitigate them.

“Oh, and apparently publishers will print anything now days, so look for my book, Dickasaurus Rex, a coming-of-age story that chronicles an abusive relationship a young virgin has with his penis.

“I suspect it's because his talking penis can't hug anyone with his little t-rex arms. In all sorts of fine bookstore establishments that haven’t gone out of business this week. Fuck you, Hastings!”

“And Borders!” Harleen adds.
“And Borders.” He answers. “Now that I’ve plugged myself, let’s get down to business. You all know about the endorphin feedback loop that comes with masochism, right? The body’s natural high that comes after a painful stimulus, that we exploit to get people into another state of consciousness that some of us like to call sub-space?”

Most of us nodded at that.

“Well, some of us really enjoy pain and want it in locations that have even more nerve endings, because they are junkies for the pain and the pleasure. As you all know, this is a cunt torture class, so there shouldn’t be a fucking question about ‘where do you mean?’.”

He reached over and took the lampshade off of his girl who hopped up onto the spanking bench and spread her legs to expose herself to the room.

“The human clitoris has eight thousand nerve endings,” she stage whispered behind the back of her hand, “twice that of the penis.”

“And some of us crazy fuckers put piercings in it.” The reverend shrugged at that. “What else can you tell the class?”

As he asked that, The Good Reverend yanked on the side of the spanking bench, causing stirrups to appear on either side.

“The internal muscles can be trained to clamp down, and with the right kind of device inserted, you can do weight lifting… all with the power of your cunt.” She grinned in pride as she had her legs strapped down, forced open wide.

“Harleen here can hold up to 6 pounds hanging from her snatch. I can’t wait until I can hang an 8 pound bowling ball from her. I wanna see her roll a strike that way.” He beamed back at her momentarily before going over to his table.

“So, first off, safety. If you’re not fluid bonded, wear gloves. Now we are, but sometimes I just like the feel of latex, you know?”

“I’m slightly allergic to latex.” she chided back, rolling her eyes as he bared a wolfish grin at her.

“I know. God bless the sick fuck who marketed adding capsaicin to lube. So, first off we’re going to with impact play. You know how spanking an ass is nice, and then you go in for a good swat just over the labia, letting the impact hit the clit once she’s warmed up?” His hand struck quickly-yet-lightly, making a light slapping noise as his fingers hit her clit, making her yelp in delight. “The lower the pitch, the more ‘thuddy’ it feels.”

She went from yelps to moans quickly as he walked over to his table.

“This is called a zipper. Simply put, I string together clothespins, let it work its magic for a little while, then rip them off.”

People in the class winced at that, while others sat up more attentively. There were only 4 clothespins there, which he applied around the public mound, avoiding the labia and the clitoris.

Once that was done, a younger male Dominant stepped forward and got really close to inspect the work.

“Shit, that's real.”
The Good Reverend checked his watch as he motioned for the young man to move over a bit. “No photography unless you donate to the can. And the good shit is still coming.”

The Good Reverend put a chair right in front of the girl and sat in it, and I noticed some 20 gauge needles and surgical tubing in his hands.

“Now some people think medical play is fun, with the poking, prodding, and speculums.” He unwrapped a needle from the sterile packaging and placed it in the tube, putting it to his mouth.

*What the hell is he...*

“You really don't want to confuse suck with blow.” As he blew, the needle flew like a dart and impacted into her labia.

“Good shot, Sir!” she gasped in delight once the adrenaline kicked in.

Instantly, four people walked out of the room in a hurry.

“Don't forget to critique the class!” The Good Reverend called out as a submissive girl flipped him off. The young male Dom took one of the vacated seats, glad to be in the front row now.

“Obviously you practice this first, and only use fresh needles.”

Harleen wobbled her knees in delight as the next one hit. “Also take the needles out before electrical play.”

“The talking pincushion is right; you really don't want to mix those if you don't know what you're doing.” He blew another three darts, getting dangerously close to the clit. Harleen’s legs quivered as the pain was making her almost orgasm.

“Sharps container. Get one.” He instructed as he deftly removed each needle and dropped it into a red plastic box designed for it. As one of the needles came out, a trail of blood leaked out and Carmilla's hand grabbed my thigh in either shock or arousal.

*Wow, I forgot Carm was here.*

“You're leaking, pincushion.” As he said that, Harleen clicked her tongue twice for his attention. They shared a bloody kiss that made another two people leave the room.

I leaned over to my Mistress. “You okay?”

“Yeah,” she mumbled, releasing a bit bottom lip. “Just... hot.”

Once the kiss ended, Harleen smacked her lips affectionately. “I love it when he shares.”

As he went back to attending Harleen, he grabbed a pump-spray bottle like I'd seen at the dungeon.

“Eighty percent rubbing alcohol. Good for sterilizing, fire play, and for being a complete bastard.”

“Are you about to set her vagina on fire?” The young male asked curiously.

“Hotel won't let me.” He sounded grumpy at that. The Good Reverend took the long piece of iron bar and dipped the tip into the dry ice. “But this burns just as well. Remember to make certain you don’t have any bits of dry ice on your brand when it hits flesh.”

Another four people left the room, and I was fairly certain that one was a Dominant. Harleen
screamed as she came violently, her ankles fighting the straps as some fluid shot out of her and landed on the tarp laid out on the ground.

“Holy shit.” Carmilla gasped.

“Never saw cold branding before?” asked the Good Reverend.

“Saw the real kind back in my day. I meant the squirting.”

“Well it’s kind of rare. Any questions?”

The keynote dinner was given by a funny-yet-poignant woman who referred to herself as part of the Middle Aged Guard, and dispelled the idea that there was secret lore behind the Old Guard as if they were gatekeepers to the only true way to play.

Armitage leaned to whisper in my ear. “What was up with you at lunch?”

I glanced over to Carmilla, who was deep in conversation with Sadistic Cupcake. “I want to spend the rest of my life with her. Will she want the same? Will I be too old to pass as her wife-”

JP’s eyebrows shot up at that. “Have you two-”

“-no. Just saw how Jordan looked at her partner and I know I feel the same way.”

“Talk to her, Laura.” Carmilla's eyes were fixated on me for the briefest moment before I turned away from her gaze. “I love you both, and I wouldn’t be surprised if she is having the same or similar fears with you. I signed a contract for life, so she and I know where we stand with each other.” JP gave me a reassuring smile that didn’t help.

“Thanks,” I replied as they gave my hand a reassuring squeeze, “are you really conspiring with them for tonight’s scene?”

JP looked back down to their plate pointedly. “Not as much as Sadistic Cupcake is. You should go shower and shave... everything.”

Oh, crap.
The Kink Convention, Part Four

Chapter Summary

I expected this chapter to be longer, but I also expected to be done with the convention weekend. Sorry for the delay, readers.

I’m standing next to Jordan, wrists handcuffed together in front of me as I look between my Mistress and Lady HotPants. Even Jordan seemed nervous next to me as we stood there waiting.

Carmilla broke the silence, and it only made me worry even more.

“JP, go help Sadistic bring in the stuff we need. Laura, you and Jordan should strip.”

“But we’re handcuffed, Mistress.” I objected as Jordan started to take off her shoes.

Carm and LHP traded that unmistakeable Domme look and grinned as Jordan’s Dominant spoke up. “Then help each other. And be glad you don’t have to use your teeth.”

“No, I mean…” I sighed in the darkness. What are they up to?

“Yes, Mistress.” we muttered to our respective women.

LHP chuckled as she actually did order Jordan to undo my pants with her teeth. “She’s quite talented, orally.” I was surprised as she undid the button and unzipped me in two quick motions with her mouth.

My jeans hit the ground and I stepped out of them along with my trainers, feeling exposed and turned on at the idea that everyone could watch us. Jordan grabbed one side of my shirt while I grabbed the other and we struggled to get it off, until I figured out that I could bend over at the waist and made it easier to pull off.

“It’s still going to get stuck at the handcuffs… I felt Carmilla’s hands grab hold of mine and unfasten one of the cuffs, pulling the shirt off of my arms one at a time.

“Be glad we’re doing it this way, HotPants brought a pair of safety scissors soaking in ice water.”

Jordan yelped and I turned my head towards her, useless as I couldn’t actually see through LHP or help her out at all. The sound of fabric tearing informed me that Jordan was having her clothing ripped off as a type of kinky foreplay.

“Mistress, I like this bra.” I say quickly, hoping to save it from a similar fate. She unhooked the strap and pulled it off of me as I nodded my thanks. As Carm put the shirt and bra aside, I was able to see that Jordan was stark naked in the middle of the dungeon, eyes looking up expectantly at her Dominant.

That’s when Carm pulled down my panties as well and left me in just my socks as she put the familiar blindfold over my eyes.

“The floor is a bit cold, I’ll let you keep your socks, sweetness.” Carmilla’s voice was in a different location now and I tried to turn to face her.
“Thank you, Mistress.” Lips grazed my ear, but the voice was completely wrong for Carmilla.

*It was Sadistic Cupcake.*

“Don’t you fear, and don’t you cry, Sadistic Cupcake will tell you why…” She changed the words to the *Hush Little Baby* nursery rhyme as I felt my wrists put behind my back and the handcuffs ratcheted back into place.

Carmilla continues, “I’m gonna tie you up, and make you fly, if you flinch, I’ll make you cry…”

Lady HotPants finished up the impromptu nursery rhyme. “Here’s your task, it’s do or die… you’ll come together, now don’t be shy.”

*We’ll come together?* I wondered as I felt ropes quickly get tied onto me, into a familiar hip and chest harness designed for a suspension. What wasn’t familiar was the strip of duct tape on my pubic mound with some sort of plastic… “Mistress, is that a dental dam?”

“It is, it’s for the best. Trust me.”

*Holy crap, what are they up to?* The ropes start to lift me and I feel the ropes pulling me to lean back like I’m in a recliner, leaving me naked and exposed as I am hoisted up into the air, my toes scrambling for any purchase on the ground as I hear the rustle of a thick plastic tarp being put down beneath us. A hand grabs my left ankle and ties it back and outward, exposing me even more as the rope runs around the chain of the handcuffs.

*What are they planning?* I realized that I nearly resembled the logo of *Twisted Monk,* and wondered if they were going to do the same to Jordan.

As I had my weight shifted and was forced to lean backwards, I felt Jordan’s leg slide between mine and I understood why the dental dams were placed there. *This isn’t Carmilla pressed against me.*

People must have begun to crowd around, and I was glad to be blindfolded as I didn’t want to be the center of attention.

“Oh my god…”

“I’ve seen Cupcake play. This is going to be good.”

“Suspension and forced scissoring?”

The flick-and-click sound stole my attention immediately.

“Try not to move, cupcake.” Carmilla cautioned as I tried my best to fathom what I just heard.

The tickle of feathers brushed the lower part of my back and I flinched. Jordan yelped in pain and I instantly felt the sharp, sizzling pain of hot wax splash down my torso.

Sadistic Cupcake giggled in my ear. “If you move, you pour wax on your fellow submissive. If they move, the same thing happens to you.”

Jordan chortled at that. “So the dental dam is there to avoid direct waxing, right Mistress?”

“Indeed, my love. I’m not a monster.” As Lady HotPants replied to her, I felt Carmilla’s teeth graze my neck and I whimpered as she teased me with her teeth.
“What am I to do here, Ca-Mistress?” I asked, breath shuddering in anticipation.

“Stay still enough to not wax her. And we’ll stop once one of you orgasms.”

As she said that, I realized that my plastic-covered quim was rubbing against hers and my thighs clenched instinctively.

“Um, I’m not certain I’ll be able to-”

Jordan interrupted me immediately. “-shut up Laura. You’re going to give them ideas.”

What felt like one of those small vibrating bullets was slid inside of me, and I could only guess that the same thing was being done to Jordan.

“One dial, two vibrating eggs. Let’s see who comes first.” As Sadistic Cupcake chuckled that out, the toy began to pulse inside of me.

"You're breathtaking," Carmilla whispered into my ear, trailing a finger along a bit of rope that caressed the inside of my thigh.

It was just enough to not tickle as I shivered and Jordan screamed. “Restrained, helpless, and so sexy.” She moaned, loving our anguish.

I was helpless. I was exposed. The egg was vibrating within me and I felt Jordan twitch, making her lips rub against mine. The plastic came in handy as hot wax trailed down my torso and stopped at the pubic mound, as the wax dripped even more and Sadistic giggled as the toy vibrated faster within me.

The wax dripping on me hurt, but in a really good way that only made the pleasure from the vibrator inside me multiply. I realized that my reaction to the stimulus would get was poured on Jordan, and her own pleasure would get hot wax poured on me as well.

Pain was Pleasure. Pleasure was Pain. And Jordan and I were locked into an exquisite cycle of sadomasochism as our clitorises rubbed against each other through thin plastic.

“FUUUUCK!” Jordan screamed, making wax pour onto both of us and it set off a chain reaction as we both shuddered violently and orgasms hit the pair of us together.

I relaxed as Sadistic relented with the vibrating toy and the blindfold came off. I could see the splashes and trails of white wax on the pair of us as our respective Dommes untied our left legs and began to lower us towards the ground.

Holy fuck. I just came in a dungeon in front of everyone… and I don’t think I care.

Sadistic had that mischievous glint in her eyes. "I really enjoyed making you scream, Laura."

“I think I uh… enjoyed it too.” As I looked back at her, she blinked rapidly and looked behind me.

“Christina, request permission to-”

“-I’m fine if she is.”

My feet touched the ground as my wrists were being released from the handcuffs. My legs gave out and Sadistic Cupcake was there to help hold me up. My head lolls on her shoulder, and I am lost, lost to all this overwhelming sensation. I’m all shattered breath, exhausted desire and sweet, welcome oblivion. Vaguely, I’m aware that Carmilla is behind me as oiled hands gently rub my
chest and pick off the wax that landed on me.

Even with the blindfold off, I don’t seem to have the energy to open my eyes. I find familiar soft lips kissing me and I return the gesture as I float gently back to Earth.

“So beautiful,” Carmilla murmurs. When I finally persuade one eye to open, Sadistic Cupcake is gazing down at me, smiling softly.

“Hi,” she says. I manage a grunt in response, and her smile broadens.

“Remember where you are?” I nod and give her a reluctant grin.

“I think you’re trying to kill me,” I mutter.

“Death by orgasm.” She shrugs, smirking. “There are worse ways to go,” she says but then frowns ever so slightly as an unpleasant thought crosses her mind. It distresses me. I reach up and caress her face.

“You can kill me like this anytime,” I whisper. “Thank you, Sadistic.”

When she takes my hand and kisses my knuckles, I lean up and capture her face between my hands and pull her mouth to mine. She kisses me briefly, then stops.

“Your Mistress promised some time to JP tonight as well. Laura, would you mind if I handle your aftercare?”

I nodded groggily and said that I loved my Mistress as Carmilla kissed me once again.

“Go fuck up our boy good.” I slurred. Did I just kiss Sadistic?

“I certainly will, my submissive.” She purred in reply.

“I wanna watch, Cupcake.” I said to the Domme who was helping me stand.

“Of course, but call me Sadistic.” I shook my head and the room spun slightly.

“You’re too nice.”

“No,” she cautioned playfully, “I’m a horrible person, a complete rogue, and I will not have you spreading rumors about my having any virtue.”

“Okay, Sadistic. But you’re a good Domme.”

I soon found myself curled up in Sadistic Cupcake’s lap as Carmilla made a request with the DJ in the playroom. I felt lethargic and happily sated.

“What’s going on?” I ask as I melt into her embrace. I was somehow wearing a silk robe that I don’t recall putting on.

Crap, I’m losing time. Carmilla did me good.

“Aftercare. Your Mistress bet me that she could get JP into sub-space in three minutes. She’s about to start.” A blanket was pulled over me and lips kissed my forehead.

I looked over to the St. Andrew’s cross in the middle of the playroom as the music immediately stopped, distracting some of the players as something harsh and fast began. Carmilla had her
floggers out and swinging at a pace that would make speed metal guitarists envious.

She didn’t hold back, and even in my state, I could tell she was using her vampire strength and dexterity as I recognized Muse’s cover of *House of the Rising Sun*.

She did single hits, but exploded into a full florentine with the pair as the music swells, then goes back to a single flogger as the lyrics begin, but surprisingly able to hit even harder than before.

*There is a house in New Orleans*
*They call the Rising Sun*
*And it’s been the ruin of many a poor boy*
*And God, I know I’m one*

Carmilla resumes hitting with both floggers and then switches to just the one in the left, turning perpendicular to JP and changing up the flogging style and covering the full back. The floggers hit like gunshots, and all play in the dungeon ends to watch them at work.

*Oh mother, tell your children*
*Not to do what I have done*
*Spend your lives in sin and misery*
*In the House of the Rising Sun*

During the next instrumental break, Carmilla flips back to a full florentine, and the thudding echos in the dungeon as Armitage is screaming in release and delight as she slams them in beat with the near drum solo. This time when Carmilla seems to be about to slow down and go back to a single flogger, she actually speeds up, and I can see JP’s skin already turning crimson in the dark dungeon. *She’s going to draw blood.*

*Well, there is a house in New Orleans*
*They call the Rising Sun*
*And it’s been the ruin of many a poor boy*
*And God, I know I’m one!*

As she finishes, she drops the floggers and tears into his neck, and it’s obvious to me that she’s feeding on their blood. I tried to get up, worried that she lost control, but I can’t even keep my balance.

“Holy shit she’s good,” Sadistic Cupcake marveled, “that… didn’t even seem human.”

As Carmilla released her bite on JP, I saw a lack of blood there.

*She didn’t pierce the skin.*

I breathed a sigh of relief, glad if the worst damage is on their back and maybe a wicked hickey for the next few days. The adrenaline seemed to sober me up almost instantly as reality crept back into existence around me, knocking away the cloudy wisps of bliss.

I studied attentively as JP was released from the St. Andrew’s Cross and staggered a bit while Carm cleaned up and put away the toys in our bag. They looked really out of it and Carm had to use a fireman’s carry to bring JP and the toy bag back towards us.

“Looks like I won the bet.” Carm said, grinning as she was coated with a sheen of sweat. I sobered up enough to stand as she put JP back on their feet and I had his arm around me for balance as we made our way back to the hotel room.
“Fine. Tell me when you want to collect!” Sadistic called out, bemusedly. JP was out of it as bad as I was a few minutes ago, but they weren’t the type to need or want serious aftercare. Carmilla was every bit the cat that got the cream as she nearly sauntered to get the elevator for us.

“Mistress, what did you wager?” I looked at JP and had a horrible thought. “You didn’t wager us, did you?”

She seemed astonished at that. “I’d never risk my property, even with a sucker bet like that. I wagered a week’s worth of service.”

“So she’s coming to stay with us for awhile?” I wasn’t certain I was comfortable with that as we got into the elevator amid some strange looks from the non-convention people at the hotel.

“Babut needs a new playmate; I’ve been getting too busy with work blowing up and everything else going on…”

‘Everything else’ including the potential rise of Lophii, I mused darkly. It was nice to have this weekend respite before school resumed for me, though.

“…Hawaogopi understands, though. I’m not happy with the lack of response from the Brotherhood, either. Their Hohenheim and top Wardens were supposed to be here already.”

Her words didn’t make complete sense, but I could hear the concern in her voice.

“Send a rescue team?” I asked as Carm opened the door to the hotel room and I shuffled JP and myself in. They were coming to finally as they crawled into bed, exhausted and blissed out.

“If we have to do that, then we’re really boned. But yeah, tomorrow I’m sending Nat and JP off to find them. I really hope they aren’t lost inside a dimensional gate or anything.” She pointed to bed and we both stripped naked and crawled in, Carmilla taking the middle spot.

“Was that where you and Will…?” I drifted off as the phrase ‘took out an Elder God’ stuck in my throat.

“Yeah. Shortcut through hell.” She pulled me towards her and demanded cuddles much like a cat. “Can we talk about cute, fluffy things, like you kissing Sadistic Cupcake?”

“Oh god, that happened.” I muttered. “I’m sorry, Carmilla, I didn’t mean-”

“You were high on endorphins, and Sadistic displayed amazing restraint, considering.” She chuckled at that.

“That why you showed off with carrying JP that way?”

“Maybe. She’s a good woman; her primary partner is still deployed for another few months, and her current play partner Damien is more of a platonic thing, apparently.”

*Her submissive girlfriend is in a warzone?* As I thought that, I could feel Carmilla’s concern as she squeezed me in reassurance.

“We can only do so much, sweetness. Get some rest.” She holds me tightly against her breast as we spoon on the king sized bed, JP snoring quietly. And in this moment—this moment of love and panic for the unknown future—the intensity of this entire weekend overwhelms me, not just physically but emotionally. I am completely overcome with all these feelings. I am so deeply, deeply in love with her.
And I know that it will have to come to an end someday.
This chapter took the car chase scene from 50 Shades Freed and turned it up to 11, set it on fire, and then blew it sky-high with a few extra packs of C4 that I had lying around.

Get ready for a whole lot more action as we near the end of the trilogy... and for a whole lot more all-new material as I've practically abandoned the original plotline and I'm working almost entirely in my own sandbox... with the ideas from the Carmilla universe.

Also, if you haven't started reading 'The Hunter Carmilla Karnstein' by StrappyCat295, I highly recommend it. I may have patterned an upcoming character after this brilliant author who helped feed my Muse.

EDIT: "If I Only Were A Goth" is by Thou Shalt Not, not Voltaire.

Nat and JP finished breakfast in relative silence as they each had their own checklist of supplies to go over. It felt odd, considering that they were each armed and trained for completely different types of combat as they were simply searching for a few people who were running late.

“Don’t worry, Laura, if we run into any problems, I’ll have a fifteen-foot golem protecting us. You don’t get to be my age without learning how to survive an ambush.” Nat consoled.

JP was loading silver nitrate-coated thorium bullets into extended magazines for his pair of glock 19’s. “We’re just going to do a quick reconnaissance run over on a ley line. Nat here knows how to look into the next dimension without crossing over. Totally safe. Besides, I’m too pretty to die.”

I knew that he was trying to make me smile, but it only upset me more. As I looked to Carmilla, I noticed that she hadn’t put in her contacts to hide her kitty-cat pupils yet, and it reminded me all over again about the price she paid to kill Z’Klatheggon.

“You wouldn’t be loading extended mags if it were totally safe.” I tried to hold back tears.

“I’m being cautious. Besides, I’m out of grenades right now.” He shrugged.

“I know a decomposing transmutation that will do the trick.” Nat added.

I nodded, uncertainty clawing at my chest.

“Be safe, Armitage.” Carmilla said compassionately.

They nodded obediently. “Of course, Ms. Karnstein.” They leaned over and kissed my cheek, brushing away a tear that just fell. “I’ll be home tonight.”

I mouthed the words ‘love you’ as my voice was missing, and the returned the sentiment in equal silence. How had I gone from being jealous to accepting them as an integral part of my life?
Once they left, I played with the food on my plate, my appetite gone.

“Why couldn’t we go with them?”

“Nat can’t cloak all of us. JP’s the logical choice out of us all; they are small and well-trained for emergency situations.”

I balked at that. “Natalie can cloak? Like a Romulan?”

Carmilla chuckled softly. “Yeah, you didn’t hear the game plan? Right, you slept in. She’s able to cloak herself and it covers a meter in every direction. Not enough for more than just one tag-along really.”

I felt much more reassured at that as we made our way to the silent auction and the classes on the final day of the convention, though nothing really stood out as I was focused on the new school year and having to face Lophii’s attempt to rise soon.

We ran into Jordan and Lady HotPants outside in the smoking area later on that day only to see the pair of them grinning non-stop. Near them seemed to be a wedding party who gave the rest of us strange looks, while the bride was excitedly getting selfies with a few of the Leather pups and the groom seemed to be questioning his life choices. There was a new collar on Jordan’s neck and an engagement ring on Lady HotPants’ left hand.

“Laura, you should have seen it,” Jordan gushed, “we both took a knee and had a stand-off about who got to go first. We each had no idea what the other was up to, but we both said yes!”

“Oh my god congratulations!” I exclaimed, truly excited for them. “When’s the date? Where will it be? Do you need a flower girl because I am down for that!”

Jordan chuckled as Lady HotPants and Carmilla were a bit more reserved with their reactions. “Don’t know, maybe the BDSM B&B place, and of course!”

“Think we can get The Good Reverend to do the honors?” I asked, half-jokingly. Jordan paled instantly at that.

“Sadistic is ordained with the Universal Life Church. Pretty certain she’s called dibs already.”

Lady HotPants informed us.

“How’s your skin after last night?” I asked Jordan.


“So it’s normal to feel super-sensitive in those spots today?” I asked.

“Totally. The nerves have to recalibrate. She rubbed aloe vera on afterwards; we used the same bottle.”

“Oh. My memory was a bit fuzzy after all that.” I felt my cheeks go red at that.

“It can happen. Not like you made out with Sadistic Cupcake, right?” Jordan’s face split into a grin as I slugged her in the arm.

“I am so going to murder you if you tell anyone.”

“Considering it happened in the middle of the dungeon,” Sadistic Cupcake spoke up from behind
me, making me turn to face her with a nervous smile, “everyone saw and nobody cares.”

“So… are we cool?” I asked nervously. Sadistic tousled her hair, and I recognized it for the nervous gesture that it was.

“I feel like I should be asking you that question. Yeah, you kissed me, but it was post-scene and I feel at fault for kissing back. I’m sorry; I knew you were in a more vulnerable and endorphin-drunk state than I was. Are we cool?”

I nodded in understanding. “Yeah, I think we are. Sorry to hear about your girlfriend.”

She shrugged at that. “I send care packages, she’s on forced chastity. She won’t be walking for a week when she gets back. Now let’s see the shiny!” And with that, I knew we were okay.

“Enjoy the convention?” Carm asked. I nodded, pulling Baby Smaug out of the hotel parking lot and made our way to the highway to get back to Styria.

“You certainly know how to silence a room.” I smile, remembering our time in the dungeon playspace.

“I do it all the time,” she says and she grins at me.

“At work, yes, but not in a dungeon.”

“True, not here. I’m glad you brought me out to the local kink community. It has its fair share of numbskulls, but I’ve met some amazing people, too.”

“I’m glad.” I stop at a red light and gaze at her, trying to gauge her mood. Her eyes are soft and warm and slightly bemused. I decide to change the subject.

“Will JP stay with me when school starts?” I whisper, and suddenly there is dread in my stomach. She gazes back at me, her eyes darkening.

“I want you protected.” I glance back at the light, still red.

“I want the same for you, Mistress.”

The light turns green and pull through the intersection as I select some random music. The industrial-folk opening of Thou Shalt Not's If I Only Were A Goth starts to play as an impressed Carmilla gawks at me.

“What? I had my goth phase when everyone else went emo.”

“We’re going to talk about this later…” she mentioned before we broke out into similar chipper tones for a goth song.

I’d be thinner, I’d be taller
Go clubbing in my collar
With skin pale as a moth
Dressed in black, I’d go creepin’
While the normal folk are sleepin’
If I only were a Goth...
With my hair up, I'd look fancy
Like Siouxsie and the Banshees
With silk or velvet cloth
Dressed in boots, never sandals
And the room would be lit with candles...

The song died off as we both sang “if I only were a goth” together when I realized a call was coming in.

*Crap, it’s dad.*

I hit the bluetooth button and the call picks up.

“Hi Dad.”

“Hey sweetheart… I’m on speakerphone again, aren’t I?”

I sigh as quietly as I can. “Yeah, I’m driving back from a convention.”

“Oh, did you get any autographs or photos?”

“Um… it wasn’t that kind of convention.”

He gets really quiet for a second, and I’m worried he’s about to ask what kind it was. I decide to throw caution to the wind.

“Dad, I’m in love with them. And they love her too. The three of us are in a type of relationship.”

“They who? Forgive me, but could you please just use names instead of pronouns? It might be less confusing over the phone.”

“JP Armitage. I love them… him.” *It might help to also avoid using a singular ‘they’. “He loves Carmilla. She loves him, too… even if she won’t admit it. The three of us work well together.”* Carm arched an eyebrow as she lowered the passenger visor to check her reflection.

“Oh. Relationships like that can get difficult. Your mother had a-”

“-uh, dad? Do I really want to hear this?” My mother died when I was really young, and I had asked him all sorts of questions about her. *Her sex life wasn’t ever on the list.*

Carmilla stifled a laugh at the revelation.

“I guess not. But if you’re all consenting adults who know about each other, then I can’t judge you. Is now a bad time for us to talk?”

Carmilla spoke up as she sent a text. “Dave, yeah, it’s Carmilla. Traffic is looking pretty bad here so she’ll have to call you back.”

“Love you dad!” I say and quickly hang up, glad to out of that awkward conversation. “Thanks, Carm, I didn’t-” Voltaire’s song tried to resume, but Carmilla turned the volume all the way down instead.

“-sorry love, I need to call Detective Clark.” She had her phone out and whispers a romanian curse as she’s checking the mirror again.

“What is it?”
“Detective Clark? Carmilla Karnstein. We’re being followed.”

“WHAT?” I exclaim as I briefly check the rearview mirror, but I don’t see anything odd, just a few cars behind us.

“Black SUV, illegal tint job if I ever saw one.”

“I see.” Carmilla sighs long and hard and rubs her forehead with her fingers, tension radiates off her. Something’s wrong.

“Yes . . . I don’t know.” She glances at me and lowers the phone from her ear. “We’re fine. Keep going,” she says calmly, smiling at me, but the smile doesn’t touch her eyes. Shit! Adrenaline spikes through my system. She picks the phone up again.

“Okay heading north, and you’re the silver sedan?. Thank you… As soon as we hit it, yes, she will.” She plugs her phone into aux port, turned the volume back up, and put her phone on the dashboard.

“What’s wrong, Carmilla?”

“Just look where you’re going, cupcake,” she says softly. I’m heading for the on-ramp of the highway to go east back towards Silas. When I glance at Carmilla, she’s staring straight ahead. “I don’t want you to panic,” she says calmly.

“But as soon as we’re on the next highway, I want you to step on the gas. We’re definitely being followed.” Followed! Holy shit. My heart lurches into my mouth, pounding, my scalp prickles and my throat constricts with panic. Followed by whom? My eyes dart to the rearview mirror and, sure enough, the dark SUV I saw earlier is still behind us. I squint through the tinted windshield to see who’s driving, but I see nothing.

“Keep your eyes on the road, please,” Carmilla says gently, hoping to calm me down. I mentally slap myself to subdue the dread that’s threatening to swamp me. Suppose whoever’s following us is armed? Armed and after us! Shit! I’m hit by a wave of nausea.

“How are you certain we’re being followed?” My voice is a breathy, squeaky, whisper.

“The Dodge Durango tailing us has false license plates.” How does she know that? I signal as we approach the on-ramp. It’s late afternoon, and although the rain has stopped, the roadway is wet. Fortunately, the traffic is reasonably light. Dave’s voice echoes in my head from one of his many self-defense lectures.

“It’s the panic that’s gonna kill you or get you seriously hurt, so slow down your breathing.” I take a deep breath, trying to bring my breathing under control. Whoever is following us is after Carmilla, and it’s either James or Elladora. Or any minion they brainwashed into helping during the daylight.

As I take another deep steadying breath, my mind begins to clear and my stomach settles. I have to keep Carmilla safe. I wished my smart car could go over 90mph, but I’ll have to make due with this. Well, here’s my chance. I grip the steering wheel and take a final glance in my rearview mirror. The Dodge is closing on us. I slow right down, ignoring Carmilla’s sudden panicked glance at me, and time my entrance onto the ramp so that the Dodge has to slow and stop to wait for a gap in the traffic. I use the paddle shifters to drop a gear and floor it. Baby Smaug shoots forward, slamming us both into the backs of our seats.

“Carmilla, what did you do to my car?” I asked as the speedometer hits 90 easily. Too easily.
“Not now… steady, sweetness,” Carmilla says calmly, though I’m sure she’s anything but calm. I weave between the two lines of traffic like a black counter in a game of checkers, effectively jumping the cars and trucks. We’re so close to the lake on this bridge, it’s as if we’re driving on the water. I studiously ignore the angry, disapproving looks from other drivers. Carmilla clutches her hands together in her lap, keeping as still as possible, and in spite of my fevered thoughts, I wonder vaguely if she’s doing it so she doesn’t distract me.

“Good girl,” she breathes in encouragement. She glances behind her. “I can’t see the Dodge.”

“I’m right behind the SUV, Ms. Karnstein.” Detective Clark’s voice comes through the speakers. “They are trying to catch up with you. We’re going to try and come alongside, and see if I can get a look at the driver.”

“Good. Laura is doing well. At this rate, provided the traffic remains light—and from what I can see it is—we’ll be off the bridge in a few minutes.”

A gunshot goes off and there’s a crashing sound, and I try to whip my head back to see what happened.

“Okay, Laura, I think we have a problem.” Carmilla murmurs again as she gazes out the back of the car. For a fleeting moment, her tone reminds me of our first encounter in her playroom when she patiently encouraged me through our first scene. The thought is distracting, and I dismiss it immediately.

“Are they okay?” I ask, moderately calmer. I have the feel of my car now, and I realize she did more than just change out the engine. Driving this speed in this car shouldn’t have been possible.

I glance nervously at Carmilla, and she smiles reassuringly. Then her face falls. “Shit!” she swears softly. She unbuckles herself before reaching back and moves a suitcase as I hear something open up.

“I’m going to need you to trust and obey me, okay?” Her voice was extra calm, and it only served to distress me more.

“What do you have back there?” I asked.

“There’s a secret compartment in your tailgate that is supposed to hold the rails when you want to go fully convertible. Just like in the good old-fashioned bootlegging cars.” As I glanced in the rear view mirror, I saw what appeared to be an MP5A3. “But better guns.”

“CARM WHAT THE HELL!” I yelled in a panic. Gunshots rang out again and the deep thudding noises had me panic as I knew that the bullets just tore through Baby Smaug’s plastic panels.

Thunk, thunk, thunk.

“Three round burst, and decent grouping while on a freeway. They aren’t amateurs. Lower the roof.” The lack of panic in Carmilla’s voice was disturbing. Not amateurs means professionals, right?

Thunk, thunk, THUNK!

“CARMILLA WE’RE BEING SHOT AT!” I scream as three more shots hit, and I see the rear window crack but doesn’t shatter.
“Yeah, and the new panels were reinforced with kevlar and ballistic foam! I’m impressed the window polymer is holding up, though. Open the roof!”

I glance to my driver side window and notice that the tint is a much thicker layer than normal.

“CARMILLA KARNSTEIN WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO MY CAR?!”

Carmilla works the bolt handle to inspect the chamber before clicking the magazine into place and cranks the bolt back again to load the first bullet.

"I gave Baby Smaug dragon hide. Also, Detective Clark is dead." Her voice is eerily calm as she hits the button herself as the roof rolls back and she extends the buttstock, balancing herself by standing on her seat and resting the buttstock into her shoulder and aimed for the SUV that was coming for us.

There’s a line of traffic ahead as we come off the bridge, and I have to slow a bit. Glancing anxiously in the mirror once more, I think I spot the Dodge.

“Five or so cars back?”

“Yeah,” Carmilla calls out, ducking as more gunshots go off and whiz overhead. Before I can tell her to stay down, she’s returning fire and the cars behind us all start to pull over, clearing the way for the SUV to close in.

“Is it James driving?” I yell up to her.

“Can’t tell. Could be a man or woman. The tint is too dark.”

Fortunately, the traffic is thinning a little and I am able to speed again, weaving through the cars again.

“What if we get stopped by the police?” I ask.

“That would be a good thing.”

“Not for my license.”

“Seriously? We’re being chased by hitmen and you’re worried about a ticket?” she says. Unexpectedly, I hear humor in her voice. I put my foot down again, and pass eighty-five. Boy, this car can move. I don’t think I have ever driven this fast as I max out the speedometer. I don’t know how fast I’m going.

“They cleared the traffic and picked up speed.” Carmilla’s voice is calm and informative. “They are closing on us.”

Shit! Faster, Hollis!

“The button next to the seat heater on your dashboard? Push it.”

“It’s blank, it doesn’t do anyth… we are going to talk about what all you did to my car!” I scream in frustration.

“Talk later, release caltrops now!” I hit the button and a strange metallic jingling sound trails behind us. Small metal spikes cover the freeway in our wake as semi-automatic gunshots go off above me and I realize that Carmilla has a suppressor on her MP5, thank god.
Ahead of us, there’s a car coming directly at us from the wrong direction on the highway.

“CARM!” I call out, staring at the flash of a muzzle coming from the driver’s side directly at us. I instinctively duck down as Carmilla must have went full auto.

“GO RIGHT!” She yells as she ejects one magazine and loads in another. I do as I’m told and I’m surprised as the oncoming car lurched away from us and crashed into a car that had pulled over.

Holy shit she nailed them!

“Second car was simply stolen, the first one seems armored.” I glance into the rear view mirror and frown at the new cracks in the window.

“What about their radiator?” As soon as I yell that out loud, Carmilla sprays a hailstorm of bullets...

...and screams in apparent victory.

“I think we’re good.” She says, looking both ways on the freeway before closing the rooftop.

“These are professionals, right? They work as a team?” I ask, wondering if a third car might come by.

Carmilla shook her head as I started to hear sirens in the distance. “If there were, they are scrambling now.”

A truck lurches in front of us—Shit!—and I have to slam on the brakes and swerve to avoid a collision.

“Fucking idiot!” Carmilla curses the driver as she climbs back down into her seat. I am grateful for her improvements. “Go around her, Laura,” Carmilla says through clenched teeth.

I check my mirrors and cut right across three lanes. We speed past the slower vehicles and then cut back to the fast lane, back in the flow of traffic like nothing ever happened.

“Nice move, Ms. Hollis,” Carmilla murmurs appreciatively. “Head straight home, I’ll call Kirsch.” I slow, check my mirrors, signal, then move with surprising ease across four lanes of the highway and down the off-ramp.

The remaining streets are calm and seem almost too empty compared to the chaos we just went through. Even Carmilla sounds anxious as she’s unplugged her phone and calling someone. I zoom past three blocks but the last light before our home turned yellow.

“Run it, Laura,” Carmilla shouts. I jump so hard I floor the gas pedal, throwing us both back in our seats, speeding through the now red light. “Kirsch, sit-rep?”

A quick glance and I can see Carmilla glaring at me as if I’m crazy. “Eyes on the road!” she snaps. I ignore her tone as we make it to her place.

“Keep going; we’re going to circle around.”
“Everything okay?” I asked, noticing the way she’s checking her mirrors.

“I had my office firebombed, and now a hit team went after us on the highway leaving a kink convention? The first was a message, this was an assassination attempt.”

“Well the first was from your ex Elladora, right? Maybe this had nothing to do with it.”

She shook her head, listening to the phone. “Check again, Kirsch.” She glanced at me. “You’re saying all of this was just a coincidence? No. This isn’t Ell’s style, though. She’s never wanted to kill me.”

I wanted to ask Carm what Ell wanted, but a bigger part of me really didn’t want to know.

“So it’s James, or someone in service to Lophii.”

Carmilla nodded at that. “And, seeing how the Brotherhood of Paracelsus is missing in action… I’m going with the second one.”

“So what all did you do to my car?”

“I did it to all of my vehicles; removed every panel and had them armored to be bullet-resistant, and added a ballistics film to the windows as well.”

“And deployable road spikes, and you changed out the engine for something that can go faster!” I exclaimed in frustration.

“Hey, we’re alive, right?” Carm asked redundantly. “Are you seriously upset about this?”

“Yes!” I exclaim, realizing that I actually was relieved. “I mean, no… why the hell is this happening and why didn’t you tell me there was this kind of risk?”

We came around again and Kirsch gave us the all clear and I made our way into the parking garage.

“Cupcake, you faced off my ex at gunpoint. You knew I was going up against war lords. You helped me regain my sanity after I came back from blowing up an Elder God. I thought hiring JP and assigning them to be your personal bodyguard was enough of a flashing sign for you.”

I park the car and get out, scared to see the damage to my car.

“Okay, wow… that actually worked.” Surprisingly, we only have to replace the rear panel and the rear window.

“Theo’s been investing wisely into Corvae; their R&D is top-notch.” Carmilla said as she ran her finger over the gunshot that shattered the glass.

“I thought you said he was some sort of wall street hedge fund guy.”

She nodded. “Yeah, the Zetas understood that there was a threat at Silas and he took it on himself to build the framework for funding and weapons to deal with whatever may come.”

I frowned at that. “So they are doing the same job that the Brotherhood is doing? Trying to protect us from the paranormal?”

Carmilla shrugged at that. “I suppose; the Brotherhood existed for over a century and they research and use Alchemy and magic in their fighting. The Summer Society is much older, and ties into
Goddess worship and is okay with the use of magic. Zetas are the newest group and they are all muggles, for lack of a better term."

“That explains the thorium ammunition.” I mutter, remembering the crates that were in LaFontaine’s lab before as we made our way up to her floor.

Perry was watching Tara and pointed us over to Carm’s office, where Kirsch and LaF were cross-referencing maps while having a phone out on speakerphone.

Kirsch nodded to Carm a greeting while Armitage’s voice crackled through, as if a bad connection.

“We’re hidden in the parking lot behind the Ley Line Reactor,” Armitage sounds irritated as an inhuman wailing noise pierced the line.

“Damn wraith won’t go fully corporeal so I can’t decompose it!” Natalie spat, “Nor can I send my Golem to pound it into the ground!”

“What about the Summer Society? Jessie or Sam could attack it-” I wondered exactly what they could do against a wraith.

“I got Danny killed last time; I don’t want any more of their blood on my hands.” Carmilla interrupted me.

The wailing abruptly ceased as I heard a strange click-whoosh sound, which apparently made Nat and JP yell in surprise.

“Bro! Tell me you’re okay!” Kirsh yelled at the phone.

There was a lot of coughing, as if they were fighting to breathe.

“Yeah… I don’t know what the hell I just saw, but we’re clear.” Armitage gasped.

“That’s a Warden,” Nat said in reverential awe, “no… two Alchemist Wardens! Boss, I’m going to need to bring them in. They look pretty beat up.”

“What do you mean, two Wardens? Where’s Hohenheim?” Carmilla’s jaw was clenched in fear.

“Who is Hohenheim?” I asked out loud.

“The leader of the Brotherhood is called that; they wield the only known Philosopher's Stone. Makes them virtually indestructible.” Carmilla replied nervously, “And he promised to come deal with Lophii.”

JP replied on the other end of the line. “He didn’t make it; According to Brimstone and Snowflake… the Stone is lost.”

Carmilla punched her desk in anger, startling all of us. “Damn. Come home; we’ll treat the wounded and plan from there.”
“So you had a goth phase?” Carmilla asked, trying to get back on a more pleasant topic.

* Might as well enjoy the lull in the violence. *

I shrugged. “Yeah, I just started high school and half of my friends fell in love with AFI and My Chemical Romance, while the other half drooled over the Louis Vuitton handbags. I was the loner who wondered how many severed heads could fit into it.”

Carm’s face split into a grin as she nodded appreciatively and made her way back out to the living room. “In the early 80’s, I was in the punk/grunge scene while disco was dying a slow and painful polyester death. So when Victorian fashion returned with the Goth subculture, I enjoyed it. So much better than Georgian, the effort that went into getting your bustle...” She trailed off, realizing she’s confused everyone there. “Poofy dresses suck.”

“Who was your…” My eyes darted over to Tara and Perry. *Don’t say submissive. “...partner back in the 80’s?”*

Carmilla caught on while Kirsch and LaFontaine quickly made their way down to their lab, looking for supplies that might be needed when the Alchemists arrive.

“My black swan was named Kimberly. We hung out at Uncle Charlie’s South and pounded back beers to Black Flag and the Sisters of Mercy.” Her face fell slightly at a memory. “Will and I reunited there one night, actually. Nearly kicked his ass.”

“I thought you and him were cool.”

“He and I had a falling out in 1829 during the Decembrist Revolt in Russia. He left the family and told me to do the same.”

“You avoided your brother for almost… 150 years?”

“Seventy of those years I was buried alive. Mattie and I had a long talk over watching the moon landing about how I should get back in touch with Will. Apparently, she then took it on herself to tell him where he could find me.”

“Oh. So she wants to sleep with you, and you don’t like that, but you still hung out with her?”

Carmilla shrugged. “Maybe it’s because I’m just that good? Part of surviving centuries as a vampire requires having another preternatural friend who can relate when you want to talk about the late 18th century. And understanding why you sometimes look at people like juice boxes on legs.”

“Is that what you meant by ‘black swan’?”

“Yeah, people living the *stereotypical vampire lifestyle* for aesthetic reasons wanted a poetic-sounding name for the people who would bleed for them. I liked the term and went with it… Kimberly was homeless when we first met, which reminded me of Edith during the Great Depression. Oh, you should have seen the Hoovervilles...” Carmilla paused and looked at me. “Is it okay that I’m talking about my exes?”

“Most of them are long dead, right?” I covered my mouth, horrified at what I said. “Kimberly
could still be alive, I’m sorry…”

She could still be alive and old. Too old for Carmilla. Just like I could be in two decades.

“No, it’s okay. She… passed away. Officially it was some sort of blood disease, but she looked really sick near the end and I was already bribing blood banks to feed by then, anyways.”

My blood ran cold as I put it together. “She died from AIDS.”

Carm’s eyes watered as she nodded silently. “We argued over her heroin problem, and I knew how she was paying for it… as much as I hate Freudian Psychology, Kimberly was an echo of my problems with my birth mother.”

“Don’t mean to derail, but you and I have… you know…?”

“I’m HIV negative. Had chlamydia once and had it cured, making me order Kimberly to wear a condom from then on.”

“Hold on, Kimberly wore a condom? Like, a female condom?”

Tara’s voice broke my train of thought. “What’s a female condom?” Perry glared daggers at the pair of us.

“Tara sweetie, let’s go play in your room. I’m certain Ms. Karnstein would like some privacy.”

Even Carmilla winced and looked ashamed at that.

“So Will didn’t understand her and thought I was somehow ‘tricked’ into a relationship with Kimberly because he couldn’t wrap his mind around the concept that she was transsexual.”

You could see the light bulb going off over my head. “Oh.”

“You have to understand, as a vampire that was approaching two-hundred and eighty, I like that the human race can still surprise me at times.”

“I see. How were you two treated as a couple?”

“Oh, the bartender bemoaned the fact that I threw my gold star away, and I let her know exactly where she could shove it.” She frowned at the thought. “I don’t get why some people measure their own value by putting down others.”

The front door slammed open, JP had one arm around a girl nearly their size, pale skin and short chestnut-brown hair. She was wearing a dark brown trenchcoat over a basic white t-shirt and black jeans. Each and every vein I could see was glowing a dark red that reminded me of cooling lava. She looked exhausted and was bleeding from a wound over her left eyebrow. Behind them was Nat, carrying an equally diminutive blonde over her shoulder who wore a black and blue spandex suit, boots, and had a visor on like Geordi LaForge from The Next Generation.

“I could use some help, Ms. Karnstein,” Armitage said, huffing under the strain of the weight, “And where’s LaF?”

She scrambled over and scooped the fatigued Alchemist up into her arms, eyebrows shooting up as the dark glowing veins faded back into her skin and Carmilla recognized her.

“Kira?”

“Apologies for meeting this way, Mircalla. Didn’t think you’d recognize me without my
Edwardian dress and Bollman hat.”

“Yeah, you always said to dress for the cause… What are you doing here? How did you...?”

“Made a mistake in Tokyo, a year after we finished hunting the Plague Doktor. I read the runes out loud.” She raised up her right hand, and I saw a series of runes covering her fingertips as if her flesh had been etched by something ancient and powerful.

“Tokyo? You call that a MISTAKE?! ” Carmilla shoved the Alchemist off of her and looked at her in horror.

“I had no idea I was melding my body to an Elder Rune!” Carmilla backhanded Kira at full force, making a trail of blood spray across the room. LaF and Kirsch returned, First Aid Kits in hand.

“Carmilla! What the hell!” I exclaimed, taking a kit and kneeling beside the felled Alchemist, pressing gauze against their freely bleeding nose.

“She caused a ten minute earthquake that killed over 140 thousand people!” Carmilla muttered curses under her breath that I couldn’t make out. “The city burned for almost three days straight!”

Oh, shit.

Kira staggered back to her feet, grimacing in shame. “That was an accident. I was still trying to get a handle on my power.”

“There’s no excuses for genocide.” Carmilla bit back as the Alchemist over Nat’s shoulder came to and was standing on their own power.

“Oh, really? Do you want to compare body counts with me, Mircalla ?”

The visor-and-spandex-clad Warden was standing alongside Nat for support as she whistled with two fingers loud enough to stop the argument.

“Warden Brimstone, cool it. We just lost the Hohenheim and the Philosopher’s Stone, and Lophiliphormes is Ascendant.”

“Okay, Maegen.” Kira replied as I pulled the gauze away and the bleeding had already stopped. That was fast.

She turned to face my girlfriend. “Ms. Karnstein, I understand your perspective here, but we’ve got bigger fish to fry.” The bleeding from her massive head wound was clashing against the blue and black spandex outfit as she adjusted her visor and looked around the apartment and Kirsch held out his kit warily. She smiled and opened it up, using an alcohol wipe to lightly dab at what must have been where the blood came from.

Carmilla, however, was pissed. “Look, you two-bit rip off of Cyclops, I don't have time for the goodie two shoes act right now. What’s your name again?”

“Snowflake.”

“Really? Wow, you’re a two-bit, emo rip off of Cyclops. Even better . So you were with Kira here and the Hohenheim? What happened? Are you even a real Warden?”

Snowflake winced at that question. “Not exactly.”
“Not exactly? So what, you're like her *sidekick*? ”

“No. Trainee.”

“Oh! Let me guess, the Brotherhood decided this was, what, a shit detail?”

“Then what does that make you?” She replied bitterly.

Carmilla raised a finger at her, and I rolled my eyes at her childish choice of finger. “Pretending you're not here, Snowflake.”

Snowflake rolled her eyes at that. “Can you let it go?”

Carm scoffed. "Oh, just let it go? What is this, some frakkin’ Disney Princess meets dystopian angsty teen movie?? Oh, look! I'm a helpless teenage orphan girl!'-"

Natalie tried to interrupt. “Ms. Karnstein-”

"'-I'd rather be anywhere than here. I'm all about being clumsy and unwanted, except for being perfect in combat while in the middle of a love triangle between two hot guys! Despite having the world revolve around me, I live for long, sullen silences, broken up by an occasional goodie two shoes comment, followed by even more silences.' So what's it gonna be? Long, sullen silence? Or little goodie two shoes comment? Go on.”

Maegen’s visor began to glow bright blue and Armitage was already standing between her and Carmilla, cold-iron Kukri pointed threateningly at her. A flash of blue hit the blade before she slapped it with an open hand, shattering the blade like a cheap glass window. JP dropped the handle, rubbing their hand as if it nearly froze off.

“Get out of the way, short stuff.” *No wonder she was paired up with Brimstone.*

They used their left hand and had a Glock trained directly on her forehead.

“Your zero kelvin visor takes time to recharge. I put three bullets into the back of Lilith’s head before she reacted. Think you'll fare better?”

Snowflake’s visor went dark as she backed away, pulling the device off of her face.

“You're the godslayer?!” Maegen had fearful cerulean blue eyes locked into JP.

“Ms. Karnstein killed Z’Klatheggon, not me.” Armitage replied nervously, lowering his pistol.

“She’s a vampire; doesn't count.” She dismissed. “Not like yours does.”

“Hey, it still counts!” Carmilla interjected.

“Um, can we go back to the part where Lilith is a god?” JP said, looking queasy.

Brimstone frowned as she was forced to divulge information that was probably supposed to remain secret.

“The Brotherhood has concluded she's an incarnation of Ishtar. She was the only one with the ability to wrench apart the gates; but at a great cost to herself.”

“Hence her seeking more power from Lophii, and the few number of siblings I had.” Carmilla added.
“Also why each of you had one of her powers.” She added.

“How did you-?”

“-Hohenheim had a theory on it.”

“Of course he did.” Carm scoffed, “Bastard probably knows what’s going on with me now.”

Kira’s tight-lipped smile didn’t settle any of us. “Good thing you killed her, JP; she was known for holding a grudge.”

Carm’s phone went off, breaking the flow of the awkward conversation.

“Spencer, I got shot at! Yeah… One of the cars I shot wasn’t armored; the hit team had to improvise.” Carmilla turns to me and JP, her eyes searching our faces.

“You okay?”


“Whoever drove that Dodge is dead now and can’t hurt us, you know.” She hits a button. “You’re on speaker phone.”

“Confirmed; there’s a police report of an illegally parked car that was booted near a report of a stolen vehicle. Witnesses only saw one person there. I’ll look into the identities and bank accounts of the would-be assassins, maybe it can uncover something.” Both of us sag simultaneously with relief.

“Any police report on the massive shoot out on the freeway?” I ask, “Any warrants for unsafe speeding?”

“None whatsoever. They are giving it the Silas treatment, it seems.”

“Of course they are.”

“Hold on,” I exclaim in shock, “they won’t even look into the death of Detective Clark?”

Carmilla shook her head sadly. “Not if they can ignore it.”

“Will there be anything else, Ms. Karnstein?” Spencer inquired.

“Contact Theodore Straka with Corvae Corp. Tell him one word: ‘DarkWinter’. With that, she touched the screen to end the call. “I miss the phones you could actually slam down to hang up.”

“That was impressive shooting on the freeway, Ms. Karnstein.” JP said, hoping to cheer her up.

“Thanks; I don’t want to have to deal with that again, though. Take Laura back to her dorm with your Audi. I’ll have Kirsch work on repairing Baby Smaug.”

Armitage nodded and motioned me towards the doorway.

No… I want to stay here!

“Carmilla, hold on, we need to research-”

She had her hand up, silencing me mid-sentence. “No. There’s a target on my head. Ironically
enough, you’d be safer on campus than here with me. Besides, school starts tomorrow for you.”

I hadn’t even thought about classes.

Carmilla gently stroked my face with her fingertips, and I jump at the contact, inhaling deeply. *I had no idea I was holding my breath.*

“Do you think I can just skip the first day of class?” I ask. She laughs—a loud cathartic laugh.

“Who are you and what have you done to Laura Hollis?”

We both smile at that.

“I just… want to be certain you’re safe.”

“I’ll be safer without worrying about you as well.”

I understood where she was coming from.

“I'm still going to call you whenever I can.”

“Wouldn't expect anything less.”

“And thank you for the past two weeks; it was a great vacation from what we’re about to have to face.” I try desperately to keep my voice light.

“I’ve got a few aces up my sleeve still. And LaFontaine as a few as well.” Suddenly I’m shuddering and shaking.

“My legs feel like Jell-O.”

“It’s the adrenaline, cupcake,” she says. “You did amazingly well, considering the situation, Laura. You impressed me today.” She touches my cheek tenderly with the back of her hand, her face full of love, fear, regret—so many emotions at once—and her words are my undoing. Overwhelmed, a strangled sob escapes from my constricted throat, and I start to cry.

“No, sweetness, no. Please don’t cry.” She reaches over and, despite everyone else in the room, holds me in her arms. Smoothing my hair off my face, she kisses my eyes, then my cheeks, and I curl my arms around her and sob quietly into her neck. She buries her nose in my hair and wraps me in her arms, holding me tight and we stand there, neither of us saying anything, just holding each other. Armitage’s voice startles us.

“We should get going.”

Carmilla nods. I wipe my nose on the back of my hand and take a deep steadying breath.

“Here.” Carmilla has a monogrammed handkerchief in my hand instantly.

“Sorry,” I mutter, embarrassed by my crying.

“What for? Don’t be.” I wipe my nose again. She tips my chin up and plants a gentle kiss on my lips. “You are my beautiful, brave girl,” she whispers.

“Kiss me again.” Carmilla stills, one hand on my back, the other on my behind. “Please,” I breathe, and I watch her lips part as she inhales sharply.
Her lips touch mine and I melt into the kiss, our tongues slowly dancing with each other. I'm lost in the moment as my hand is pinned on her chest, and our hearts beat as one.

As the kiss ends, I tell her that I'm ready to spend the rest of my life with her.

Carmilla freezes for a moment in shock, my words processing in her mind.

“Uh… oh.”

*Oh shit.* I refused to apologize or take back what I said.

“Mistress?”

“Yes, Laura?” She didn't call me ‘sweetness’ or ‘cupcake’. *This is bad.*

“I'm yours. And you're mine, until my dying day.”

“Don't promise that. Forever is a long time.”

“I don't care; I know you're the one that I want to grow old with. Even if it's just me aging.” I try to play off the last bit.

The only word that came to mind to describe her expression was ‘unmitigated fear’.

“Carm?”

Her eyes darted back and forth between myself and Armitage, as if she were on the verge of a panic attack.

“Get her home. Now.” Carmilla dabbed at her eyes with the back of her knuckles, cursing quietly as she did. “Laboratory.”

As she turned and made her way down the stairs, Brimstone and Snowflake shared a look as they followed her down to LaFontaine's lab.

“Carmilla?? I love you.”

She paused on the stairway, refusing to face me.

“I love you, too. Please stay safe.”
A Storm of Crows

Where am I? The playroom. The lights are still on, softly illuminating the blood-red walls. Carmilla moans again, grabbing my attention.

“No,” she groans. She’s sprawled out beside me, her head back, her eyes screwed shut, her face contorted in anguish.

Holy shit. She’s having a nightmare.

“No!” she cries out again.

“Carmilla, wake up.” I struggle to sit up, kicking off the sheet. Kneeling beside her, I grab her shoulders and shake her as tears spring to my eyes.

“Carmilla, please. Wake up!” Her eyes spring open, silver and wild, her pupils blown wide with fear. She stares vacantly up at me.

“Carmilla, you’re having a nightmare. You’re home. You’re safe.” She blinks, looks around frantically, and frowns as she takes in our surroundings. Then her eyes narrow back into the feline slits and focus on mine.

“Laura,” she breathes, and with no preamble whatsoever she grabs my face with both hands, pulls me down onto her chest, and kisses me. Her tongue invades my mouth, and she tastes of desperation and need. Barely giving me a chance to breathe, she rolls over, her lips locked to mine so that she’s pressing me into the hard mattress beneath me. One of her hands clasps my jaw, the other spreads out on top of my head, keeping me still as her knee parts my legs and she nestles, still clothed in her jeans, between my thighs.

“Laura,” she gasps as if she can’t believe I’m there with her. She gazes down at me for a split second, allowing me a moment to breathe. Then her lips are on mine again, plundering my mouth, taking all I have to give. She groans loudly, moving her mouth to hover over the soft flesh of my neck.

I moan as all of my pent-up sexual tension resurfaces with a vengeance, flushing my system with desire and need. Driven by her thirst, she urgently nips at my neck as if to ask for permission.

“I’m here,” I whisper, trying to calm her, our heated, panting breath mingling. I wrap my arms around her shoulders, as I tilt my head in welcome.

“Oh, Laura,” she pants, her voice rough and low. “I need you.”

“Me, too,” I whisper urgently, my body desperate for her bite. I want her. I need her now. I want to bleed for her. I want to be hers… I need this.

Her hand reaches down and slides into my pants and I shudder as I beg.

“Yes. Please,” I breathe, my voice hoarse and needy. And in one swift move she buries herself inside me as I feel the sharp pleasurable pain from her fangs.

“Ah!” I cry out, feeling her suck and drink from me. She groans, and her lips find mine again as she
pushes into me, over and over, her tongue possessing me, too.

I taste my own blood on her lips and it doesn’t take long before I come violently, shuddering in her embrace, as I start to hear my name being yelled.

“Laura?” JP asks as I open my eyes and realize I was grinding my hips against them in my dorm bed.

“Sorry. Uh, nightmare.” I fibbed.

“Do you want to stop grinding on my leg, then?” They smirked a Carmilla smirk at me. “Or do you want to finish?”

I grab my pillow and smother my own face with it. “So sorry, JP.”

I so need a cold shower.

They shrugged, pulling the pillow away from my face and surprising me with a kiss. “If you need me to help you finish, you can ask.”

I scrunched my face in disbelief. “You don't want to, do you?”

Armitage shrugged. “Every once in awhile, I get curious. Or think that I am curious.” They raise an eyebrow at me. “You're really worried that I wouldn't want to, but still offer myself to you?”

“Well, yeah. You told me about your last relationship.”

“You're not my owner. It was an honest offer, okay?” Did Armitage just offer… sex?

I blinked, then blinked again as reality seemed to shift around us. I love them, but would that change anything?

“Um, thank you. That really means a lot; I just… have to process this, okay?” I kiss them quickly as I get out of bed, realizing that Betty and Jamie were still in bed together.

“That’s fine. You didn’t reject me like I feared.”

I gave them a sad smile. “Of course I wouldn’t.” As I said that, I knew my answer.

JP mercifully changed the subject. “So what was that you said last night to Carmilla? Promising to be hers for the rest of your life?”

“It just felt like the right thing to say. I didn't expect Carmilla to freak out.”

“Me either; it's obvious that she wants to spend the rest of her life… well, the rest of your life with you.”

“That’s the problem; I don’t want her to see me grow old and frail while she remains youthful…”

“She’d rather have you than not have you,” JP said as they rolled out of bed. I noticed their breasts as they weren't binding overnight. It was a bit jarring to see them in this way, but as they didn't try to cover up, our eyes met. They looked vulnerable there, which reminded me of how I felt when I first met them.

“Same with me, Laura. I want you to be a part of my life, too.” Armitage offered as they joined me
by the sink to brush their teeth.

“I can’t imagine a future with Carmilla that doesn’t include you, JP.” They actually blushed at that, which brought a smile to my face.

The sound of my roommate climbing grumpily over Jamie alerted me that she was finally awake her attention on the person I had been recently sleep-humping.

“...kay, I know why my overnight guest is here, but why is JP?”

“They are bodyguarding me for the time being. Carmilla and I got shot at on the freeway yesterday.”

Her eyes bolted wide at that. “Holy shit, are you okay?”

I shrugged. “Yeah, it’s the new normal, but we go to Silas, so there’s always danger here.” JP already had his binder on and was putting on his dragonskin body armor over it.

I remembered that Armitage had mended Will’s and tailored it to fit me. Out of all of the dangers at Silas, bullets seem so... muggle.

“Is this about your creeper ex-boss, or is this more of Carmilla’s drama?” She sounded a bit bitter at that.

“It was a professional hit job.” I said, skirting around the fact that it was probably both. As I got dressed, JP helped me into my vest as well, securing the velcro straps at the sides.

“Here I thought all we had to worry about was Stevenson being an asshole.” Betty wasn’t bitter, she was worried. I don’t want to think or talk about Stevenson, but Betty seems to have other plans.

“Yeah, um... my ex-boss is related to Carmilla. They apparently go back centuries.”

“I knew Carmilla’s vampire drama was going to follow you. So why did he go postal on you two?” she asks, cutting to the heart of the matter in her inimitable style. She tosses her hair behind her while we cede the sink to her.

“He was trying to get with me, Carmilla had him fired. The worst part has to be that she didn’t even recognize him, and he seemed really jealous that she was successful and dating me.” And that she was a lesbian. But why would that matter unless-

I shuddered at the thought, knowing that apparently vampires didn’t have any qualms over having relationships with each other. I’m glad Carmilla won’t do that.

“Ms. Karnstein, Kirsch, and the Alchemist Wardens are hunting him even as we speak.” JP glanced to me. “She didn’t want you to worry.”

“Well of course a man is going to get jealous over lesbians.” Betty rolled her eyes before stopping herself. “Not you, Jamie.”

Jamie shrugged as he sat up in bed. “I don’t get jealous like that. I tried to live as a very butch lesbian for years. Not my thing.” He winced and laid back on the bed, hand over his gut. “Oh fuck, it’s early this month.”

“What’s early this month?” Betty asks, confused.

Armitage was rooting under the sink and pulled out two boxes. “U by Kotex tampons or disposable
“Diva cup?”

“Like a shot glass for my mangina? Ew. Tampon, please.” JP tossed one over while Betty looked completely shocked at the situation.

“Right… you have a uterus and all that.” Betty blushes in embarrassment.

Jamie grunts as he shuffles out of the room to go use the bathroom. “I love that you forget that, Bets.”

As the door closes behind them, there was a very un-Betty look on her face.

“Was that wrong of me, and he’s just playing it cool for my sake?”

Armitage shrugged as I put a blouse on over my body armor. “I’d take him at his word.”

“It’s just that I’m straight, and he knows that, and… well, we haven’t been together that long, so I didn’t know he could…” She was channeling Perry.

“If he’s early enough in his HRT, then yes. Is he on the patch or needle?”

“Patch, I’ve seen it when we’ve… you know.”

Betty Spielsdorf is shy about her sex life? “Okay, you used to brag about the guys you banged, Betty.”

“Yeah, and he’s different.”

I frowned slightly, remembering what I had learned last night about Carmilla’s history. “Well, Carmilla dated a trans woman back in the 80’s.” I said.

“So?” Betty asked.

“Does that make her any different?”

“What? No, I don’t mean he’s different because- Laura, I’m as straight as they come.”

“Yeah…?” I didn’t like where this was heading.

“And, well, it’s one thing to sleep around with a bunch of guys in college, but a wholly different thing when you think you found the one. And he comes with a fair bit of issues I’ve never handled before, like not being born with a dick and wanting to be a puppy.”

“So you love him, but his vagina is a problem?”

“Only in the eyes of the law; we can’t get married.”

Jamie came back inside the dorm room, and it was obvious that he had heard what she said.

“Betty, you mean you?”

“Yeah, the cruise really made me start thinking of you in terms of ‘forever’. Don’t you want that, too?”

His face split into a grin. “Of course I do, Bets!”

As they began to celebrate and kiss, JP looked at his cell and reminded me that we needed to get
going for New Student Orientation.

“Laura, grab your gear. We need to get downstairs to wrangle all of the Freshmen.” Armitage put his shoulder rig on, putting a Glock 19 on either side before throwing on his grey ankle-length greatcoat.

Damn he looks handsome.

“Uh, do you think I should bring the Ruger?” I ask, remembering that it’s in my desk drawer.

“Better to have it than not. Just remember your ammunition is designed to kill nearly any preternatural creature short of Lophii.”

“Laura, is it safe to be on campus?” Jamie asked, looking concerned for Betty.

“Yeah; the vampires are coming after me, not you.” I looked around my desk. “Hey, have you seen my Floor Don packet?”

“No; shouldn’t you have received it already?” Betty asked.

I pulled out my call and called up Perry. She would know what to do. She answered on the second ring.

“Laura, hey, have you seen-”

“-Perry, I didn’t get my Floor Don packet for the Induction Ceremony.”

“Wait, really? Dean Morgan was usually really good at getting those out in advance. Try messaging her through the ethereal-net at Larissa.Morgan.”

I pulled a pen out and repeated the name carefully. “As in L-A-R-I-S-S-A dot M-O-R-G-A-N?”

“That’s it. Now, have you seen Kirsch? He dropped Tara off at school but I haven’t heard back yet.”

“No, I haven’t. Is anything wrong?”

“Guess not; Carmilla and the Alchemists went off without him today to try a tracking spell with Sam and Jesse from the Summer-”

LaFontaine’s voice cut through excitedly.

“-OH I AM GOING TO SCIENCE THE SHIT OUT OF THIS!”

“LaFontaine, you are not going to play with any of the Warden’s belongings!” Perry chided. “Sorry Laura, I have to keep my spouse in line today.”

I chuckled at the pair of them and hung up, going over to my laptop to message the dean.

“Laura, before you message her, have you ever seen the Dean?” JP asks nervously.

“Why would I?”

He pulls up a file on his phone. “Because one of James Stevenson’s aliases was Jodous Morgan.”

I go to the Twitter page for Silas and notice a significant absence of recent tweets. I click on the
Media tab to see the recent photos taken, and a familiar face appears.

*Power-suited bombshell blonde.*

“Oh, shit,” JP whispered beside me, “I killed the Dean.”

“Or she killed and possessed the Dean?” I offer weakly before noticing the time. “Oh crap, we’re behind schedule. I’m supposed to lead the freshmen to the union green, where the Board of Governors will-”

“Get away from the window!” Jamie calls out, and immediately Armitage has me pinned down to the ground, taking a knee in front of me and has both glocks out and pointed in that direction as a dark cloud darkened the sky… until I hear cawing sounds come from the cloud itself….

*That’s not a cloud.*

“You okay Laura?” Armitage asks as we realize that the threat is going away from us.

“Yeah, what? What was that?”

“A Storm of Crows, so dense it blotted out the sun.” JP replied.

"I think it's called a Murder of Crows." I replied as the emergency klaxon went off, the alarm signaling the immediate lock-down of the campus.
“Hey, call Ms. Karnstein.”

“No signal, JP.” I said in a hurry as I checked my phone. “Internet?”

Betty was up and on her laptop already. “Just the local ethereal-net. Isn’t that misspelled?”

Jamie shook his head. “Everything here is weird, you learn to just roll with it.”

“Laura, someone just posted a picture at the campus green… the Board of Governors are dead.”

I looked to Betty, trying to comprehend what that meant.

**Who are the adults in charge now?**

“Let’s get to the Green and see if we can find any clues, JP.” I removed the magazine and checked the chamber before tucking the Ruger into my pants, wishing that I already had the shoulder rig my dad was sending.

“Sorry I didn’t think about grabbing Will’s drop holster, Laura. If we can find a way out and back home, I’ll get more supplies.”

“Thanks.” We made our way down to the lobby where there were plenty of scared and confused students, namely the freshmen.

“The Induction Ceremony will have to wait; here’s the TL;DR: version. Your campus isn’t normal, and the supernatural exists. We believe that the Board of Governors was attacked by a Mur- uh, a Storm of Crows. Please stay in your dorm rooms and uh… I’ll get back to you in a bit with more details.” I ramble, but it seems to assuage their fears.

“She’ll keep contact with you over the local intranet.” JP added.

“Why is it called the etherial-net?”

“Why can’t I get on facebook?”

“Does the lunch lady actually serve eyeballs?”

“It just is, I don’t know, and you don’t have to eat them.” I reply to the questions that are called out to me.

“How can a campus get away with that?” The follow-up question left me wondering that myself.
“You know, it all seems okay once you go through the Induction Ceremony…” I mutter out loud, wondering what kind of power this university wields to pacify the students.

“The Illustrious Brothers of Zeta Omega Mu are still throwing their start-of-term party tonight!” A guy says as he hands out fliers. “One free shot to hottie co-eds, 7.0 and higher.”

His comment reminded me of Kirsch. Where is he? He’s too much of a Hufflepuff to abandon his post, particularly now that they are going after James.

“Hey, Zeta!” I called out to him, and his face lit up before recognizing me.

“Hey, I’m Ben… oh, you’re Brody’s girl.”

“I’m not Kirsh’s girl.” I respond testily. I’m Carmilla's.

“You sure? He said that you’re off limits, and that if any of us hit on you we’d get a pounding.”

WHAT? “First off, I can fight my own battles, thank you very much-”

Armitage stepped in. “Okay, bro-tein shake, did he promise that he would deliver the pounding?”

The Zeta stopped and had to think for a second. “No, actually. But I assumed-”

“-she’s dating his boss. His female boss.”

“Oh. The scary hottie.”

As soon as he said it, I couldn’t help but stifle a laugh. Scary hottie? He has no idea.

“So Ben, have you seen Brody Kirsch today?” Armitage asked, keeping us focused.

Ben shrugged. “No, but there’s no way he’d miss the party tonight.”

“He’s working as Carmilla’s personal bodyguard, the campus just got locked down, and you think he’s going to just going to skip work for a kegger?” I ask, bewildered.

“All the other Zeta’s have dropped everything. There’s this total hottie chick that’s practically the Frat Queen-”

I scoffed at, walking away from him. “Yeah, like that will happen.”

As the pair of us got to the campus green, my reporter instincts took over as JP did his best to secure the scene. My mind wasn’t looking at them like people, only as evidence and bodies as I used my cell phone to take pictures.

They all seemed to have the same kind of wounds, small cuts around the face, neck, and forearms. Defensive wounds.

The murder of crows had specifically targeted them as nobody else had died. The ground was coated in blood as I realized that the crows must have torn open the jugular vein, causing blood to pour out of their necks.

This was a targeted attack.

“Anything strike you as odd here, Laura?” JP asks as they look around the campus, “like the fact
that you have an on-campus hospital, and this isn’t a *medical school*.”

“*The campus really cares about the students*?” I shrug uncertainly.

“*And an on-campus cemetery*?”

“*The Alumni really love Silas*.”

“*Blue tentacle phones??*”

“*The university seems to have a semi-nautical theme.* *Strange, since it’s land-locked.*

“*And that has nothing to do with any latent influence from a certain Elder God that’s also a giant anglerfish in the Deeper Well, right*?”

“Okay, JP, when you put it that way…”

“Um, incoming from your six.” Armitage had his pistol out and trained on a shambling target as it made its way towards us.

“Laur… laura.” As she gasped, I could tell her skin was looking unnaturally pale and she was on the verge of collapsing.

*Holy shit, it’s Lana, I mean… Mattie.*

“JP, it’s Mattie. It’s okay.” At least, I hope it is.

“No it’s not, Laura. She looks like a zombie.” As Mattie made it out of the shade of the trees, she stumbled onto all fours and began retching.

“Came to tell- help.” She held a backpack with her that JP deftly pulled away once they approached her. I recalled that only Carm and Will had been given LaF’s anti-viral treatment.

*This is what a vampire looks like when they have to face the sun.*

“Oh my god, she needs blood!”

JP assessed the sickly vampire and put away his weapon. “Let’s get her in the shade first. Laura, cover me. If she tries anything, you shoot her.”

“But that’s-”

“-my *DUTY* is to protect you. I’m not about to let you get too close.” I nodded my agreement, pulling out my pistol and taking a shooter’s stance as they helped her up.

It was surreal; drawing down on a vampire on Silas campus and keeping Carmilla’s sister directly in my sights. *Please don’t do something stupid.*

As they helped Mattie up, I could tell she was only dry-heaving as she apparently had nothing in her system. *Didn’t she have a blood source?*

“Thanks, JP. I… need the hospital…” The flushed vampire mumbled once she was sitting under a shady tree.

“You rob the hospital for blood?” I ask uncertainly. Mattie nodded, tilting sideways as she did.
“She’s not going to make it, Laura.” JP muttered, pulling out his blade and huffing in an attempt to keep calm.

“I’ll bleed, JP. You’re the better fighter, and I’ve done this before.” He handed me the blade and I made the small scratch on the fleshy part where my left palm meets my thumb, right where I bit Carmilla when she fed from me from a cut before.

This way I have more control and can pull away if need be.

I winced at the sharp pain and saw the red line seep upwards, dropping the kukri and extending my palm towards Mattie.

“This is a one-time offer. We’ll get you back on your feet so you can go steal blood again.”

Didn’t she have a black swan of her own?

Mattie suckled from my hand, and the waves of pleasure that it gave me were foreign and utterly wrong. I felt my breath shudder and it took a great deal of willpower to pull my hand away as she licked her lips in ecstasy.

“No wonder my little sister calls you Creampuff.”

I applied pressure to the small wound, knowing that it would close quickly. “Got enough to go get some blood bags? And why are you out here in the sunlight?”

She nodded to the backpack. “Delivery for you. I’ll go raid the hospital, but I have to tell you what’s happened to Carmilla.” Mattie gasped a bit as she got to her feet and I could see the color return to her face.

“What? Something happen to her during her hunt for James?”

She shook her head, looking crestfallen. “She didn’t go. Kirsch is MIA, and the alchemists confirmed what I suspected.” Armitage rifled through the backpack and tossed me the drop holster for my Ruger. “Campus is locked down, but there’s some escape tunnels through the Dean’s House on campus. We’re going to have to defend that location and evacuate the school.”

Evacuate the school? It was sounding like a better idea the more I thought about it.

“Wait, what happened to Carmilla?”

“I noticed it when she cried tears instead of blood. Then she mentioned that the blood she took on the cruise seemed to go bad, and she didn't manifest her fangs when she bit JP recently.”

As I recalled each moment with clarity, I could feel chills rolling over my body. Oh, shit...

“The anti-viral that LaFontaine made? She’s turned human.”

Chapter End Notes

So there's the big friggin' reveal.

Carmilla's tears that weren't of blood. Her inability to manifest fangs. Her distaste for
the blood on the cruise. And now that she's not invulnerable and has her days numbered?

...how do you go from living forever to knowing you have an expiration date? That your body will start to weaken with time and that you're on a downward spiral of physical entropy?

This is where it gets good.

(tie in to the 'other series': this is where Christian Grey finds out Ana Steele is pregnant and he runs off to get drunk with Mrs. Robinson... which gets Ana crazy-jealous. I thought this was better.)
The First Gate

Chapter Notes

I'm going to try like crazy to end the series by the time Act III comes out for one good reason... I bet my solution is also going to be in the show.

Let's see if I'm right.

“Carm is human? As in, mortal?” Trepidation seeped into my voice.

“Yeah, and she took the news as good as one could expect. She got really shit-faced and called me.” Mattie replied with an eye-roll.

A flash of jealousy went through me at the thought of that.

“She called you, someone who wants to sleep with her, when she got drunk?”

Mattie realized her mistake and tried to back-pedal. “Yeah, but we didn’t. Vampires don’t get drunk on alcohol. That’s what threw me off about the phone call. She needed a friend, one that wouldn’t look at her with pity nor put her on a pedestal like some sort of heroine.”

“I wouldn’t-” I grimaced as I stopped myself. Of course I would.

“She lived for over 300 years without worry of deteriorating with age. Now she has an expiration date, complete with losing bone density and physical strength. This was the worst time for her to come face to face with mortality; right when we’re planning on destroying an Elder God. You know, something a bit more important than you worrying if your girlfriend might cheat on you.”

“Sorry.” I said glumly.

“I won’t poach; and she’s made her intention quite clear.”

Carm can grow old with me.

My heart leapt at the realization.

Carm will grow old and die.

I shuddered as that thought hit home, and I hated myself for thinking this was a positive thing.

“Am I supposed to be happy that she’s mortal? Or sad?”

Mattie scoffed at that. “I’m depressed at the thought. I am going to lose my longest living friend someday.”

Armitage pondered at that and their eyebrows shot up in realization. “What would Xander say? ’ I just feel weird feeling bad that my friend's not dead. It's too mind-boggling. So I’ve decided to simplify the whole thing. Me like Buffy. Buffy's alive. So me glad.’ We both love her, so it sounds right to me.”
“Yeah. Thanks, JP.”

JP went through the backpack and pocketed extra clips of ammunition before putting it on. “Okay, so my boss is in the midst of a personal crisis and I’m on campus in the middle of a budding apocalypse. First things first… why do we need to secure the Dean’s House?”

“We only want the humans to escape Silas. Hence the lockdown.” Mattie answered, looking for a shady path to get to the hospital.

“I guess that makes sense.” I reply, looking around the area. “Why didn’t you think of getting a parasol or at least an umbrella?”

“Didn’t think I’d need it.” Mattie said ashamedly. “I don’t go out that often, and only recently did I lose my black swan.”

I was about to ask what happened, but the look on her face told me everything.

*James is going to experience a whole new level of pain when I’m done with him.*

“Meet you two back at the Dean’s House?” Mattie asks as she turns to leave. “I’ll show you how to claim the mantle—”

“-what about being my floor Don?”

“Right; you’re going to need to do the live vid-streams from the Dean’s office to start the evac, Acting Dean.”

“What?? I can’t be the Acting Dean, I’m not trained-”

JP’s hand gave me a reassuring squeeze. “Who else is going to take charge? We can do this. Just tell them to get off your lawn.”

“Get off my…? I looked over to see some freshman trespass on the campus green. “HEY! GET OFF MY LAWN!”

The freshmen scattered, making their way towards the hospital.

*A lot of students were going towards the hospital, actually…*

“Oh, crap. We’re going to the hospital. Come on.” I hand my hand over my drop holster and JP got the message as they nodded in understanding.

“Laura, I can get my own blood.”

“No you can’t. We’re going with you.” Armitage said with authority.

As the three of us made our way to the hospital, we realized the utter pandemonium that was there. Students looked green in the face while others came in with basic cuts and bruises, but they all held that same look of uncertainty in their eyes.

“What happened?”

“Lunch lady was serving eyeballs! I don’t even think she was human…” One student said as his head was in a waste bin.

“I think I ate people.”
“The rest of kitchen staff was missing, and I thought it was weird, but… this is like, weird central, right?”

“Okay, definitely robbing the blood supply rather than taking a student to-go.” Mattie muttered as we walked past the waiting room, the staff too swamped to notice or care. Some of the students looked at us in concern.

“Mattie, what is going on? Why is this happening?” I asked.

“Can’t you tell? The nature of power abhors a vacuum. Killing Mother has set off a chain reaction once the school year resumed. Either the Board of Governors kept the Dean in check, or the other way around; it doesn’t matter now. The murder of crows was probably her dead man’s switch. Let’s hope there aren’t any more booby traps tucked in around here.”

“Well I didn’t kill Moth-Lilita.”

Mattie scoffed at that.

“Spoken like a human.”

“I am human.” I retorted.

The vampire waved away the comment as she ripped the lock off of the hospital fridge with ease, grabbing a few bags and tossing them into the backpack.

“Once you live past a hundred years, you start to see the butterfly effect from what appears to be a completely benign action… In fact, I blame you for Carm turning human.”

“What? She was already taking her-”

“-you don’t get it. She didn’t want to hurt you but still had the desire to tear into your neck and feed. All the time. It's our nature.”

“I was willing to bleed for her occasionally-”

“-do you think that’s the way we like to feed? Gently sipping from the cattle, just enough to stave off starvation? She was Mother’s favorite; the beauty at the center of the world’s rotting core, always got the best kills…”

“Yeah, I’ve heard enough of that. If she's going to live a mortal life, then JP and I will spend it with her and die within this century. Good luck finding new friends.”

I turned to JP, who tossed Mattie the backpack. “Let’s go.” We made our way towards the staff exit, leaving Mattie behind.

“Laura, wait. It’s not safe out there.”

As JP opened the door, we saw the parking lot begin to sink as potholes formed instantly, some seeping with lava.

“Are we on a volcano?” I asked, turning towards Mattie.

JP had their gun trained off to the left, immediately finding cover and kneeling behind it. “LAURA THAT’S NOT AS IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW!”

In the distance, I could hear a familiar voice calling out orders.
“SUMMERS! On my order, NOCK!”

“What’s going on?” I ask, making my way outside to see a firing line of Summer Society Sisters with bows and arrows.

In the distance, I saw that Sam was wearing the Tiwaz rune war-paint on her face as they faced off the Silas Cemetery.

“LIGHT!” In unison, the Summers lit their arrows and I was trying to find their targets. _Were they just doing target practice?_

“DRAW!” The bows were pulled back and I heard a deathly moan come from deeper in the graveyard.

“LOOSE!” As the flaming arrows fired forth, JP and I made our way around the lava-potholes and to the edge of the cemetery. Jesse was there and had placed some sort of force-field in place. Her _Braveheart_ war paint looked almost blood red today.

“Oh my god! What are you doing?!”

“Hollis? Kind of dealing with some ‘Alumni issues’ here!” Jessie shouted, sniffing the air.

“What the fuck is she?!”

Mattie flashed an evil smile at her while I had to stand between them before Jessie threw a hex.

“Whoa! She’s with me; helping the school, okay?”

“She reeks of death and decay. She’s older than Carmilla.”

Mattie laughed at that. “I’m older than the Roman Empire, darling. Matska Belmonde. Call me Mattie.”

“She in charge now that the Dean and the Board are dead?”

“No, I am.” I reply, forcing some authority into my voice. _Good job._

“RELOAD!” Sam called out, turning her attention our way. “You okay there, Jessie?”

Jessie waved her ritual dagger in the air, sending red sparks up like she were in the Triwizard Tournament. Sam nodded, satisfied. “So you’re the Acting Dean?”

“How did you know about that?”

“You really should read your Student Manual. So far, the Zeta’s have taken over the north-east part of the campus while the Alchemy Club is controlling the south. We’re holding the North West.”

“What? Already?”

“The First Gate has been broken, the floor is _literally_ lava and zombies are walking around. _Of course_ we’re all trying to contain the madness.” Jesse shrugged as if this were a normal thing for them.

“JESSIE, FIREBALL!” Sam shouted, and the redhead turned and jabbed her dagger towards the grave stones, uttered an ancient-sounding word, and fire fell from the sky and slapped the ground with a resounding thud.
“FOR ARTEMIS!” Sam shouted as she took to her double barrel approach to problem solving, while the other sisters pulled out machetes and huddled into a defensive phalanx.

“Gotta go help out my sisters. Keep us in touch.”

Mattie lead us into the Dean’s House, where I found an office setup and had to squeeze a few drops of my blood into the desk to take up the mantle of Acting Dean.

“Silas is so weird…” I mutter as the security monitors across campus turn on.

JP made a low whistle in surprise. “For a school situated on a hellmouth, it sure is wired.”

“I never saw cameras though.”

There was a button labeled Broadcast and I was about to press it. “Okay Mattie, explain why it has to be me.”

“You’re the only person with any authority recognized by this school that Carmilla trusts to save as many human lives as possible. Everyone else we thought would willingly sacrifice the student body to keep Lophii asleep.”

“Okay, but… Mother was the Dean? How did nobody know this?”

“She hops bodies all the time; at one point, she was possessing most of the Irish Rebellion of 1803. Poor Emmett; he thought he had a chance against the crown.”

“Wow. She really did get around. I mean, the Brotherhood Alchemists mentioned something about Lilith being the Goddess Ishtar. Like, goddess with a capital G.”

Mattie sighed, nodding uncomfortably. “As her first ‘child’, Lilith told me more about her history than anyone. She never even told Thutmose about the Valley Men and how she was bound in bones.” She looked to JP. “Go secure the perimeter.”

Armitage didn’t move. I pulled out my pistol and nodded to JP. “Go secure the perimeter. I’m safe here.”

JP obeyed as I turned to look at the monitors. “From the top, I need to understand everything.”

“Long ago, before even I was killed and turned, Ishtar was the goddess of fertility, love, sex, war… pretty much everything she wanted to be. Now there were others, and they all swore to protect mankind against the rise of the Elder Gods and the return of the Old Ones.

“The question was on exactly how to help protect mankind. Ereshkigal, goddess of the dead, wanted to see humans stop killing each other so much as her lands were being overrun due to senseless war. That pissed Mother off.

“Enki was the god of intelligence, water, magic, and mischief… kind of like Loki. He of course wanted to test mankind with all sorts of puzzles in order to make them smarter. He was partial to the Valley Men over the Hill Tribes. Ishtar, of course, kept getting the smartest people killed off with raiding parties and it made Enki upset.

“So Ereshkigal and Enki visited with the Valley Men, and together they conspired and bound Ishtar into a mortal shell, so that she may understand the pain and anguish that she submitted mankind to. Ereshkigal took the punishment one step further, and stole away Ishtar’s true form so that she could
never return to power, leaving Ishtar to jump between dead bodies so that she could have form, but always be bound to the earthly realm. Enki tricked her into believing she was Lilith, a demigod who had limited powers and whose job it was to help mankind.”

Mattie sighed as she looked up at Laura. “Obviously, you can see where it all went wrong.”

“No, I really can’t.”

“Mother found out about the trickery, and as punishment, she did the one thing that would most hurt Ereshkigal and Enki: she had the Romans attack Egypt and destroy the Library of Alexandria. She had found out about her true nature, but was stuck in human form. Mother figured out how to open the gates in hopes to get back her true nature, only to find out that her powers were tied to her true form. She settled for raising me from the grave, putting my soul back into me so that I could serve her.”

“Oh my god, you’re the first vampire.”

“Thutmose came soon after, and we were a happy family, albeit we were brainwashed to love and serve her. Her thirst for power and blood would often get us in trouble, but we spend centuries together, doing whatever scheme Mother would make. It wasn’t until after Mircalla got scarred by the Inquisition that she decided to give up on finding her true form and sided with the Elder Gods in hopes to gain more power that way. By this time, Thutmose and I were openly defying her as Mircalla and Wilhelm were her new favorite children. It was like a child got bored of cats and decided to get more kittens instead.”

I raised my eyebrows in surprise there. “So she always was a horrible ‘mother’. Glad to know some things stayed the same. So Lophii was here all along?”

Mattie shrugged. “I don’t know; a lot of weird stuff happened in 1904, though.” Mattie looked around the office. “If you don’t mind, I’m going to study her books and notes to figure out what we can do about this.”

I looked at the various screens and saw the Zetas using their tridents to spear the undead herd that was coming across campus, while the Alchemists had paralyzed theirs with some sort of fungus and were making a transmutation circle around one of the lava-filled potholes.

So far, so good. They really are trying to help the campus.

I cleared my throat and sat up a bit straighter before hitting the ‘Broadcast’ button.

You got this, Hollis.

“Students and Faculty of Silas, this is Laura Hollis… Acting Dean. During the summer break, our Dean of Students passed away. Our, uh, thoughts and prayers go out to the family that survives her. As school was to resume today, the Board of Governors were killed by a freak bird strike, leaving the leadership position of this campus empty.

“I have taken the mantle of Acting Dean and am hereby ordering the immediate evacuation of the school by anyone who does not wish to meet a painful, untimely death. The Summer Society, Zeta Omega Mu Fraternity, and the Alchemy Club may remain to help keep the peace in their current sectors.

“I know this seems unusual, particularly to any freshmen who were to be a part of today’s Induction Ceremony. It’s really better this way, to just get the hell out of here and maybe even get a tuition refund.”
I was about to end the transmission when I remembered that the campus was on a lockdown.

“Oh! In order to leave campus during the lockdown, there are escape tunnels through the Dean’s House at the center of the campus. You will be screened and verified as human before you’re allowed to leave, though.

“I know many of you have a lot of questions. And perhaps, if we all survive what’s to come, I can try to explain it to you then. For now, please pack up your belongings and make your way here so that we can get you to safety. And, I can already tell you, that the Bundespolizei will not believe a word of what’s going on here, so don’t even bother.”

“This is Acting Dean Hollis, signing off. Good night and Good luck.”
The evacuation was underway, and we were glad to have Mattie there in order to ‘sniff test’ the students to only allow the humans to leave. The zombie rising had ended a few hours ago and the cleanup was already underway. The Summers burned their undead in piles, the Zeta’s packed them all back into a mass grave, and the Alchemy Club refused to touch the dead and said something about how they would ruin some mycological transitions they were working on. At sunset, mushrooms grew among the dead bodies and rapidly broke them down and were reabsorbed into the earth.

*The Alchemy Club actually could make bodies disappear.*

“Oh come on! I’m human enough!” Ben the Zeta said. Mattie arched an eyebrow at him.

“You’re at least a quarter demon, Doyle.”

“And that makes me three-quarters human, right?” He hedged nervously. “Look, my bros don’t understand what’s coming and um… as much as I love them, I’m not here to be devoured by a freaking Elder God!”

“So I’ll just take a quarter of your body, then. So, left arm and head okay?” Mattie flashed fangs malevolently and it made the other students leaving seem nervous.

“Ben, why not help us fight what’s coming?” I ask, trying to diffuse the situation.

He laughed at that, madness seeping into his voice. “Oh yeah, take on something that literally wants to bring back the Old Ones!”

“How do you know all this?” I ask curiously.

Ben rolled his eyes at that. “Mom is part seer and was very proud of it all, saying that I got to be front and center when reality itself will be unmade and we demon-kind will rule the earth again. Dad of course rolled his eyes and told her that she was being delusional.”

That got me thinking. “How many of the students aren’t fully human?”

He rolled his eyes and looked upward in thought. “At, uh… least a third? I mean, Silas is the weird place where we all can be relatively accepted. We even got the pilot program to start offering scholarships to werewolves.”

“So all the more reason to stay and fight! This should feel like your home!” I exclaim in shock.

“Some Summer Soc girl took a shotgun to my grandfather’s face while another set him on fire. Do you think I want that for myself?”

“Well, technically, he rose from the grave, so he was already dead.” Mattie’s attempt to console him wasn’t working.

I motion towards the monitors. “A lot of your brothers are staying put and…” I looked and saw some Zetas tapping a keg on their front lawn, making me sigh loudly. “…apparently doing keg stands now.”

The queue of evacuating humans halted as the pair of Alchemist Wardens, Natalie, LaFontaine,
and Carmilla came through, all covered in dust and rubble. LaF and Carmilla were both outfitted in
the same gear that Carm and Will had when they faced off Elder Gods before. Even as she was
wearing the black BDU’s with MOLLE gear and her Dao, Carmilla seemed slumped and sullen. In
place of Will’s cutlass, LaFontaine had a pickaxe and rope tied around their waist.

“Kira and I are going to find the Alchemy Club, Hollis…” I barely registered Maegen as the pair of
them went by.

“Um, Laura?” LaF called out. “The heavy traffic through the tunnel triggered a partial collapse. We
went in to try and save people, but…”

Carmilla kept her eyes to the ground, but I could see tracks where tears had fallen minutes ago. I
tuned them out and made my way to my Mistress.

“Carm?”

Natalie frowned at Carm’s near-comatose state. “She’s uh… been in and out like that for the past
day. Perry even made her favorite meal, but nothing.”

I turned my attention to LaF. “Oh, where’s Perry and Tara?”

“Back home; there’s a panic room that’s built like a bomb shelter. They are perfectly safe.”

Mattie cleared her throat and spoke up to the line of students. “Okay people, the escape tunnel has
partially collapsed. We’re going to make a fire line. Put down your stuff, get into the tunnel, and
help dislodge the cave-in one large boulder at a time.”

The students looked to me as I was trying to meet Carmilla’s eyes. “Yeah, what the vampire said. If
you want out, we all have to help clear the path. Dump the large rubble outside of the tunnel,
preferably outside of this house.”

I pressed a finger gently under her chin, lifting her face to have to meet mine. “Carmilla, please…”

“I’m going to die.” She sounded absolutely laconic and dead inside.

“Someday. And so will I.” I kissed her lips, my heart breaking at her lack of response. “But it
might come sooner due to Lophii.”

“I didn’t expect Will to die. Nor myself, to be honest. Even when Danny nearly gutted me, I wasn’t
fearing my own mortality.” Her eyes met mine, and I saw her tears held no trace of blood in them.

Except for the cat-like shape, she is truly human.

“I know it’s scary, Mistress, but we don’t have time to worry about this.”

“I can’t keep you safe. I…” Carm looked off into the distance as JP approached and kissed her
forehead.

“Ms. Karnstein, that’s my job. We are going to protect each other, okay? You said Theo was
coming with a small army, right?”

“Corvae Corp Security. Yeah.”

“So we don’t have to worry. They supplied you with the ammo that took out Z’Klatheggon, so how
much harder can Lophii be?” I asked lightly.
“Der hungrige Licht, das alles verschlingt.” Carmilla muttered almost silently, and I remembered how fragile her sanity had been when she got back.

“The Hungry Light that devours everything.” Mattie translated, looking at her now-mortal sister with concern.

“So we kill it with ranged weapons. Bombs. Does Corvae have a guided, programmable missile?” I asked, hope fading as Carmilla shook her head.

“We’d have to steal that from a standing NATO army if we wanted that.” Carmilla replied brusquely, looking over the monitors before us. “What are the Zeta’s doing?”

I briefly glanced up to see guys staggering around drunkenly. “Start of year kegger.”

It was jarring to see how quickly my Mistress went from depressed to hyper-focused. JP shared my concern when we exchanged a glance.

They leaned over and whispered into my ear, quiet so that only I could hear it. “I think she’s dealing with major trauma and needs something to focus on instead.”

“I still have my senses and strength, Armitage,” Carmilla snapped quickly, “but you’re right. I need to bury myself in something, and Laura’s not on the menu, so this current crisis will have to do. We’ll deal with James later.”

_Bury herself in…?_ My body grew wet at just the insinuation of her, making me nearly blush.

She tilted her head until it was parallel with the floor. “And I found Kirsch.”

Nat gasped, and finally my attention locked onto the screen. “Why in David Bowie’s Name are they naked?” I ask, cringing.

“The better question is, why are they dying?” As soon as Mattie said it, everyone turned to look at the screens. Sure enough, the half-dressed and naked Brothers of Zeta Omega were staggering and crawling about, dropping dead left and right.

“Oh, I knew that Frat Queen was trouble.” Ben muttered, looking back towards the tunnel exit.

“Sorry, beefcake boy,” Carmilla had him by the arm and turned towards the door, “but we got a frat party to crash.”

JP and I shared a simultaneous nod as we went after them. “Mattie, stay here and uh… supervise.”

By the time we made it to the Zeta House, Carmilla was holding her side and panting, complaining about cramps on her side.

“This isn’t even the right week for it.” She complained, breathy.

“I think that’s runner’s stitches.” I sympathized.

“Runner’s…? Yeah, it feels like… crap. Don’t tell me I have the lung capacity of a three hundred year old.” LaFontaine shrugged, not knowing for certain.

“Guessing you never had to exert yourself when you ran before.” Armitage added we passed the _ZΩM_ gate, using Ben as our ticket in.
“Okay I got you ladies…” The four of us glared at him, “sorry, people… in. Now can I bounce?”

“Aren’t you worried about your bros?” I asked, pointing to the dead bodies littering their lawn.

“Can’t do anything now, and… oh god, can’t you sense that?” He visibly shuddered to something intangible. “The power… oh, god no…”

“Let him leave,” Carmilla replied, rubbing down the goosebumps that were raised on her skin.

Natalie seemed equally nervous, but that might have been because she was looking for Kirsch.

“Boss, can you smell him?” She asked, worried.

“In this sea of death and AXE Body Spray? No.” Carmilla replied, “And I was never good at smells. Otherwise I’d be gagging on all this.”

“KIRSCH!” I yelled out, seeing a few of the undressed guys try to get up and fall over, nearly dead tired.

“No wounds on any of them.” JP murmured.

Nat reached down and touched one. “But… drained.”

“So they bled out of nowhere?” I asked, confused.

“Drained of Chi.” She looked over the area and recognized something as she ran away from us. “Wilson!”

She knelt beside him as we caught up. He was half-naked and shivering, even as it was a balmy evening.

“Babe… I didn’t want to, but… hot chick was pulling some major mojo…” Kirsch shuddered as he seemed locked in a memory. “How’s my little sis?”

“Safe with Perry in the Panic Room.” She replied with a sweet smile. “Now tell us what happened.”

“Zetas were called in because this Lily chick wanted to be Frat Queen, and she was apparently really hot, so most of the bros were like, ‘totally’… but after the first few… you know, they got really tired and passed out, I knew something was wrong. But I wanted to like, stay here and do her.”

“Wait, what exactly does it take to be the Frat Queen?” As soon as I asked the question, I didn’t want to know the answer.

“All of the officers bang the same… you know. Ben took one look at her and ran, and then I really wanted to leave. Lily kept asking if I were the most beautiful girl I had ever seen, and I was like, ‘yeah’, but… the bros here don’t know I swing both ways.”

“That might have saved your life, Wilson.” Natalie said, checking her pockets for a vial.

“Nat, I can’t take your Elixir. You said it would kill me.” Kirsh gasped in pain.

“It’s for me, after I do this.” She grimaced in pain before taking a sharp gasp, pulling the Zeta’s lips to her own and kissing him. Seconds later, she was collapsing with her Elixir of Life in her own hand, aging rapidly as she fell unconscious.
“Oh, shit! Nat!” Kirsch pulled himself up and cradled her, thumbing the stopper off and pouring the viscous liquid into her mouth and making her swallow. She started to come to and looked up at him with loving eyes.

“Smart man. Understood my…” she swayed drunkenly, “...plan.”

“How could you do that?” I asked, marveling at the reverse-succubus action.

“I work with Chi. Which is what this bitch must have done.”

JP looked around and unholstered a pistol. “So we’re looking for an alchemist.”

Nat shook her head. “No… a vampire. Iliana.” She turned towards Carmilla. “Your family reunions really suck, boss.”

Carm just shook her head in bewilderment. “I don’t know her.”

Nat sagged in Kirsch’s arms and he helped her stand with support.

“She’s gone by now, Ms. Karnstein. But if I had to describe her, she was a total hottie with mystical seduction skills.”

Carmilla seemed to understand that. “Did she have sex with the… with your friends?”

He nodded regretfully. “It was an orgy of death.”

“So proximity and/or direct touch needed.” LaFontaine surmised.

“Mother always said there could only be seven. Matska, Thutmose, myself, Wilhelm, Elladora, Jodous, and now-”

“Iliana.” Nat mumbled. “She made all seven, right?”

“Any idea why that number exactly?” LaFontaine questioned.

Carm shrugged. “Maybe it’s like Horcruxes, and it costs too much to make more.”

“Seven gates…” Nat mentioned. “Maybe she had planned to sacrifice one per gate?”

“Thutmose wasn’t sacrificed, so if that was her plan, that’s ruined.” Carmilla frowned. “Hence why she didn’t flinch killing Will.”

“...and decided to side with Lophii.” I finished up.

“Now I really wish I knew what Hohenheim’s theory was.” Carmilla muttered.

“So the Brotherhood gets attacked before our big guns can get here, the Zeta’s get infiltrated and decimated from the inside…” Nat says ominously.

“The Summers!” I cry out, reaching for my phone and accessing the etherial-net to call Sam.

On the fourth ring, she picks up.

“Laura!” As the video came in, I cringed at the death around her. Jia was crying out in pain while Jesse stood over her, attempting to spell her into unconsciousness. “We got ambushed by a vamp; wasn’t trying to kill any of us, though. Just bit a few of us before Jia grew claws and tried to gut
“What happened to your sisters who got bit?” I asked, hoping in vain.

“They’re all dead. Jia is fighting it off still, but even with her werewolf blood she’s losing. The flesh around the wound is black and necrotic.”

Carmilla snarled at that. “James is here.”

Another call beeped at me and I apologized as Sam nodded in understanding. Mattie appeared, looking unusually stressed out.

“Laura, the Robespierre building has gone completely *Groundhog Day*, the Ley Line Reactors are fluctuating as if they are about to shut down, and a lot of the humans who were working on the tunnel have gone to circle the Lustig Building, singing and swaying in some language that I don’t even know.”

“I uh… Ley Line Reactors?” I ask, trying to grasp the concept.

LaFontaine nodded in understanding. “The campus power plant uses the natural flow of magic to power the school, much like any hydroelectric dam.”

“How bad can it get?”

“Fukashima?” LaF shrugged. “I’ll head over there and check it out; I really wanted to get my hands on Professor Parson’s research-”

“I’ll get it.” Nat said, leaning against Kirsch. “We’ll meet you at the reactor.”

I nodded, glad to see people were delegating themselves. That left JP, Ben, and myself out in front of the Zeta house, uncertain what we’d do next.

“What’s Groundhog Day?” Ben asked.

“It’s a movie with Bill Murray, it came out in… oh, how old was I then?” I wonder aloud.

Ben rolled his eyes. “Old movie, then.”

“Hey, I am not old!” I objected, feeling offended. “Hey Mattie, I don’t think we can do anything about the Robespierre building right now-”

A loud blast came from the south, shaking the earth beneath my feet while all the lights on campus flickered heavily. Ben cringed as he recognized where the explosion happened.

“Shit, I think Alan actually tried to do it.”

“Do what?” JP and I asked together.

“Open a temporal portal to escape. I warned him and the Alchemy Club about the where and the when; that he could accidentally tap into a buried gas line. Which is probably what just happened.”

“Mattie, did you get that?” I asked.

“Yeah, the little tyke was tinkering around with linear chronology. He took out a big chunk of the Alchemy Club with him.”
“Damn it! We’ll go… Carm?” I looked to my Mistress and saw she was pulling cell phones off of the dead bodies. “Are you actually looting the dead?”

“It’s called gathering clues, dumbass…” She scrolled through the photos and scowled at something. “So that’s my sister Iliana.” She scrolled some more before her face went stern and she angrily threw the phone away.

“What is it?”

“Mother liked having us in pairs, particularly when we were running one of her hustles. Ell pretty much replaced me as I was no longer her perfect lure.”

“So all of this is just another one of her hustles?”

Carmilla nodded, her raven hair catching a vague breeze that went by. “And James has been her partner all along.”
“Laura… Laura!” I feel a hand squeeze my shoulder and my eyes bolt open, Mattie having a finger pressed over her lips to alert me to stay quiet. I sit up and look over, smiling at the sight of JP and Carmilla spooning in the king-sized bed.

Did we… the details from last night were a blur after Levi and a few of the Summers caught and tied up a Brimstone dealer working just outside the Library. I hadn’t even known that crystallized brimstone was a thing you could smoke.

Since I was Acting Dean, I opted against a full tribunal and just confiscated the drugs from the quarter-blood Akritar, a Fae apparently known to embrace chaos. Mattie had suggested we remove her wings as punishment, but I refused to be as inhumane as King Stefan was with Maleficent.

I followed Mattie away from the bedroom and to the office, looking at the time.

Barely even seven am?

“Sorry, but you need to take this call.” I sat down and saw Betty and Jamie looking back at me.

“Laura… I mean, Acting Dean. We’ve got a major problem.”

I sighed, not wanting to have to deal with anything this early.

“Is it on fire?”

“No.”

“Is it killing people?”

“No, but I think you should have led with that question.”

“Then what is it?”

“Our dorm mates from across the hall fused together last night. I’ve heard of surgically separating conjoined twins before, but magically creating them?”

“Oh, crap. I, uh… have no idea how to fix that. Have you reached out to LaFontaine?”

“Their theory is that someone used Professor Parson’s anti-space device, and we’re seeing some major fallout.”

I shook my head at that. “But the Brotherhood shut it down already.”

Jamie winced at that notion. “That’s if you assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint - it’s-”

“…more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey… stuff.” I finish, quoting the Doctor. “So how are they?”

“Confused, breathing, but unable to drink water or eat food… they are just ‘merged’ at the rib cage; they have four legs and four arms and two heads.”

“Can you get them to Professor Parson’s lab to separate them?” I asked awkwardly.
“Unless we have a transporter from Star Trek, I don’t know how we could isolate one from the other.” Jamie replied, “and they have already made a decision.”

“So, what does that have to do with…” I really didn’t want to know this, did I?

“They are willing to sacrifice themselves to keep Lophii asleep.” Betty said darkly. “But we don’t know how to do it.”

I shook my head in disgust. “I am NOT feeding students to that thing!”

“Some of the students think that the tunnel was purposefully caved in, too. That the campus lockdown was designed for all of us to be left here to die.” Betty had to blink away tears. “It kind of makes sense, on a dystopian-horror level.”

Jamie looked like he had been trying to reason with his fiance for awhile now. “We don’t know if that would actually strengthen Lophii, rather than let it slumber.”

“Okay, I’ll uh… figure something out.” I ended the call and looked to Mattie. “What should we do for them?”

“Well, a bullet to their heads would be fastest, most merciful route.”

I recoiled at that. “Executing them is… murder!”

“They are dying already.”

I took a long breath, trying to figure a way out of this.

I am so unprepared for all this. I looked to Mattie and saw that there was something else.

“What else?”

“After the cafeteria incident yesterday, students looted for food and other provisions. Most of the on-campus stores have shut down or been completely stripped of supplies.”

Looting. Of course.

“…so we are essentially dealing with Anarchy? Where are all of the… adults??”

“Dead or singing around Lophii. Most of the teaching staff has been here for so long that possessing them must be child’s play for the Elder God.”

“Well a lot of students have probably hoarded snacks in their rooms, but I’m sure plenty depended on the meal plan. Are the student groups doing anything to help?”

Mattie gave an awkward smile at that. Oh, some good news.

“The Alchemy Club has, of course, harvested edible mushrooms. The Zetas think they can live off of beer, and the Summer Society has turned to hunting the feral hogs as a source of protein.”

“At least we have a fully-stocked kitchen here, right?”

Mattie’s smile fell.

“Mother didn’t eat food, per se.”
“Right. She ate and drank people.”

“She does have one excellent wine cellar, though.”

“Good. I can get drunk then.” I reply sarcastically as I look up at the campus monitors and see that everything is actually peaceful since the sun is barely up.

That was, until the Library decided to just vanish.

“Uh, Mattie? Can I zoom in or anything with these screens?”

She looked to monitor thirteen and tapped it twice. “Looks like the Library had enough sense to escape.”

“The library has sense? As in, it’s sentient?”

“Yeah, it will go to extraordinary measures to protect itself, apparently. I read that back in 1874-”

“Ugh, I don’t have time for a long story!” I said, rolling my head back in frustration. “Why can’t ANYTHING go right at this godforsaken school?!”

“Probably because the school literally is godforsaken.” I grimaced at that, looking for a shred of hope.

“So could we pray to some gods to intervene?”

“They really hate to be bothered. Or they’ll just ignore you.”

“But Enki or Ereshkigal-”

“Would probably trick or kill you for fun? Better to not depend on them.”

A familiar hand rubbed the nape of my neck and I closed my eyes and went with the sensation, arms and jaw going slack at the pressure.

“We got this, Laura. Make the announcement that Corvae security will be here today with provisions and we’ll be able to evacuate Silas just fine.” As Carmilla said that, I gasped in pleasure.

“Okay Mistress.” As her hand pulled away, I came back to reality slowly, the stress completely gone. “How is Corvae going to get in?”

“She can clear the tunnel. Theo knows about it; we had attempted to plan out for every outcome.”

A goat was running across the campus green, followed by the Zeta Ben.

“...the fuck…?” I muttered as other screens were showing pitchfork-wielding Zetas and bow-carrying Summers chase after him.

Less than a minute late and our front door was slamming open and shut again, followed by a deadbolt made from the previous century lock into place.

“HELP ME OUT!” Ben came into my office and I could hear the sound of hooves at the entryway. “Acting Dean Hollis, I need sanctuary!”

I looked back at the monitors and found the armed students banging on the door and demanding entry.
“Why are they trying to kill you?”

“Kill me? No, they want Goatie! The homecoming goat!”

Carmilla and Mattie exchanged a glance and tried not to laugh at Goatie the goat.

“Isn't it supposed to get sacrificed, butchered, and eaten?” I ask, confused.

“Well yeah, but if school isn't happening now, there can't be a homecoming, right? Which, by the way, we don't even have a football team, so how do we have a homecoming?”

I shrugged at that as I looked at the monitors covering the ley line reactors. LaFontaine had fallen asleep there while Nat went over Professor Parsons’ notes and Kirsch seemed to be keeping the reactors from overloading.

In the next room over, I could hear the goat’s hooves clopping on the wooden floor as it made its way through the house, terrifying Armitage awake.

“Who did...? Ms. Karnstein, is that you?”

“No, JP, I only lost my immortality. I still have my groove.” Carmilla replied, followed by what sounded like smooching sounds.

I had to get up and confirm that, as I looked around the doorway to see Carmilla cradling JP’s face in her hands, looking deep into their eyes.

“Thank you for last night.” She said lovingly.

“I live to serve, Ms. Karnstein.” They replied, equally sweet.

I cleared my throat to announce my presence. “Aww look at you two lovebirds. I'm going to get a cavity watching the two of you.”

“Hey, sarcasm and dry wit is my thing. You're the naive innocent one.”

“I'm not innocent anymore, Mistress.” I grinned at the pair of them.

“With respect, you two are rubbing off each other.” JP chuckled, getting a pillow in the face from Carmilla as she straddled them and the playful moment quickly turned into something much more.

The sound of the pair of them moaning made them pause and check in with each other, as well as myself.

“I love you and want you to know that the last thing I want to do is hurt either of you.” My Mistress confessed.

JP’s hands were on her hips as they waved me over. “I consent and gladly give, Ms. Karnstein.”

I stood beside the pair of them and kiss Carmilla gently on her lips. “I am fine with last night's spooning, and with whatever we're progressing into.”

“*He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home.*” Carmilla quoted.

“Machiavelli?” JP asked as Carmilla leaned down and kissed them again.

“Goethe.”
They resumed making out with each other, leaving me able to slap Carm’s butt in admirable appreciation.

“I'll go refill your glass of water, JP.”

They gave me a reassuring thumbs-up as I made my way to the kitchen.

I looked around the furnished kitchen and wondered why on Earth she would need all this.

Don't open the freezer. Do not look into the freezer.

I refilled the glass with ice and water through the door panel of the freezer and turned and faced a red-eyed Mattie.

“I know I'm wasting blood by crying, but I can't help it.” She wiped the tear away, licking her finger and winced. “Salty.”

I couldn't help but look horrified at her tasting her own bloody tears.

“This can't bother you; you've bled for my sister. Both you and your… paramour.”

“Yeah, but...” I did not know what to say. “Look, I'm sorry about what I said earlier. About having to find new friends.”

She waved the way the apology with a flick of her hand. “It's fine. It's true. I would not curse my worst enemy with immortality. I never liked mother’s petty games, but after she got Thutmose killed, everything seemed to start falling apart. We had this long philosophical debate between nurture and nature. It was why Mircalla became her favorite and Jodous was left on his own.

“Somehow she started feeling sympathy for him, and made Iliana to be his sister. Now she was a piece of work. Beautiful, narcissistic, but all Jodous could focus on was his whore mother selling off his older sister and being the less favored sibling.”

“Carmilla had her fair share of problems in life.” I replied, straining to hear what I could between JP and my Mistress.

Mattie turned her head and smiled wistfully. “I think the term is second base.” She looked away, guiltily. “She would want you there for the first time.”

I looked at her awkwardly, not expecting the conversation to turn this way.

“I was there for her first kill with Mother.” She reached into the fridge and pulled out a blood pack. “Anyways, I'm glad she has the two of you.”

“Are you going to be okay?” I asked.

“I used to think I wanted to see how it all ends. A hundred years ago, if you were 1/8 colored, you can be classified as an octoroon and banned from working in government and in Banks.”

“I think the term is-”

“-and now the Colonials have their first... oh what's the term in vogue today? Person of color? I have seen enough of humanity. All good things must come to an end.”

I wasn't certain how to respond as she went back to monitor the screens and I rejoined my partners. They were cuddling, fully clothed, and I could not begrudge the happiness in their eyes.
“Oh, thanks for the water, Laura.”

Carmilla smiled at the pair of us, and I knew that she had overheard the conversation.

“I love you both, and I'm willing to-”

The lights flickered in the room.

“Hollis, we've got a problem!” Mattie yelled.
The three of us made our way to the office, and each of them were holding my hands on either side.

“What’s the situation?” I ask, finding my inner boss voice.

“Well, we have flaming arrows at the Zeta-Summer border, and the Alchemists in the south have put up some sort of barrier.”

“No mushrooms this time? That’s a first.”

“No,” Mattie said cautiously, “they are using wild magic. It eats up the ley lines, particularly at this size.”

A call came in and Mattie took it. It was LaFontaine and Kirsch, scurrying around as a red warning light flashed overhead.

“Hey boss, you there? The Ley Line Reactor is going dry. We’re looking at a shutdown and immediate blackout if this doesn’t stop.”

Carmilla spoke up. “The Alchemists are wielding wild magic; I’ll try to get them to stop. But Lophii and Silas University are also tapping into the lines, as the chemistry building is bleeding from every law and all of the rare books here are blurring and moving their text around so as to avoid being read. It’s like the campus itself is trying to fight the Elder God, but Lophii is a step ahead.”

LaFontaine nodded. “Laura, as Acting Dean you may need to put out a message to ask for calm and to end the infighting.”

I agreed, making myself presentable and sitting down to start a broadcast. “Thanks LaF. Keep us informed. Kirsch, are you okay?”

“Yeah; mostly the pipes start to release steam and I just have to re-tighten the connecting bolts. This is pretty much steampunk heaven here… except that we could all die if I screw this up.”

Carmilla pointed to a different monitor that looked like a scene out of Harry Potter 7. “I found the source of the magic. They are fighting… oh crap, it’s James!” Carmilla and JP ran back to the bedroom to put on their body armor and were armed to the teeth as they ran out to fight them.

I turned to Mattie, worried over the pair of them. “Please go protect them.”

She nodded, finishing up her blood bag. “Yeah, sure.” She left in a blur, her vampire quickness causing papers to fly about the room in her wake.

Looking into the camera, I hit the ‘Broadcast’ button.

“Students of Silas, this is your Acting Dean. I know that resources are scant, but fighting amongst each other is not the answer. Corvae Corp security will be here soon with provisions, so sit tight. Also, anyone in the Alchemist district, please stay indoors as a very dangerous vampire is out there and attempting to gain access to the Lustig building.

“Again, please remain calm, stop fighting each other, and—”

The power went out completely.
It took some time for me to grope around in the dim light that came from outside, but I was dressed in my armor and armed with Sarah Jane’s pistol in a drop holster as well as a P90 with Silver-jacketed Thorium ammo slung on my back. I was ready for anything.

Except for my cell phone to ring.

I looked back up at the monitors, and some were flickering in and out as they got any bit of power to them, and I had to wonder if there was a backup generator that would kick in.

You’re wishing too hard, Hollis.

As I answer the phone, the screens start to turn back on as a strange whirring sound begins in what I could only assume was the basement.

Or the office can read my thoughts? I want a cupcake.

There was no cupcake as an unfamiliar voice rasped at me.

“So you’re the latest juicebag my Mircalla is fucking.”

“Who is this?” I asked, a cold shudder going through me.

“Oh, she didn’t tell you about me? Strange, because she and I? We’re soulmates. You can’t sever the connection we had.”

“You sound as insane as Sarah-Jane. Carmilla and I belong together. With JP.”

“Oh, Mother told me all about that poor confused girl Justine. I’m her first and only true love. What we have is timeless and immortal.”

Oh holy shit it’s Ell.

I racked my brain trying to think of something to say as hysterical laughter came out.

“Why are you laughing, Laura?”

“Because Carmilla isn’t a vampire anymore. She’s mortal, and going to live a nice human type of life and die in 80 years or so. She’s not yours. Bitch.”

“You’re getting a call via the ethereal-net.”

I looked to the monitor before me and, sure enough, I was. Creepy.

As I answered the call, I saw Perry’s smiling face from inside the panic room. Tara was huddled in the corner, looking terrified of her.

What’s going on?

Perry started talking to me, and it was the exact same words that I could hear from Ell on the phone.

SHIT.
“Come alone, Laura, or I will harm the girl.”

“Why are you doing this?!”

“Because I can. And don’t tell Mir or anyone else that you’re coming, or the girl is dead.”

Fear started to constrict around my throat. “What about Perry?”

Perry’s lips moved and spoke in unison with Ell as she put a pistol to her right temple, her cheerful smile juxtaposed against what all was going on.

“You have one hour.”

The line went dead as the gun went off.

“PERRY!!!!” I screamed as the body went limp. Tara had her hands over her ears, cringing at the murder that happened right in front of her.

She ran towards Perry’s body, took the gun out of her hand, and fumbled a bit to get the magazine ejected and worked the slide to eject the chambered bullet. She took the bullet and the magazine back to the bed she had been sitting on and yelled across the room.

“I changed the code when Ms. Perry started acting funny. Don’t look her in the eyes, even over video!” As Tara said that, there was the unmistakable sound of something slamming heavily against the reinforced door.

Don’t look Ell in the eyes.

My mind was stuck as shock and fear seemed to hold me in place.

Perry is dead.

I knew I needed to get there and save Tara. But I also knew she could mind-control people like Kilgrave could.

Don’t hear the voice, and don’t look into the eyes.

I knew that made sense on some level as Mother’s eyes flashed a different color when she sliced apart Will.

Quit stalling, Hollis.

The monitors started to flicker off again, as well as the lights inside. Either the backup generator was failing, or Silas was dying.

Tara is being held hostage, and Carmilla is with JP and Mattie against James.

Leaving the Dean’s house was surreal, as helicopters were landing with Corvae Corp logos emblazoned on them.

Theo’s team. He can sort out the campus.

The lights on campus were completely out, making the flickering blue lights at the tentacle phones look all the more ominous as night fell.
Was it night time? I couldn’t recall.

That’s when I realized that with the blackout, Silas’ lockdown was broken.

That’s how I got the phone call and the helicopters could come in.

I ran my way back to my dorm and looked for Baby Smaug, only to remember it was shot up by James’ hitmen.

*JP’s Audi - the submissive special.*

I made my way back to my dorm room, almost ignored the looks of the scared students who have probably never seen a 5’3” lesbian armed for war.

Mary Ringwold took one look at me and went back into her room, the door appearing to slam on its own.

As I entered my room, I saw it was empty. *Where did Betty and Jamie go?*

I couldn’t waste my time on it as I found JP’s keys and was about to leave when I noticed Danny’s MP3 player and headphones.

*She must have left them here the last time she was over.*

I decided to put it on, then zipped a hoodie over it all in order to conceal the P90. It would have to do.

As I drove back to Carmilla’s place, I turned on the player and cranked it up. The beat was slow and loud, speeding up until Trent Reznor’s voice pushed me forward and on my way to kill Elladora Karnstein.

*I am the voice inside your head
and I control you
I am the lover in your bed
and I control you
I am the sex that you provide
and I control you
I am the hate you try to hide
and I control you*

*I take you where you want to go
I give you all you need to know
I drag you down I use you up
Mr. Self-destruct*

Ell will not control me. I will not look into her eyes. I will not listen to her voice.

*I speak religion’s message clear
and I control you
I am denial guilt and fear
and I control you
I am the prayers of the naive
and I control you
I am the lie that you believe*
and I control you

I will have this cranked all the way up and I will shoot her before she can even talk.

_I take you where you want to go_
_I give you all you need to know_
_I drag you down I use you up_
_Mr. Self-destruct_

_I am the needle in your vein_
_and I control you_
_I am the high you can't sustain_
_and I control you_

_I am the pusher I'm a whore_
_and I control you_
_I am the need you have for more_
_and I control you_

_I am the bullet in the gun_
_and I control you_
_I am the truth from which you run_
_and I control you_
_I am the silencing machine_
_and I control you_
_I am the end of all your dreams_
_and I control you_

_I take you where you want to go_
_I give you all you need to know_
_I drag you down I use you up_
_Mr. Self-destruct_

I didn’t even bother parking the car properly as I shut off the engine and made my way up the elevator. I scrolled through the songs, found the perfect song to play next, put on a pair of sunglasses that I found in the Audi. I unzipped the hoodie so I could un-sling the P90 and readied it, pulling the hoodie over my head to feel much more confident as the doors opened.

I looked down the sights of the submachine gun, ready to shoot at anyone in here.

_He sewed his eyes shut because he is afraid to see_
_He tries to tell me what I put inside of me_
_He's got the answers to ease my curiosity_
_He dreamed a god up and called it Christianity_

I sensed movement ahead and put my back against the entryway and peeked around the corner to the great room. There were two armed people, looking at Carmilla’s violin. I didn’t hesitate as I took the shot, letting the three round bursts hit center mass as both bodies fell.

_Your god is dead and no one cares_
_If there is a hell I'll see you there_

Two more guards came out in surprise, their hands reaching for their guns, but too slow.
Four bogeys down.

Great room clear. I kept my angle tight as I pied Carmilla’s office.

Office clear. I made my way to the stairwell, down to LaF’s lab, and did the same sweep and clear tactic to the room to see it was clear. I went further and did the same to LaFontaine's and Perry’s room, Kirsch’s room, and the guest room that was turned into Tara’s room.

All clear.

*He flexed his muscles to keep his flock of sheep in line*
*He made a virus that would kill off all the swine*
*His perfect kingdom of killing, suffering and pain*
Demands devotion atrocities done in his name

At the end of the hallway, I saw a camera and realized that the panic room was right in front of me.

*Your god is dead and no one cares*
*If there is a hell I'll see you there*

**I didn’t find Ell.**

*Your god is dead and no one cares*
*If there is a hell I'll see you there*

I turned around, realizing that she would have to be in the playroom, my room, or Carmilla’s room. As I made my way up the stairs, my heart was thumping in my throat as I felt two or three punches knock the wind out of me and drop me to the ground.

**SHIT SHIT SHIT I GOT SHOT**

*Your god is dead and no one cares*
*If there is a hell I'll see you there*

A body was standing over me, and a foot kicked the P 90 out of my hands. I didn’t look, I didn’t listen. A blur of motion landed on top of me, wrenching my head to the side as pain took over and I reacted instinctively.

*Your god is dead and no one cares*
*If there is a hell I'll see you there*

I had the pistol in her ribs, pointed towards her heart. If I was going to die, so was she. I pulled the trigger, over and over, as I was now living out my very own nightmare scenario with Carmilla… but with her ex.

*Your god is dead (Drowning in his own hypocrisy)*

The smell of burned gunpowder was thick in the room as I recognized pain blossoming in my neck. Warmth was running down my chest as the weight that was on me vanished, and I stumbled back with the pistol still in my hand.

*and no one cares (Burning with your god in humility)*

The room spun as I sat up, Ell looking at me in horror as I raised the weapon and squeezed off another two shots. I wasn’t certain if I could hit my mark or not.
If there is a hell (Will you die for this?)

Ell’s head was misshapen as she fell to the ground. I tried to cry out, but found my voice was gurgled and my vision was blurring. I dropped the gun and fumbled for my phone to dial 911.

I’ll see you there

I rolled onto my side, unable to make the phone call, hoping that I wouldn’t drown in my own blood as everything faded to black.
The Message

“How is my little girl?”

“Mr. Hollis, Laura’s in a coma.”

“I was told it was just-”

“The blood loss was significant, but not lethal. Her head injury, however, complicated things.”

“She'll be okay, right?”

“She may never wake up again, and you're the next of kin, so... there are choices that must be made.”

“Can I talk to her? Will she hear me?”

“It can’t hurt.”

“Laura, sweetie, it’s Dad. I just want to let you know I’m here and you had amazing grouping.”

Carmilla moves frantically, compelled by her fear, her lust, her desire, her—love? I don’t know, but I meet her thrust for thrust, welcoming her.

“Laura,” she growls almost inarticulately, and she comes powerfully, shuddering into me, her face strained, her body rigid, before she collapses with her full weight onto me, panting, and she leaves me hanging in need. Holy shit.

I’m at the edge, and I think Carmilla is too tired to finish me off as I roll her off of me. I lick my fingers and delve into myself, but it’s not the same. Carmilla struggled to turn off the vibrator in her Tango and was trying to recover.

This is not my night. I am practically writhing with need and I don’t think I can get myself off.

JP and I exchanged a glance as they moved closer to touch me. I couldn’t help the words that came out of my mouth.
“Please.” I was begging and needy, and my body wanted fulfillment, and they were one of my partners. I looked ashamed at having to ask for it, but before I could look away, I felt their lips press against mine.

Armitage is straddling me, gazing down at me as if seeing me for the first time.

“Oh, Laura. Of course.” They lean down and kiss me tenderly.

“You sure?” I breathe, caressing his lovely face. JP nods, but looks nervous and yet most definitely aroused.

They bite their bottom lip and stare intently into my eyes as if finally recognizing where we are.

“Yes. You?” they asks, concern evident in their voice.

“Oh, Laura. Of course.” They lean down and kiss me tenderly.

“You sure?” I breathe, caressing his lovely face. JP nods, but looks nervous and yet most definitely aroused.

They bite their bottom lip and stare intently into my eyes as if finally recognizing where we are.

“Yes. You?” they asks, concern evident in their voice.

“Um...” I wriggle beneath them, and after a moment JP smiles, a slow carnal smile.

Holy shit he’s handsome.

“Mrs. Karnstein, you have needs,” they murmur. JP kisses me swiftly, then scoots off the bed. Kneeling on the floor at the end of the bed, they reach up and grabs me just above the knees to pull me toward them so my behind is on the edge of the bed.

“Sit up,” he murmurs. I struggle into a sitting position, my hair falling like a veil around me, down to my breasts.

JP’s gaze holds mine as they slowly and gently push my legs apart as far as they’ll go. I lean back on my hands—knowing full well what they’re going to do.

But... um...

“You are so amazing, Laura,” JP breathes, and I watch their head dip and plant a trail of kisses up my right thigh, heading north. My whole body clenches in anticipation. JP glances up at me, eyes darkening through long lashes.

“Watch,” they order as their mouth is on me.

Oh god. I cry out as the world is concentrated at the apex of my thighs, and it’s so erotic—Fuck—watching it happen. Watching their tongue against what feels like the most sensitive part of my body. And JP shows no mercy, teasing and taunting, worshipping me. My body tenses and my arms start to tremble from the strain of staying upright.

“No…. ah,” I whimper.

Gently, they ease one long finger inside me, and I can bear it no more, collapsing back onto the bed, relishing this mouth and fingers on and in me. Slowly and gently, JP massages that sweet, sweet spot deep inside me. Dazed, Carmilla rolls over and kisses me, lips trailing down and she bites my neck... not to draw blood, but to give me just enough pain. And that does it—I’m gone.

I explode around them, crying out an incoherent rendition of their name as my intense orgasm arches my back off the bed. I think I see stars it’s such a visceral primal feeling... Vaguely I’m aware that JP’s nuzzling my belly, giving me soft, sweet kisses as Carmilla is kissing my lips. Reaching down, I caress JP’s hair.

“I’m not finished with you yet,” they murmurs. And before I’ve fully come back to myself, they are reaching for me, climbing onto the bed and between my legs, putting on the fuze tango and activating the attached vibrator.
I gasp as they fill me. *Holy cow…*

“Oh, Laura,” JP breathes as they wrap their arms around me and stills, cradling my head and kissing my face before kissing Carmilla.

JP flexes their hips, and pleasure spikes hot and hard from deep within me.

“Ah,” I moan, and Carm’s lips are on mine again as JP slowly, oh so slowly, goes in and out of me, making me shudder as a second orgasm is on the way. I throw my arms around their neck, surrendering to the gentle rhythm and to wherever JP will take me. I flex my thighs, leaning backward, and tilt my head back, my mouth open wide in a silent expression of my pleasure, reveling in her sweet lovemaking.

“Laura,” Carmilla breathes, and she leans down, kissing my jaw and throat. Holding me tight, JP is slowly easing in and out, pushing me... higher and higher... so exquisitely timed —a fluid carnal force. Blissful pleasure radiates outward from deep, deep inside me as JP holds me so intimately.

“I love you, Laura,” JP whispers close to my ear, their voice low and harsh, and rocks into me again—in, out, in, out. I curl my hands back around their neck and into their hair.

“I love you both... so much.” I find the pair of them gazing at me, and all I see is their love, shining bright and bold in the soft glow of the playroom light. And as I feel my body build toward my release, I realize this is what I wanted—this connection, this demonstration of our shared love.

“Come for your Mistress,” Carmilla whispers, her voice low. I let go as my body tightens at the sound of her voice and JP’s fucking, and I come loudly, spiraling into an intense climax. JP stills, forehead pressed against mine, as they softly whispers my name, wraps their arms around me, and pumps into me a few more times until they find their own release. Armitage lifts me gently and lays me on the bed. I lie back on the bed between them, curled in in both of my partner’s arms, wrung out and finally sated as Carmilla nuzzles my neck.

“Dissecting something makes it less scary, boss, and it won’t hurt you—”

“-studying the Old Ones will drive you mad and kill you, LaF.”

“Fiends like your sister, *who serves Lophii I might add,* killed Perry. I’ve got **nothing** left to lose!”

“I don’t want to lose you, too!”

“She was my wife! At least you still have one of your partners!”

“Get. Out.”
I was walking in a forest, and a familiar redhead was using sandpaper to smooth out something. As I approached her, I realized she was making her own bow.

“Wow, you’re good at that.” I marvel, noticing the pile of dark feathers and thin bamboo rods that have also been smoothed out. “What kind of feathers are those?”

“Pheasant, Duck, and Turkey.” I notice the epoxy glue and smirk at her cunning.

“Are you doing this entirely from scratch?”

She shrugs at the glue. “I’m not using anything that they wouldn’t have used back then… had they our modern technology, Hollis.”

The way she said my name was familiar, as I moved to see her face. I couldn’t make anything out, as it was indefinable. But her eyes shone inhumanly bright gold.

“Danny?” I ask, as the face started to look more familiar.

“In part, yes.” As she smiled down at me, I ran forward and hugged her tightly.

“I’ve missed you!”

“We haven’t missed you. we’ve checked in on you from time to time when not part of the Wild Hunt.”

I pulled away, her words hitting home. “In part… oh, merciful Zeus, I’m dead!”

_Holy shit-snacks I just glomp-hugged a goddess, didn’t I?_

“You’re not dead yet. In the chest of young Tara beats the heart of an Amazon. Hippolyta herself is proud of her cunning and drive.”

“I’m not dead yet? Wait, are all of the Greek gods and goddesses real? What about the other pantheons?”

“We all are, yet only the ones who are remembered and revered have any power left to commune with mankind.”

"The Flying Spaghetti Monster?"

"I can sic a wild boar on you." She smiled so I knew she was kidding.

I knew then who she was.

“Artemis, may I talk to Danny?”

She nodded kindly as her face seemed to twitch and I recognized the blue eyes and square jaw of my best friend and almost lover.

“Hey, short stack.”

“Where are you? How are you? What do you do all day?”

“I live in the Elysian Fields with Artemis and all of the Sisterhood who proved themselves worthy.”
“I’m glad then… and sorry that Jia has died while I’m Acting Dean.”

Danny shook her head. “Never mourn a good death. She’s in transit to join us.”

I chuckled as Danny worked on making an arrow. “That’s what Sam said.”

“She’s a warrior and a believer. Listen to her.” As Danny sanded the bamboo smooth, she looked down the length of it and frowned.

“What is it?”

“It’s not your time yet; you must go back. Artemis has a message and a gift for you.”

I seemed perplexed at that. “What is it?”

“Carmilla will fail without the Sword of Hastur.”

Something Carmilla said sparked a memory. He Who Walks Behind. The name alone put chills all over my body. The sword consumes the owner.

“But the sword is suicide!”

Danny nodded. “It is. But it must be used to destroy the Hungry Light first. Otherwise, Lophiliformes is invulnerable.”

“Lophi is Ascendant.” I replied automatically. It is on its way to be an Old One.

“Now you understand what must be done.”

I nodded, the weight of the world on my shoulders.

I was willing to die for Tara.

“Now for the gift.” Danny’s blue eyes shone gold once more as Artemis shone through.

She leaned down and pressed her lips gently against mine, causing searing pain to go through me as my eyes opened wide.

The pain was gone, and I had to touch my neck in order to confirm that I had been bitten by Elladora. There was tape and gauze, and I winced as I pulled away the bandage to feel stitches where the wound was.

Oh shit. That all really happened.

"Carm?” My voice is shot, and I can't figure out if my vocal cords have been damaged or not.

"I'll go get her, Aunt Laura.” Tara called out as I heard her run away loudly.

I fought to open my eyes and realized how bright it was. Was I in my room?

"My only daughter is now an Aunt? Congratulations."

"Dad?” I asked, swallowing down fear.

"It's me. I'm glad you're alive.”
"Me too. Why are you here?"

"You single handily took out one of the most wanted assassin teams on INTERPOL. Also, because Detective Clark reached out to me to confirm a few details and then never followed up."

"Yeah, she died."

"In a highway shootout with you and your vampire girlfriend. In broad daylight."

"Uh..." I swallow again, "I can explain."

"Oh, your boyfriend Armitage already did. He can't handle a Hollis interrogation."

"Dave, quit giving her such a hard time." Carmilla's warm voice instantly put a smile on my face. "Besides, I'm not a vampire anymore." I looked over and saw Carmilla in her black combat gear while carrying Tara on her hip in a very maternal fashion.

"But you're still her Mistress."

*Oh god, oh god...*

"Can I be put back into a coma?" I pleaded.

Dave, Carmilla, and JP all laughed and I was fairly certain I have literally gone insane. Carm put Tara down and JP left with her, closing my bedroom door behind them.

"Oh sweetie, schoolteachers and police officers are the two careers most likely to engage in this kind of lifestyle. Don't you remember what the rumor was back home? That mom wore the pants in the family?"

*Oh god, it's worse. My dad's kinky, too.*

As my mind wrapped around the concept, it made sense that he was submissive at home while he was always having to be in authority at work.

"Dad? Can we focus on the fact I killed 5 people here? That might be less uncomfortable for everyone."

"I'm just saying that I understand."

I nodded my thanks as Carmilla asked for some privacy. Dave nodded and left as well.

"The hospitals were overrun, and Theo lent me one of his doctors to care for you."

I tried to smile. "Thanks. How long...?"

"Forty-eight hours, roughly. Tara has barely left your side."

"Perry-" I started, unable to say the words.

"Yeah, we know. James and Ell were working together all along. Remember Elsie Morgan, the bad dye job?"

*Holy fuck.*

"I... consoled her after she had a 'family emergency' and I saw the cigarette burns on her!" I
exclaimed.

My mind flashed back to the video on Mother's phone that disturbed Carmilla. "Oh my god... she had it done to herself..."

Carmilla nodded. "She once told me that she only feels alive when she's on Death's door. She turned into an adrenaline junkie and decided that getting me to kill her would be the ultimate rush."

"She said you two were soul mates."

She looked off into the distance. "She thought our lives were intrinsically entwined, even killed a few of my exes in hopes that I'd be angry enough to do her in."

I scowled at Carm. "You should have."

She started to shake her head no, slumped, and nodded in agreement. "It would have killed a big chunk of my humanity if I did, but you're right. I should have. Too many others suffered because of me."

I frowned at where our conversation lead. She just became human and I was telling her to kill off her humanity.

And I still needed to know if she killed her brother.

"Mistress? Tell me James has been taken care of."

She nodded. "We had one hell of a fight, then some Alchemist hit him with a powerful paralytic neurotoxin and Brimstone did what she does best."

"Incineration means he's not coming back, right?"

Carm clench her jaw. "I still have an... echo of my Insight. He's dead; I felt his final thoughts... 300-plus years of incestuous sibling jealousy made him quite the monster."

"I'm glad he's finally dead."

"Me too." There was a flinty, distant look in her eyes when JP came back in with a box in their hands.

Carmilla saw it and her face broke into a smile. "Thanks, JP."

"Of course, Ms. Karnstein. I know when I'm needed."

My Mistress took a deep breath to recompose herself as she took the box and laid it next to me in bed.

"I... you mean the world to me. And it's time that we take this relationship to the next level." Her voice wavered with nervousness.

I looked at her in confusion as the box was big enough for a box set of DVD's.

"Laura Trevelyan Hollis... will you wear my collar?" As she opened up the box, there was the same type of titanium eternity collar that I saw at the kink convention.

"Y-" The word stuck in my throat.
I thought she was about to propose or something... but in a way, this is an engagement, isn't it?

My eyes went to JP, who stood there and beamed at the pair of us.

"No."

Carmilla's jaw dropped and she fought to regain her composure as she closed the box and prepared to take it away. My hand caught hers, and I saw the fear in her feline eyes.

"I'm sorry, I didn't think... uh..."

"JP." I reached out towards them as well, "If we do this, we do this together."

Carmilla turned to Armitage, whose eyes welled up with tears. "Agreed. JP?"

"Yes, Mistress."
Finally this draws to a close. I want to acknowledge my son, StrappyCat, my wife, and the real life equivalent of Sadistic Cupcake in my life.

I hope you enjoyed this lesbian revision of the worst, best-selling repackaged twilight fan fiction that never approached the actual kink community at any time.

Look me up on FetLife as Cysteine; I'll be importing some of my other femmeslash kink stories here soon.

I was still in bed, an IV transfusing blood into my body still. I looked up and saw the Karnstein Industries logo on it and smiled.

“Synthetic blood. Your girlfriend’s going to revolutionize medical treatment.” Dave said, knitting his eyebrows in concern. “That term doesn’t sound right.”

“Well, I guess we’re going steady.” I say, and I find myself agreeing with him.

“I mean, you are wearing her collar. And so is your boyfriend.”

*Calling JP my boyfriend didn’t sound as bad. But Carmilla?*

“Carmilla is much more than just a girlfriend.”

“I thought so.” He pulled a chain out from under his shirt and unclasped it. On it was a delicate ring.

“Dad…” *It was my mom's ring.*

“I know that after mom died, that I went through marriage after marriage. I kept trying to find your mom again in other people.” His eyes welled up with tears. “She was one of a kind, and I'm glad that I had the time with her that I did. Because she gave me you.”

He handed the ring and chain to me.

“She's one of a kind, and already started a family with you. Make it official.”

I thought about it, and remembered the conversation with Danny/Artemis.

*I have to use the Blade of Hastur.*

I just smiled to Dave, not wanting him to know that this would be all for naught.

“Okay.” I looked to my arm again in confusion. “Dad, I’ve been in a coma for two days, right? Why am I still getting a transfusion?”

He looked away rather than meet my eyes.
Oh shit, it's bad.

“You know why they need a next of kin, Laura. When…” He slumped in his seat. “…the blood loss should have killed you. The bleeding in your head should have left you comatose for the rest of your life. You being alive now is nothing short of a miracle. That’s how I can believe in vampires, and werewolves, and an Older God or whatever… and can forgive myself for sending my only little girl to Deathtrap University.”

I shook my head slightly. “Deathtrap University is in Albania and didn’t have a journalism program.” As he looked at me incredulously, I gave a wry smile, and we laughed together. "So what's happened?"

“Lophii has gained enough strength that it has broken the first two gates already, which is why the undead were roaming earlier… and now it’s working on gate number three. LaFontaine is coping with the loss of Perry by burying themselves into studying stuff that Carmilla’s none too happy about. JP is hyper focused on battle plans and working with Corvae, and Carmilla… it’s like she was told she only has six months to live.”

“Well, six decades maybe. That’s got to be one hell of a shock to realize you’re going to age and die.” I looked at the ring and understood why I’d have to propose to her anyways.

*I’m in love with her, and she deserves happiness, even if it’s just for the next few days.*

“Tara?” The girl popped her head in the doorway at the sound of her name. “Wait, are you standing guard outside my door?”

Tara grinned, lifting something up for me to see.

“Yeah. And JP got me a crossbow!”

Kirsch walked into the room, and though he looked tired, I was glad to see he was alive. “We’re going to have a talk about giving weapons to a minor.”

I smiled at that. “Oh, come on, it’s just suction cup arrows.”

Brody rolled his eyes at that. “She talked Theo into getting her some Thorium-tipped arrowheads.” He turned his head to his little sister. “Do not load your crossbow unless the perimeter is breached, Princess.”

“That’s Warrior Princess, Brody!”

We held back chuckles as he corrected himself. “That’s my little sis.”

My father nodded dutifully to Kirsch. “In another year, she’ll be ready for Krav Maga.”

“No, Dad!”

“What? Foreign Language, Musical Instrument, and Martial Art…”

“-I was horrible on the flute!”

“Carmilla seems quite well-rounded.”

“...well, she’s been alive for over three hundred years!” I stop and think about that for a second. “Why were you telling my, uh, Carmilla about parenting techniques?”
“Well, you’re decent at speaking French and the Krav Maga saved your neck with James! Maybe if you find a different instrument....”

“Wait, what martial art does Carmilla know?”

“She learned fencing from La Maupin. We kind of bonded while you were comatose.”

“Yeah, that’s… okay.” I looked to Kirsch. “How’s LaFontaine holding up?”

“They got in a fight and Corvae Corp is under orders to arrest them on sight.”

“What?! WHY?” I exclaimed, pulling on the IV line.

“Science nerd kind of figured out a solution… a final solution. Purposefully overload the ley-line reactors and shunt the energy to Professor Parson’s Anti-Space device, shifting the university to a realm of nothingness.”

huh?

“I don’t…?”

“Imagine a blackout and hard reset just after Scotty beams you off the Enterprise. You get deconstructed on a molecular level, and then... nothing.” Kirsch frowned at that. “Ravenclaws are scarier than Slytherins. They get creative and don’t realize how evil they are.”

“Evaporating Lophii into non-existence is a good thing, right?” Unless it’s invulnerable and not fully tied to this reality...

“That’s just it, it wouldn’t be just Lophii, the…”

“So, how big are we talking here?”

“Thirteen mile radius... and it wouldn’t just turn Silas into a crater…”

“What would happen to the area? It would just be scooped away, right?”

Brody bit his lip. “More like a hole the fabric of reality. The Brotherhood don’t know what it would mean to the Old Ones.”

A thirteen mile hole in the fabric of reality.

“We have to stop LaF!”

“Corvae’s working on that. You just stay here and recover. Warrior Princess, protect your Aunt Laura and Grandpa Dave.” The look in Kirsch’s eyes unsettled me.

“Dad? Brody? I want to see Carm and JP. Alone.”

They exchanged a knowing look, nodded, and left the room.

Once I was alone, I pulled the needle out of my arm and swung my legs off of my bed. I wasn’t woozy like I thought I would be. I felt strong, much stronger than before.

Artemis’ gift?

I was wearing a silk dressing gown that made me feel like I was naked. I decide to change into
some actual clothing before my partners would come in and I had zero time to plan how to do this right.

“Dave said you needed- Laura!” Carmilla snapped in shock. I took the submissive kneeling position before my Mistress and held up the ring on the chain.

“Mistress, I want you to know that you're as much mine as I am yours. You've collared me, and now I wish to return the sentiment.”

“Laura…” Carm gasped, understanding what I was doing. I looked up towards her beautiful face and terrified, cat-pupil eyes.

“Will you mar-” I found lips against mine before I could finish the question.

“Of course. JP, get in here, you’re a part of this.” Carmilla said, teary-eyed. The three of us awkwardly hugged on our knees as we held each other.

As we all got up, I lost my balance slightly and JP steadied me.

“Sorry, that was… did the floor just shake?”

Carmilla put the chain around her neck, tucking the ring inside her shirt. “Yeah. That… was an earthquake.”

The ground trembled again and we all noticed it. We heard car alarms go off this time. I looked out the window and saw that the sky had gone dark.

“That was the third gate, wasn’t it?” I asked.

Carmilla and JP closed down their faces and went into action as my father and Tara rushed in.

“Okay, Laura, panic room, now!” Dave ordered as Tara flinched at that.

“Grandpa Dave, no. We stay and fight here.” Tara’s face paled, and I remembered that she had been trapped in the room where Perry was forced to kill herself.

“But it’s safer in…” He looked at the pair of us and understood. “Okay, we make our stand here. Laura, you’re still recovering.”

*Arguing against him won’t work.* I frowned and nodded sullenly as Brody, Carmilla, and JP left with the Corvae Contingent that was here.

“I know, dad. I’m going to go get some soy milk.” I winked to Tara and she asked for some juice and followed me. While Dave went to Carmilla’s office to look at the security monitors, I went to the fridge with Tara in tow.

“Aunt Laura, I know it’s not soy milk in that container.”

I nodded and poured her a glass of apple juice, trying to look calm and collected. “I’m fully recovered, but I have to get out of here. They need a magic sword that they refuse to even touch.”

“Oh, Hastur Sword!”

I look at her incredulously. “Adults think I don’t pay attention. It’s in the gun safe, combination is 10-13-05. One day off from my birthday.”
“That’s… okay. Now what about my dad?”

“Brody gave me a benadryl and said it was for motion sickness when we came here. I’m eight, I know how to look up pills on the internet.”

*If I give him that with alcohol, it will work better.*

“Okay, but I’ll need us to be in the panic room so you two can be safe when I’m gone. Can you do that for me?”

Tara frowned, but nodded. “Yeah.” I handed her the juice and she put on a smile and made her way towards Dave.

“Actually, dad, I could go for a martini. What about you?” I ask as I head to the bathroom medicine cabinet and find what I’m looking for. I grab two pills with ‘44-485’ stamped on it and pocket it, hurrying over to Carmilla’s wet bar and mini fridge.

“When did you start drinking martinis?”

“Oh, well, Carm was telling me about her days when she ran with The Summit… aka the Rat Pack.”

“You mean with Humphrey Bogart and Deano?”

“Yeah, Gin or Vodka?”

“Uh, gin.” He replied, surprised to see me doing so well at playing bartender. I made sure that I kept my back to him. I set up two martini glasses to chill with ice and seltzer water in them.

“Frank apparently wanted muscle that didn’t look like muscle,” I began retelling the story of how Carmilla saved Sammy Davis Jr from a few racist bouncers as I added crushed ice in the shaker, added half a shot of vermouth, closed it, and shook it to coat the ice slightly before pouring out the excess. I opened it up again, crushed up the tablets and dropped them in, and added the gin before shaking it again.

“How many olives, or do you want it dirty?”

“Two is fine… did you go to bartending school?”

I shook my head as I emptied the glasses and filled them with the drugged martini and took the pair of them over to him, handing one over.

“To the end of the world… or the start of a new one.”

He smiled at that as we clinked glasses, and took a long sip. I feigned a sip, standing next to him as we looked at the security monitors.

“Laura, I’m really impressed that you’re handling all this with a level head. If I were in your shoes, I’d be having a non-stop panic attack.”

I shrugged. “Maybe I’m in one and just haven’t realized it yet?”

Dave took another sip. “I sent you to college so you wouldn’t turn into me, and look at you; trying to save the world. I can’t believe you went after her Carmilla’s mind-controlling ex on your own.”

“Tara was in danger. You always said to look for the helpers. They usually run into danger, right?”
I point to a van in the parking garage. “I don’t recognize that one.” I give my dad a wary look.

Dave takes another long swig from his martini glass, realizes that it’s empty, and grabs mine.

“Okay, Tara, we’re going to the panic room.”

*Drug your father. Check. Lie to your father. Check. Have Tara play her part perfectly?*

As if on cue, Tara nails her performance. “Do we have to?”

I nod apologetically. “I think we do, Tara.”

*She is way too perfect at this.*

“Fine.” She grumps as we follow her, my father taking another long swig of the drink to calm his nerves.

Within twenty minutes, Dave is asleep on the makeshift mattress consisting of blankets and pillows.

Tara hands me his keys to his car and reminds me of the code to the gun safe.

“You are frighteningly smart for an eight year old.”

“It’s not my fault they underestimate me.” Tara replied as she disengaged the panic room lock.

I grabbed the gear, put on the body armor with dents in it, and slung on the P90 and the ruger from before.

I would just have to carry the sword wrapped in a towel or something.

*Laura Hollis, heroine, wrapping swords in towels.*

When I got to the campus, there were massive casualties everywhere. Bodies littered the ground like a zombie apocalypse. It seemed like the students that had circled Lophii had grown violent and started killing anyone who approached.

Among the deceased was The Alchemist Warden snowflake. She appeared to have her throat ripped out.

Sounds of fighting continued deep in the bowels of the Lustig building, and I ran, panic-stricken down the stairs and towards the sound of automatic weapons fire.

*“You’re all going to die down here…”*

"Mattie!” Carmilla shouted as a bright light shone, so bright that it threatened to blind me even though it was around the corner and light shouldn't bounce like that.

“All forces, fall back!”

Screams of pain pierced the air as I heard the sound of people running their way towards me.

“Gamma Team Down! Bravo Team, flank from the south!”

Carmilla's voice shrieked in panic. “Theo! Don't be an idiot!”
“Fire!”

JP ran into me, pistol trained directly at my forehead.

“Wha..? Prove you're Laura.”

“We're engaged?” I asked. They lowered the pistol and hugged me.

“What are you doing here? How are you standing? And why in God's name are you carrying that cursed sword?”

“I'm on a mission from the goddess Artemis to kill Lophii. She’s why I recovered so fast.”

“But that sword will kill you.”

Carmilla, LaFontaine, and Brimstone caught up to us. “How on Earth are we supposed to kill something that's already immortal?”

“It's the hungry light. The elder god is invulnerable as long as it has that.” I replied, catching her attention.

“Oh my God, Laura what are you doing here?!”

I briefly explain my dream we're at the goddess Artemis gave me the information and gave me the gift so that I would wake up from the coma.

Kira looked into my eyes curiously. “That explains the glamour I see.”

Carmilla look deeper into my eyes. “Oh wow, yeah... And you said that Artemis kiss you?”

Glamour?

“Yes, just after she told me that I had to use the sword to Devour the light in order to make Lophii killable.” I looked at the group. “Where is Brody?”

“He and Mattie didn’t make it.” Carm said sullenly.

“Now can I hit the button boss?” LaFontaine's voice was thick with anger.

“You are not allowed to unmake reality right where we’re standing!”

“Allowed? I lost my EVERYTHING to this!”

“IT WON’T BRING HER BACK!”

I took advantage of the moment and made my way past them, ready to use the blade of Hastur. JP caught me, one hand on either of my biceps, and pulled me in for a kiss.

“It feels like it should be me.” Armitage whispered.

I nodded in understanding. “It’s a good death. Tell our Mistress… ask her to forgive me.”

I went around the corner while Carmilla and LaFontaine were still arguing and I came across the monstrous pit. The light was still bright enough to blind, but I could see through it now.

The anglerfish Elder God Lophiliformes was stuck in the ground, the glowing lure trying to burn me with it’s brightness.
This is wrong, it should be killing and cooking me like everyone else here...

I unsheathed the sword, and it was the exact opposite of the *Lumos* charm as it acted like a tiny black hole that sucked in the light all around us.

The pit went from blinding white to almost pitch-black, and the only light I saw in the area was coming from me.

I waved my free hand in front of my face to realize that it was coming from my own eyes. Artemis gave me night vision to use the sword?

“LAURA! GET BACK HERE!” Carmilla shrieked as I realized that Theo and all of his soldiers had been vaporized.

Brimstone entered the pit area, glowed red, and punched the ground with a brutality that I hadn’t expected.

Bits of the ground shattered all around us and began to float, lighting up the area so that the rest of them could see.

“The Hungry Light is muted; the Blade of Hastur is out!” Kira yelled. “Hollis, do it now!”

My eyes were going dim as my skin began to crisp and my hair singed in the heat. Temporary buff is fading.

I ran my way towards the Elder God, as it struggled and I saw its giant mouth with rotten teeth attempt to bite and kill me, leaving the most primitive part of my mind stricken with fear.

I knew that if I didn’t act now, my mind would be torn apart simply for existing around something so foreign to our realm.

“Do it!” Kira yelled, her body fading to black. She’s not going to last much longer.

As I start to swing the sword, an unseen force backhands me across the ribs, throwing me like a rag doll a few feet away, and it takes all of my effort to not let go of the sword as it is now scratching away at the inside of my body.

It was starting to consume my soul.

"YOU DIDN’T THINK IT WOULD BE THAT EASY, YOU UNGRATEFUL CHILDE! NOW QUAKE IN FEAR OF ME, FOR I AM ISHTAR THE UNDYING! LITTLE WORD OF ADVICE; IF YOU TRY TO KILL ME, MAKE CERTAIN YOU ALSO GET ALL OF MY HEART!"

Holy crap, she did have a horcrux!

“It’s Mother! Where is she?!” Armitage asked fearfully.

“I don’t know!” Carm bit back as I got back to my feet.

The sword was neutralizing the Hungry Light for now...
I took another run at Lophii, Blade of Hastur in front of me and I hacked downward into the bioluminescent light, inches away from the gaping maw that would have devoured me whole.

I dropped the sword, body convulsing in pain and anguish as whatever had been inside me was fully ripped out now, and I felt my mortality slipping once more. I turned to find Natalie with a giant Iron Golem stand between myself and Lophii as the Golem began to physically tear the fish apart while Armitage unloaded his weapons where the brain of the creature should have been.

“Find Mother!” Carmilla shrieked, “How the fuck is she still here?!”

Theo’s body rose from the ground, obviously dead and wearing a locket around his neck.

“I am the Queen of Blood and Life and none shall deny me!”

“THEO?!” Carmilla gaped.

“Did you really think you could get one over me? Your little science girl may have found a way to save you before, but now you’re mine to punish!”

Carmilla unloaded her rifle at Theo's body and I joined in with the P90.

The bullets have no effect on her.

Lophii also seemed to be absorbing the bullets with no problem at all. Armitage had a sword out and was hacking away at the anglerfish, which actually did more damage than the bullets.

“I am so sick of everybody saying that I can’t get my revenge on! Dean Morgan, Ishtar, I don’t care what kind of Big Paleolithic Deal you were before, you were turned human, which means you’re mortal. If you're mortal you’re still tied to this earth and I’ve got your one-way ticket to NOWHERE, BITCH! Science killed God once already. Let’s see about a sequel!”

“Get out!” Natalie yelled as she grabbed me and we began to run out of the pit as LaFontaine pressed a button on what looked like a remote detonator and tackled Theo, falling into the ever hungry mouth of the elder god.

“You cannot destroy a god, you foolish mortal!” Dean-Theo howled as a crying nothingness expanded at our heels, a void beyond comprehension and fathoming.

“Faster!” I yelled as we made our way up the stairs, wrenching open the door and barging into… the Library.

Carmilla, JP, and Nat made it through the doorway before it slammed itself shut and the building seemed to lurch as we all tried to make sense of what just happened.

“This wasn't here before.” Armitage said the obvious as they were trying to convince themselves of the new reality.

“Students measured out the Library once and concluded that the floor plan on the inside could not possibly fit the plot of land it sat on.” My Mistress bragged.

“Are you saying that the Library is a real life T.A.R.D.I.S.?” I asked excitedly.

“I've never had it transport me through time, but translocation? We're no longer in the Lustig building.” Carmilla went back to the door we came through, and I flinched in fear that the nothingness would come through the doorway.
Carmilla’s hand hesitated on the doorknob, whispering a silent plea as the rest of us raised our weapons… just in case.

She opened the door.

Bright light shone in, and Carm laughed, running out into the grass and rolling on the ground.

We followed her, lowering our guns as relief flooded through us. I looked around to see we were in the small dog park behind Carmilla's building. As the door closed behind us, it slowly vanished as if it were never there.

“We made it.” Natalie muttered disbelievingly, curiously fishing an ancient looking key out of her pocket.

Carm got off of the grass and recomposed herself. “I expect you've got a conclave to call, Hohenheim. And it seems that the Library has volunteered to work for you.”

Natalie teared up at that, understanding the task that was before her.

“Thank you for your service, Mircalla Karnstein. I hope we run into each other under better circumstances.” Nat raised the key up and the doorway returned, granting her access before disappearing again.

“Aw, crap.” I huffed.


“I didn't graduate. And I'm fairly certain that the whole lack of a campus will make forwarding my transcripts impossible.”

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EPILOGUE

We all were at the kinky bed and breakfast for the weekend; while Lady HotPants and Jordan were learning to ride horses with Craig and Courtney, I was watching Tara ride a giant black Catmilla Panther with Armitage and Sadistic Cupcake.

“I seriously thought you'd find this odd, to say the least.” I motioned towards my Mistress’ feline form.

“She's a cat. That makes sense to me. What I'm confused at is how you are that big around in your second trimester, Mrs. Karnstein.”

“Twins.” JP says, keeping his weight off the bruised ankle with his cane. “I'm looking forward to the new additions we're getting to the household.”

“You mean the kids, or from the Marketplace?” Sadistic inquired.

“Alexandra and Grendel are sending us a hearing impaired asexual boy; I swear we're going to be her go-to client for aces.” JP replied, remembering the multitude of files we had reviewed.

“And Carm was okay with letting you two pick one out?” Sadistic shook her head at that.

“She was wary when I started the international charity foundation, but now that I've repaid her the
seed money, she's trusting our risky ventures.”

We looked out into the field, where Tara was playing fetch with ‘Catmilla’.

“She's going to be a great mother.” Sadistic mused as JP put their hand on my belly and kissed me tenderly.

“We're finally where we want to be. A family.”

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