

THE SECOND CIRCLE

BOOK III

By Paradox

The Throne Room

She didn't know how long they had been at it. It could have been minutes, hours, or maybe even days. Kitty had lost all sense of time the moment that innocent little tongue had begun its tender ministrations upon her most sensitive of flesh. While her lover back home was certainly stronger and more skilled when it came to the art of worshiping a woman's body, the petite little thing in the adorably sexy schoolgirl outfit certainly made up for these deficiencies with enthusiasm.

Kitty had lost count of the orgasms that she'd experienced a while ago and she was still hungry for more. Dimly, in the very dark recesses of her mind, she knew that even at the pinnacle of her sex slave persona she'd never been possessed of such a dark and erotic hunger like she was now. She simply couldn't get enough. It had gotten to the degree that she had flipped around their positions so she could administer pleasure to the little girl as well and perhaps capture a different flavor of that succulent sexual meal she was already feasting upon.

The fact that beneath the girl's innocent white panties lay a miniscule male organ that only a toddler could possess didn't even register in her lust-soaked brain. All she saw was another instrument of pleasure that she'd been previously unaware of and attacked it with all of the sensual vigor she possessed.

It was quite disappointing, then, when the girl whimpered frantically, squirming beneath her, and yet there was absolutely no response. Kitty knew she was damn good when it came to sex, she'd been programmed that way before after all, so it was truly confounding why all of her efforts to stimulate arousal had been met with utter failure.

“That won't work my sweet.”

Lifting her sweat-soaked head, Kitty looked towards her goddess with a combination of confusion and desperation. “I want to pleasure her,” she whined, sounding almost like a petulant child. “I want to suck her off.”

“That particular part of her anatomy has been rendered useless,” her goddess informed her with an evil smile, “However she does possess another orifice that is perfectly functional.”

It took a moment for her goddess's words to register before her eyes went wide in understanding. Not hesitating for even a moment, she flipped the girl onto her knees, forcing her to rest her cheek on the floor since her wrists were still tightly bound behind her back and unable to support her. With her knees pushed widely apart so that her panties became nothing more than a thin band of white silk stretched between them, Kitty's mouth dove to that place where only the most depraved would consider approaching. Even Kitty herself had never even considered this avenue of sexual attack, both before and after arriving at her

goddess's temple, but the need to stimulate the girl into an even higher sexual frenzy completely overrode her pre-existing limitations.

As her tongue speared into the girl, she smiled at the sound of her crying out with rapture even as her hips started jerking spasmodically. It took barely ten seconds of stimulation before what were undoubtedly orgasmic screams tore from her mouth, sending her little body into a paroxysm of quivering before she collapsed upon the floor.

"Mmmmm, delicious," her goddess purred, "You are exactly what I suspected. But certainly you aren't through yet," she mused, reaching behind the throne she still sat upon. "You still have so much more to offer."

The set dull thunks upon the floor drew Kitty's attention slightly off to the side where she saw a collection of leather straps culminating in a rather large, rather hard, phallus. Though she had never used one before, her sex-drenched mind instantly knew what the device was. Diving for it, she scooped up the strap on and pulled the girl up on her knees before swiftly fitting and then buckling it about her hips. It would have been a pretty thought that she was having the girl be the giver instead of the receiver, seeing as how she was so much smaller and more delicate. However, the fact was, Kitty simply wanted to be fucked, long, hard, and deep, and having the girl be the one to give that to her was simple selfishness.

Once the harness was secured, the lust-crazed brunette rolled onto her hands and knees and wiggled herself backwards until she felt the tip of the phallus nudging at her soft, drenched nether area. With a moan of delight, she tilted her hips back the same moment the girl's surged forward and she was swiftly impaled upon the glorious shaft.

As the girl began humping away like a frenzied animal, Kitty felt wave upon wave of carnal bliss fill her soul and she cried out with joy. That cry turned to one of mild confusion when she felt that almost overwhelming sense of ecstasy suddenly be drawn out of her, replaced by something dark, something sinister that tried to touch her soul.

A quick, violent flare of heat speared through her that absolutely nothing to do with sexual need and Kitty dimly recognized it as the flare of her power. The

dark taint tried to push past it, to perhaps embrace and overcome it, but it flared as hot as the sun and burned the seeking tendrils away to nothing.

The sharp gasp from the dais had Kitty glancing over from beneath the curtain of her hair to see the look of dumbfounded surprise on the face of her goddess. “No,” she whispered, slowly rising, “This is not possible. How can your soul reject me?”

“I do not resist you goddess,” Kitty told her earnestly as she continued to buck and grind against the girl’s deep thrusting.

Stepping down purposefully from the dais, the goddess kicked the girl away with enough force to send her sliding across the floor to crash into the wall, the sound of her head striking the tile floor filling the room with a sickening crack. Barely a moment later, the goddess had a hand around Kitty’s slim throat and lifted her violently so her toes dangles six inches above the floor. “Tell me how you did it,” she snarled as the brunette choked and frantically tried to pry the fingers around her windpipe.

“I don’t know!” she tried to cry, but all that emerged from her lips was a wet gurgle.

“Tell me!” the goddess roared in anger...

Moments before she herself went flying across the room, crashing into her own throne and shattering it into thousands of pieces of gold, steel, and wood. As she collapsed to her knees, Kitty coughed and retched violently from the assault on her throat before blinking in shock at the damage that had been caused by the airborne body. A soft moan drew her attention to the side and what she saw there shocked her.

The ropes that had bound her were nothing more now than shredded pieces of hemp scattered across the tile. The girl sat upon her knees, struggling to breathe properly as blood spilled from the laceration in her scalp in dark red rivulets across her face. She wavered upon her knees unsteadily, but there was an unmistakable look of determination in her eyes as she glared at the spot where the goddess had flown.

“H-how? Wh-what?” She knew she should be asking about what just happened, but Kitty simply couldn’t find the right question to give voice to. This girl had been deeply in thrall to their goddess only moments ago, and yet now she looked as though she were kneeling in complete defiance of her. How was this possible? More importantly, why was she not leaping to defend her goddess with all the power she possessed? It was almost as if she wanted her goddess to fall.

Her attempts to evaluate everything that was happened were cut short when the girl suddenly screamed with a mixture of excoriating pain and abject ecstasy before collapsing to the ground with violent, body wracking seizures.

“It appears there are quite a few mysteries that I must look into.”

Whipping her head about, Kitty saw the woman standing upon the dais looking as whole and perfect as always. One would not even know she had been hurled by some invisible force moments ago except for the wreckage of her throne behind her.

“What did you do to her?” Kitty demanded, surprising herself with the ability to even make a demand. She still couldn’t rise from her knees and the urge to fuck anything in sight for days still overrode her ability to command her own body, but her true self was starting to slip through the cracks that seemed to have formed in the influencing power that had bound her mind.

“She is simply experiencing every pleasurable sensation the body is capable of possessing, all at the same time, and amplified to the tenth degree,” the woman said with a wicked grin that vanished almost as soon as she had spoken. “How are you able to take that tone with me?”

In truth, Kitty had no idea, but she wasn’t about to tell her that. Instead, she tried to activate her power and manifest one of her energy blades. She didn’t know how long her mind would remain her own but she had to take advantage of it while she still could.

Unfortunately, while her personality was still struggling to fully return, her mind was simply still so jumbled up with the thoughts and emotions of every sexual pleasure she wanted to experience to be able to focus enough to bring an

energy blade into existence. She needed more time to fight off the effects of this woman and could only pray that she was able to.

While Kitty was trying to accomplish this, the woman once again approached her with a cold, hard look in her eyes that were rapidly becoming less and less human. In fact, the tone of her skin was beginning to darken, changing from a lovely porcelain paleness to a deep pink. “I will get my answers pretty one,” she said in a hissing voice that had grown reptilian connotations, “But don’t think that you will escape my influence, or my hunger.”

Kitty choked out a sob as she felt her goddess’s influence crash down upon her mind once more, thrusting her own persona back into its dark cage, and filling her very being with an unquenchable desire to achieve pleasure in all its forms as much as humanly possible for as long as she drew breath.

Somewhere Within “The Temple”

I growled as I leapt, wall-walked for a few scant seconds to get me clear of the group orgy on the floor in front of me, and landed on the floor beyond without ever breaking my stride. I hazarded a glance backwards to make sure Ashley and Milton made it through and smiled when I saw that Milton had gathered Ashley into his arms, cradling her as though she were a small child, and leapt over the pile of writhing bodies. He kind of accidentally kicked one of them in the head in the process, but at the moment I really didn’t give a shit. Besides, the guy barely seemed to notice and kept right on fucking so it wasn’t like it was a problem.

We’d been running for about five minutes and I was starting to wonder if my sense were playing tricks on me. This place was a veritable maze of corridors and

party rooms and, while I was sure I was following Kitty's scent, we didn't seem to be getting anywhere. In fact, I was pretty sure we'd passed through that last party room twice already.

"This isn't working," I said, skidding to a halt after the next corridor. "Something's messing with my senses and we're going around in circles."

"Well what can we do?" Ashley asked, "We need to get to Kitty and we have no idea which room she's in. We could spend weeks looking and not find her."

"I don't know," I said in frustration, "I mean, her scent keeps leading me through door after door and we're not getting anywhere."

"Are you sure you're going through the right one?" she asked.

"Yes," I said throwing my hands up in exasperation, "Her scent goes right through that door on the right."

"What door on the right?"

Blinking, both of us looked at Milton as he stared right back in confusion. "There's no door on the right," he told us as though it should have been obvious, "Just that one," he said, pointing at the door on the far left.

"Wait, are you saying-"

"Aiden," Ashley cut me off, "Close your eyes and follow her scent without looking."

"I'll end up running into a wall," I argued. Since I wasn't in wolf form my sense of smell wasn't at the level of acuity where it basically replaced my vision when it came to my environment.

"I'll guide you, just do it!" she insisted, taking my arm.

Snorting out an impatient sigh, I did what she said and closed my eyes, walking slowly and carefully as I worked by scent alone. With Ashley's help, I didn't run into anything and we were able to bypass any couplings or orgies along the way. "This can't be working," I grumbled.

“It is,” she assured me, “We’ve already gone through two rooms I don’t recognize from before. I think maybe there’s some kind of illusion happening here and it made you think that you should follow a scent through a door that wasn’t actually there.”

“Whatever,” I said, trying to increase my pace a little, “As long as it gets us there fast-”

“We’re here!” she suddenly cried excitedly

Opening my eyes, I actually took a step back in surprise at the sight of the fifteen-foot door metal looming in front of us. While there weren’t any outward markings, I had no doubt that this would lead us directly to Kitty. After all, it was the biggest damn door in the place, where else would an overbearing goddess be? “Let’s go get her,” I declared and pushed the door...

Only to have it not budge an inch. “What?” Confused, I pushed again, only to have the same result. It was like I was trying to move a mountain.

“What’s wrong?” Ashley asked worriedly.

“The door won’t move, it’s like a solid wall.”

“Did you try pulling?” she asked, and I’m pretty sure she wasn’t making a stupid joke.

Shooting her a glance, I nodded my head at the solid pieces of steel. “Do you see a door handle anywhere?”

“I can do it,” Milton volunteered and lowered his head as though he was going to try to ram it.

“No!” I yelled, jumping in front of the door.

“Milton stop!” Ashley cried, grabbing his hand and giving it a yank so she would get his attention, which thankfully it did.

“Milton,” I explained as slowly as the situation allowed, “I’m a lot stronger than I look. If I can’t open it, you won’t be able to either.”

From the other side of the door, I heard a sound. I doubt the other two could because the thick metal insulated the sound, but my enhanced hearing picked it up just fine. Even though I'd only heard it once before, it was one I recognized immediately and had my heart leaping in my chest even as it sent ice through my veins.

It was the sound of Kitty screaming in helpless, agonizing orgasm.

"She's in there!" I exclaimed, "I just heard her scream."

Her eyes going wide, Ashley looked from me to the door and back again. "We have to get in there!" she cried, whirling and pounding ineffectually with her small fists, "Kitty! *Kitty!*" she screamed.

I knew it wouldn't do her any good. If I couldn't knock down that damn door she certainly couldn't. She was right there. Our friend was right on the other side of that door. Just a few inches of steel separated us from our friend and the desperate frustration I felt was quickly giving way to anger.

She threatens the pack.

Whoever this woman was, whatever she was, she had specifically sought out Kitty for her plans. I had no doubt that she was somehow involved in the dream Kitty had the night before, and there was no question it was because of her that we had brought our sweet and innocent friend into the very personification of her nightmares.

I barely noticed my breathing grow deeper and more rapid, nor did I notice the low, dangerous growl ripple up out of my throat and through my clenched teeth. Dimly, I sensed Ashley draw away from me, dragging Milton with her as I glared at the one barrier between me and the source of my vengeance.

None may threaten the pack.

Every muscle in my body tightened with the urge to lash out, to kill, to flay her skin, snap her bones, and gorge on the sweet, tasty meat of her flesh. I wanted to hear *her* scream in agony while I ripped open the very thing she seemed to think was a fucking play toy on everyone else. I wanted her heart in my hand so I could

watch it pulse with its last beat just before I devoured it right before her eyes. I wanted her fear. I wanted her to know what it truly meant to be afraid.

It is time to hunt.

Fear, she would know fear. And she would know pain, more than she had ever experienced in her entire fucking life. And after she'd taken more pain than she dreamt possible, she would know anger. Oh yes, she would come to understand that her fucking lust was absolutely nothing in the face of true anger. No, not anger, too simple. She needed to know, to feel, what true fury meant. My fury. The kind of thing that only exists within the darkest nightmares of anyone who tries to hurt my fucking pack!

She

Would

Know

RAGE!

* * * *

“Aaaaah,” the goddess sighed in delight as she took in all of that delicious lust that poured out of Kitty in wave upon wave, “*That* is why you are perfect. So deliciously sweet.”

The amplitude of that which caused such frenzied desire within the young girl suddenly spiked, tearing a scream of painful, carnal bliss from her lips as her entire body become one, giant orgasm that never seemed to end. She couldn't think, there was nothing else in this world save for that singular sensation that she both didn't want to stop and was terrified would never end. The human body can only take so much and Kitty vaguely knew she had been pushed to her absolute limit. It wouldn't be long before her mind shattered under the weight of that unstoppable pleasure and she would become nothing more than an empty shell whose only purpose was to create lustful energies for this demoness.

As another wave of ecstasy crashed over her, a hoarse scream tore from her throat as she silently asked her friends for forgiveness and said goodbye.

That was when Death made a house call.

With an ear-piercing shriek of rending steel, the huge doors leading from the throne room exploded inward with such force they shot through the air before burying themselves almost completely within the far walls of the room. As the goddess looked up in shock from where she'd dove for cover, Kitty felt the hold on her rapidly begin to weaken. Not completely, but enough so she could think again and was able to look over at whatever it was that had just created such destruction.

As though the gates of Hell had opened and unleashed its deadliest hound, a low, deadly growl permeated the air as a *huge* black form slowly stalked into the room before suddenly exploding into motion. Within the span of a single heartbeat, it was across the room, grabbing the goddess by the throat, and throwing her into the wall so hard the heavy gauge steel *dented*. Without missing a beat, and before the female body could even begin its slow slide to the floor, the creature was on her, tearing open her stomach with one savage swipe of its razor sharp claws and sending blood and meaty things spraying against the wall and ceiling. Again, barely a moment passed and the woman was once again flying, this time into the opposite wall where she rebounded and collapsed to the ground.

To Kitty's utter and disbelieving amazement, the woman began to slowly pull herself to her feet. It wasn't done quickly, however, and she had the opportunity to look and see just what kind of nightmare had been unleashed within this den of erotic hell.

It was easily eight or nine feet in height, bipedal and vaguely humanoid, incredibly muscled, and covered from head to toe in fur as black as night. The head was clearly that of a wolf, possessing an elongated snout with a mouth full of dagger-like fangs and while its fingernails had been replaced by six-inch long claws that looked like they could slice through the hardest steel like paper. She had never seen such a ferocious beast in her entire life and there was absolutely no question as to what it was.

“Aiden!” she screamed in joy, causing the beast to quickly swing its head around to look at her. Her elation temporarily evaporated when those golden, wildly feral eyes stared at her without any signs of recognition and she thought for certain those claws would be tearing her apart next.

They didn't. Instead all eyes shifted to the small sound of pain as the woman finally gained her feet and looked at them with disdain. “How dare you!” she hissed, the chunks of flesh that had been torn out of her stomach already closing even as her skin began to rapidly shift from pink to a deep, blood red. Those red eyes grew deeper and blacker until they were nothing more than empty pits of darkness. When her black lips smiled, she revealed teeth that had become pointed and almost shark-like. From her back, a set of bat-like wings tore through her flesh and sprouted from her shoulder blades.

To almost everyone in the room, she looked like the very definition of a demon. “You foolish mortals,” she hissed furiously, “You dare attack me, in my own temple! I will strip every scrap of lust from your bodies until-”

Whatever threat she intended to issue was cut off by the unearthly roar of primal rage that issued from Aiden's gaping maw an instant before she was across the room and tearing into the creature with claw and fang. Blood flew everywhere and Kitty realized that not all of it was the creature's. Now that she'd reverted to this demon-like form, the woman too possessed some very wicked looking claws that she used to viciously rake across Aiden's face, causing her to step back with a snarl. The look of surprise on the demoness's face was priceless as the wounds closed and healed within seconds. “That is not possible! No one can survive one of my blows!” she cried, to which the werewolf did something that truly terrified every single individual in the room.

She smiled.

In the next moment, all anyone could see was a flurry of black and red, tooth and claw, and shower after shower of blood paint the walls a la Jackson Pollack. There was no way to determine who was winning and who was losing since neither ceased moving the entire time as the battle raged throughout the room.

Somehow, in all of the chaos, Ashley managed to get the little girl lying weakly on the floor out of the room without either of them being trampled or shredded by either of the brutal combatants. When they were safely on the other side of the now open main door, they watched as blows rained down in a blur of motion until it became impossible to tell who was doing what.

Eventually, the demoness went flying after Aiden dealt a particularly devastating slash across her chest, crashing into the wall and rebounding off it until she was sprawled upon the floor. As she struggled to her hands and knees, coughing oozing black blood on the floor, she lifted her head to glare at Aiden before slowly beginning to rise once more.

“You cannot defeat me,” she said, though her voice failed to have nearly enough confidence in it to be believable, “I have destroyed thousands of creatures like you over the last millennia. You are nothing to me. You are ants that I will crush beneath my heel. I will take everything from you and leave you begging me to take more. I am a goddess. I am Libidine, and you-”

Her voice was silenced instantly as a triangular spear-shaped, flame-engulfed blade exploded directly through the center of her throat. As she feebly clawed at the source of her sudden loss of the ability to breathe, every swipe resulted in more and more of her digits to become separated from her hand as simply touching the blade’s edge severed piece after piece of her fingers. As her eyes rolled about frantically, trying unsuccessfully figure out just what had happened, Kitty’s face appeared right beside her head.

“Do me a favor will you,” she whispered venomously in her ear, “Just shut the fuck up and die already *you fucking cunt!*” Ripping the energy blade upward, she sliced right up through the demoness’s entire head and cleaving it in half. No sooner had the blade cleared the top of the skull, Kitty created a second blade in

her other hand and, with a wild scream, sliced the blades through the creature's head, effectively bisecting and decapitating it so that the only thing remaining were six pieces of red flesh cauterized along the edges that tumbled to the floor with the rest of the body crumpling afterwards.

As Kitty willed her energy blades to disappear, she saw Aiden lower to her knees before rapidly beginning to shrink, the fur sucking back into her flesh as the wolf's head collapsed in on itself and began to resume a more human shape. It was like watching a time-lapse video in reverse until Aiden was once again in human form, naked and kneeling on the floor. She wavered unsteadily on her knees as Ashley rushed over to steady her while Kitty slowly walked over.

By the time she reached them, her tears were in free-fall, coursing down her cheeks and dripping from her chin to splatter upon the tile with each step she took. When her friends looked up at her for the moment all she could do was shake her head and try not to simply wail in misery. Eventually, when she was finally able to make her voice work, she whispered miserably, "I'm sorry guys. I'm so, so, fucking sorry."

The pair looked at one another for a grand total of two seconds before one pair of golden eyes and one pair of brilliantly green met her heartbroken gaze with ones of love and compassion. Without saying a word, without needing to, they opened their arms to her, took her into their joined embrace, and claimed their hard-fought victory.

Cicero, Illinois

Hardly a word had been spoken by the three girls since they'd arrived at the rather spacious house just outside of Chicago several hours ago. In fact, little more than quiet murmurs of comfort had been uttered during the five-hour drive from Iowa to Cicero. For the most part, Ashley drove the R/V while Aiden had held and cuddled Kitty in the living space. It really had been a nothing short of a miracle that they'd been able to make the drive at all given their condition, but the girls were nothing if not determined and were able to arrive at their pre-arranged destination intact. Now, as they all curled up together on the living room couch in thick, terry cloth robes after having a long, hot bath, their eyes remained on the crackling fire that danced within the hearth of the house.

As he approached quietly holding three steaming mugs, their host was pleased to not that the haunted aspect of their gaze had lessened significantly, though it was still largely present within the eyes of the gorgeous brunette. Without a word, he handed Kitty and Aiden a mug of coffee while Ashley was provided with tea.

“How are you feeling?”

The three sets of eyes slowly tracked over to the speaker, however only two were able to muster up a small smile. “Good, thanks,” Ashley said.

“What you did was quite impressive,” Ashe complimented as he sat down on one of the thick leather chairs.

“What, driving five hours?” Aiden remarked, eyeing him over the rim of her mug.

“Aiden,” Ashley admonished softly, though it sounded far more weak and hollow than her normal chiding.

“It's all right,” he told the lovely redhead, “After everything you went through a little attitude is a good thing to hear.”

For a few minutes, silence fell over the room with only the sound of the wood creaking in the fireplace filling the air. Eventually, Kitty lifted her still somewhat dull gaze to Ashe and whispered, “What was she?”

There was no need to ask for clarification as to what she meant. As soon as the girls had finished with their baths, Ashe had conducted a thorough interview with them regarding the events of what had happened in that tiny town in Iowa. Thankfully, he had limited his questions to the facts of what happened and specifically told them not to go into detail regarding their abuse at the hands of the demon woman. While he had nothing in his hands with which to take notes, it had been clear that every word they spoke in the recounting was instantly being committed to memory by the dark vigilante.

“She’s known as Libidine. A demi-god, or demon if you will, that is the embodiment of lust. The originators of the Latin language actually utilized her name as the label for that emotion. She thrives on that emotion as well as the acts that come from it as a food source and has been around since nearly the beginning of human life. Typically, she doesn’t manifest in human form since she’s far weaker on the physical plane of existence, but there have been recorded events of her appearance throughout history.”

“So, we essentially killed a god?” Aiden asked in disbelief.

Ashe shook his head. “You didn’t kill her. Libidine is a fundamental part of human nature. It’s because of her existence that people want to engage in intimacy for the purposes of enjoyment rather than simple biological reproduction. What you did was destroy the physical form she took that allowed her to exist on our plane. When you did that, her essence was thrown back into whatever realm she and all of the rest of the gods and demons inhabit.”

“So she could come back?” Kitty whispered in horror.

“Eventually,” Ashe allowed as her two friends quickly pressed in closely and wrapped her in their protective embrace, “But according to various records by many skilled mystics, it takes her hundreds of years to build up enough energy to be able to manifest a physical presence here that doesn’t look like a walking corpse. If and when she does come back, it won’t be in your lifetime.”

Kitty nodded but didn’t look completely comforted by that fact. “So, you knew about her,” she stated, lifting her eyes to him. When he confirmed this with a nod those eyes narrowed angrily. “You know about her, what she could do, what

she's been doing, and you did nothing about it? Aren't you supposed to be some kind of super badass or something?" she accused.

"Kitty," Ashley whispered, "Ashe can't be everywhere at once. He's just one man."

"I did have an operation put together to eliminate her," Ashe said, clearly not taking offense to the accusation, "You girls simply got to her before I could."

"It would have been nice to know about her even being there before we started the trip," Aiden pointed out, "We could have taken a route that would have avoided her completely."

Ashe sighed and nodded. "That I will take responsibility for. I was unaware that her influence had gotten that strong. To date, the only people that have succumbed to her call were those that could only be categorized as sexual predators. Every person that was picked up from there by the FBI and MCO after you left was a registered sex offender."

"Even Milton?" Ashley gasped, "He didn't seem like a sex offender."

"No," Ashe said with a shake of his head, "Milton was not. According to his after action interview, he was traveling with his father, who *was* a sex offender. He came under Libidine's influence only after they'd arrived at her temple. He's currently being placed with a couple that specializes in caring for special needs individuals."

"What about the girl?" Kitty asked softly.

Ashe blinked in confusion. "Girl?"

"The little girl. When she...made me do things in her throne room," she explained haltingly, "There was a young girl dressed in a school girl uniform. At least, I think she was a girl. It's kind of fuzzy but I think she might have actually been a boy that looked like a girl. Anyway," she said with a shake of her head, "She was there and I think she might have been a mutant."

Leaning forward, Ashe fixed Kitty with a rather intense stare. "Go on," he urged carefully.

“Well, when that demon tried to, I don’t know, corrupt me or something, it didn’t work. That really pissed her off and she started-” She broke off with a sob at the memory but held up a hand when her friends stared to tell her to stop. “She started choking me,” she continued in a strained voice, “Wanted to know how I was able to resist her from corrupting me. Then she suddenly went flying and I saw the girl standing up and the ropes that she’d been tied up with were just lying on the ground. I’m pretty sure she used telekinesis or something.”

“I got her out of the way when Aiden started fighting her,” Ashley said, picking up the story, “But when it was all over and I went to go check on her she was gone.”

“I see,” Ashe said to himself, “I’ll have to look into this, if you want me to try and find her that is,” he clarified. When he received nods all around he returned them. “Give me as best of a description of her as you can before you leave and I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thanks Ashe,” Ashley told him gratefully.

“Of course,” he replied, as though it was obvious he would pursue this undertaking. “Now, you can stay here as long as you need, but can I assume you’re going to continue your trip to Tearmann?” The girls looked at one another for several long moments before nodding hesitantly. “Good,” he said with clear approval, “I don’t want this...event...to make you rethink your decision. In fact, it only highlights the need for you to continue so you’ll all have a better understanding of your powers and how you can use them should something like this happen again.”

“Is that why you told us not to call our families?” Aiden guessed, “Because you knew they’d have us back in Wolf Springs by sunrise?”

“Exactly,” he said with a smile a teacher gives a bright student, “Though Angela was informed due to your unique relationship,” he told Kitty, who gasped in horror, “And no, I did not provide any details. I only told her the basics. What you want her to know is up to you, but I will strongly recommend you tell her the truth.”

Shaking her head, the girl wiped a tear from her eye. “I can’t do that over the phone,” she whispered miserably, “Not with something like this.”

“That’s why we’re going to do it face to face.”

All eyes, save for Ashe, turned towards the entry of the living room to see Angela standing there looking directly at her lover with nervousness and deep concern. “Did you really think I wouldn’t be on the first flight out here after Ashe called me?”

“Angie!” Kitty whispered in shock moments before she sprang from the couch, raced across the room, and threw herself into the blonde’s arms where she began bawling like a baby. “Oh God Angie I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean to do it. I didn’t want to do it. I couldn’t stop myself no matter how hard I tried and I *killed* that bitch for making me betray you!”

In tears herself, Angela gently stroked Kitty’s hair as the pair sank to their knees on the carpet. “I know you didn’t sweetheart,” she told her in a trembling voice, “Ashe told me what happened and this *wasn’t* your fault. This was just some evil bitch who got her kicks making people do fucked up things. She deserved to go right back where you sent her and we’ll never have to deal with her again.”

As the two continued whispering words of support and love to one another, Ashe looked at Aiden and Ashley and nodded his head towards the kitchen area. Understanding immediately their friend’s need to be alone with her girlfriend, the three of them rose and quietly left the room before reconvening at the bar-style kitchen counter.

“So how are you two holding up?” Ashe asked as he refilled Aiden’s coffee and brewed a fresh cup of tea for Ashley.

“I’m all right,” Ashley assured him, “I was lucky enough to get the least of all of it. Other than being scared out of my mind that I was going to be raped and seeing some of the worst violence in my life, I’m doing pretty well all things considered. And no, Aiden,” she said even as the wolf girl opened her mouth, “You don’t need to apologize for it and I’m the furthest thing from hating you because of what you did. It had to be done, there was no other alternative, and I know that.”

“I still wish you didn’t have to see it. I mean, you saw me at my worst,” she said with shame, lowering her gaze to the dark liquid swirling in her cup.

“No Aiden,” her friend said firmly, tilting her chin up with a finger, “I saw you at your strongest and most protective and I’m going to tell you, as safe as I felt with you before, I feel a *whole* lot safer knowing you have control of that kind of power.”

“Not quite control,” she admitted, “Yeah, I was able to make the shift easier this time than before, but I was still largely out of control once I did it. All I wanted to do was kill kill kill and it didn’t matter whose blood I spilled. When I heard you yell my name, I knew it was you, but I came so damn close to just rushing at you because my...my beast was so wild and frenzied. If that Libidine bitch hadn’t made a sound when she did, I might have killed you,” she finished with a whisper and Ashe noted that she didn’t use the expression ‘try to kill you’. “It’s why I have to try so hard not to let it out. I don’t have even a small amount of control over it yet and even experimenting with it puts everyone I care about at risk.”

“But you do have control,” Ashley pointed out, taking Aiden’s hand, “At the end, after Kitty killed her, you shut it down and shifted back into your human form. That’s control Aiden,” she asserted.

“She’s right,” Ashe said manner-of-factly, “The last time you took on your...you call it your ‘rage’ form?” He asked, receiving a confirming nod, “The only reason you stopped is because I put you down. The fact that you were able to reverse your shift at will is a strong indicator that you are, in fact, gaining more control of yourself when in your rage form.”

“It’s still too risky to experiment with,” Aiden said sternly, “At least until I can get to some kind of secure training facility where I’m not in danger of hurting someone.”

“Agreed,” Ashe said, pouring his own cup of coffee and taking a sip, “And Tearmann will have such facilities for the exact reasons you just gave. So I take it that other than the matter of your rage form you’re doing all right as well?”

Aiden gave a bit of a shrug and sipped from her mug, “All right I suppose. I mean, I didn’t get it nearly as bad as Kitty did. Other than some pretty mind-blowing masturbation nothing else was done to me. I just feel bad that her fucking mind-fuck powers made us convince you to take the damn exit to her temple to begin with,” she said, looking apologetically at Ashley.

Shaking her head, the red-haired beauty offered her a forgiving smile, “Just like Kitty, you weren’t in your right mind, so there’s nothing you have to be sorry for. Still, it does make me wonder,” she said in a ponderous voice.

“About what?” Ashe asked with a slightly raised eyebrow.

“Well, from the very moment all of this started, and I’m assuming Kitty’s dreams were a product of Libidine’s influence, I didn’t feel any of that pull that ended up snagging Aiden. Even Libidine herself didn’t understand why I wasn’t affected by her. How can that be? I don’t have any mental powers.”

“It’s an excellent question,” Ashe replied, “Hopefully the people at Tearmann can give you some proper power testing and determine just what the full extent of your abilities are since clearly the MCO in San Francisco weren’t up to the job.”

“And brings up another question,” Aiden added. “Why was Kitty so strongly effected? She was experiencing those really fucking intense wet dreams long before we got close.”

“I think I can maybe shed a bit of light on that.”

Looking over, the group saw Gear walk into the room with his characteristic cocky smile. “While we were waiting for you guys to get here WiseCrack and I did a little brainstorming. Our best guess is that the mental programming she got from the Kajira program wasn’t fully gone yet. Oh it probably would have been,” he assured Ashley when her face fell, “She just didn’t have enough time for her mind to completely re-adjust to a non-sex slave mentality. She probably lit up like a sex Christmas tree to the bitch so our guess is she started feeding her little sex nuggets to reinvigorate the kind of mentality the programming had created. The closer she got, the more intense Libidine’s powers became, and the more sex-crazed she got until she became as easy as-”

“Gear,” Ashe growled warningly.

Having the grace to look embarrassed, the gadgeteer cleared his throat awkwardly. “Anyway, that’s what we figured happened. Her Kajira programming re-activated and got kicked up to eleven.”

“Poor Kitty,” Ashley murmured before a sudden thought had her looking up sharply. “Does this mean that she’s going to revert back to how she was when we first met?”

“It’s hard to say,” Gear told her apologetically, “There’s really no precedence for this so we really don’t know how she’ll react, especially when Libidine might have tried to psionically tie herself into Kitty’s psyche.”

“She’s already changed,” Aiden said quietly, causing the other three to look at her in confusion. “Her knife,” she explained, “When she used her energy knife it was different. Every time before, it was blue and white and shaped like a standard double-edged dagger. The one she used on Libidine was something completely different. It had more of a spearhead quality with an arrowhead-style blade leading to an inward bevel, flaring back out into a half hexagonal edge, and then beveling back down into the handle. It also looked like it was on fire, not just glowing.”

While Ashley smiled proudly and Ashe nodded with an expression of consideration, Gear just gawked at the wolf girl for several seconds. “That’s...*really* specific.”

Aiden shrugged casually as though it was no big deal. “I’m a bladesmith, it’s what I do.”

“And it brings up something that Tearmann will need to investigate when they conduct her power testing as well,” Ashe said in a serious and considering tone. “She said Libidine was trying to ‘taint’ her. Perhaps she was more successful than we realize.”

“Is she in danger?” Ashley asked worriedly, “Like she’ll become an avatar for her or something?”

“No,” Ashe said with a shake of his head, “If she was an avatar she would have already been contacted by spirits and likely bonded with one. It is possible

that it may have cause an alteration to her power and possibly even granted her new ones. I'll contact Tearmann and let them know about what happened and what they need to look for."

Nodding, Ashley yawned widely before quickly covering her mouth and blushing. "Sorry, I'm really tired."

"Me too," Aiden said around a yawn, "I think it's time for bed. Should we go get Kitty?"

"She and WiseCrack headed up just before I got here," Gear informed them, "They're in the first bedroom on the right so avoid that one."

"Okay," Ashley said before glancing shyly towards her friend. "Aiden, would you mind...?"

Smiling gently, the wolf girl slipped her arm around the redhead's shoulders. "Of course not," she said, and led her up the stairs towards the bedrooms.

Once the two girls were out of earshot, Gear poured himself a cup of coffee and slid onto one of the stools with a sigh. "Hell of a cluster fuck," he remarked, receiving a silent nod from Ashe. "The girls did a hell of a job," he continued, "But what kind of price are they going to pay for it?"

"It hasn't hit them yet," his long time friend and boss observed, "At least not with Ashley and Aiden."

"And when it does?"

"Then," Ashe said knowingly, "They'll have one another to offer support and understanding. I've already forwarded the incident details to Tearmann so Rebecca will know what to expect."

"Is that a good idea?" Gear wondered, "The girls might get pissed at you for telling her about it before they had a chance to. They could consider it a breach of their privacy," he warned.

"I already told Rebecca, and she agrees, that it's better to know about it in advance so the school knows what to expect in case of an outburst. She also agrees

that not letting them know the school is aware of it so they can be the ones to broach the subject is better all around.”

“And if they find out you spilled?” Gear challenged.

“That’s just something I’ll have to take responsibility for,” Ashe said without any sign of regret, “But they have a great deal of strength I don’t think they are even aware of. The local superhero team wouldn’t have been able to handle what they went through nearly as well.

“Yeah, the fuck is up with that by the way?” Gear snapped, remembering at the last moment to keep his voice down. “That team should have dealt with this already.”

“I’m aware of that,” Ashe said darkly.

“I mean, that was months ago,” the weaponsmith went on, “How in the fuck was this not taken care of?”

“I have a strong theory,” Ashe said with an edge to his voice that even had his friend scared, “And it won’t happen again.”

Headquarters for The Cornfield Brigade, Des Moines, Iowa

“So she’s all ‘Oh my gawd you’re, like, totally hot!’ and I’m like, ‘That’s why they call me Heatstroke baby!’”

The four other men, all in different style of costume, laughed and either slapped their knees or pounded on the poker table they were sitting around. “Tell

me she was blonde,” the one garbed in an ice-blue costume with what appeared to be ice fissures throughout said.

“Oh very blonde,” the one called Heatstroke said bawdily, “And natural too.” His eyebrows waggled with the traditional male sign for ‘get it?’.

“Lucky bastard,” Truck grumbled, trying to shuffle the cards with his large, meaty hands while his rather large and muscular form hunched awkwardly over the table.

“Don’t worry big man,” the ice-costumed one, Shiver, assured him, “I’m sure there’s some girl out there who you’ll look like a genius next to.”

As the big man opened his mouth to utter an admittedly dim-witted retort, the window he was sitting beside suddenly exploded inward from the force of the body hurtling through it moments before said body impacted against Truck’s head, slamming him face-first into and then through the poker table. Wood shattered as cards and chips flew through the air while several vicious and precisely targeted strikes rained down on the brick’s head, neck, and spine. The remaining four barely had a chance to realize their strong man had been completely incapacitated by the dark clad figure before it was moving once again.

Even as the man known as Heatwave began powering up, his body beginning to glow with a yellow corona of heat, the figure flicked his wrist and sent a tiny, silver sphere streaking through the air. Three inches before it struck the hero in the chest, the charge detonated, unleashing a cascade of rapidly expanding flame-retardant foam. Within milliseconds, the hero was covered from head to toe in the fire-dampening substance that effectively eliminated his powers. A moment later, a single blow to the face sent him sprawling to the floor before blood began pouring from his fractured nasal passages.

Shiver managed to recover from his surprise by then and unleashed a blast of ice shards shotgun-style at the intruder, intending to staple him to the wall with the six-inch long spikes. His eyes went wide when the strangers deftly wove between the projectiles, the momentum easily bringing him within striking distance. Two vicious and expertly placed strikes later, Shiver was on the ground screaming in pain from a dislocated kneecap and shattered collarbone.

Of the remaining two, it was Running Man who reacted first, engaging his ability and racing towards their enemy. While not the fastest speedster, the hero was able to boast running speeds of seventy miles per hour at full effort. That often was more than fast enough for him to run at an opponent and almost seem to appear from nowhere before taking them out. That would have been the case in this situation as well; however he failed to notice the patch of nearly transparent liquid spread on the floor between him and his target. Due to that lack of awareness, when he raced across it at full speed he had no means of preparing himself when his feet suddenly adhered to the substance and pitched him forward at such incredible velocity that his ankle bones shattered from the strain just before his face impacted the ground, rendering him senseless.

The last remaining member, Airborne, the vaunted leader of the Cornfield Brigade, slowly raised his hands in surrender. It had occurred to him to use his power of flight to raise to the ceiling and dive bomb their opponent, but by this point he realize who they were fighting. He also realized that attempting to combat an enemy who knew all of their exact capabilities, as well as the most effective means of counteracting them, would have been both painful and colossally stupid.

“Four months,” Ashe growled furiously, “You’ve had four months to deal with Libidine. I gave you detailed site schematics, power levels and capabilities, and five different tactical plans that would have allowed you to complete the mission with minimal effort.”

“We’ve been busy,” Airborne explained stupidly.

“You dealt with two crop fires, a bank robbery, and one minor super villain that handed your asses to you because you five idiots can’t figure out the concept of teamwork,” the dark vigilante snapped, “Because of your incompetence, you allowed a demi-god to achieve the kind of power that made her a significant threat to this region.”

“Hey, we’re still new at this,” the team leader defended.

“You’ve been in operation for a year,” Ashe informed him coldly, “And three completely inexperienced teenagers taken completely off-guard took care of the situation in less than three hours. That is unacceptable.” Looking around at the

decimated team, he fixed the leader with a hard glare that couldn't be seen beneath the opaqueness of his helmet. "You're done."

"Wh-what?" Airborne stammered while his team groaned with pain in various pitches.

"You five are useless. The only thing your 'team' uses its abilities for is to try and impress some bimbo to score a cheap fuck for the night. Cornfield Brigade is officially disbanded and none of you are to engage in crime fighting of any kind."

"You can't do that!" Airborne protested, clenching his fists angrily, "You don't have any authority over us."

In the blink of an eye, the man found himself face-to... utter blackness that was Ashe's helmet. "You put the lives of four children in danger with your laxness and ineptitude, and when you fuck up that badly I am the *only* authority. Burn your costumes and find civilian jobs, because if you continue to try and play hero I will end each and every single one of you. Am. I. *Clear!*"

Swallowing and trying very hard not to throw up from the terror he was experiencing at the implications this living nightmare was making, the former leader of the now defunct Cornfield Brigade nodded hard enough to nearly give himself a whiplash.

By the time he was done, and dizzy from the effort, he blinked when he realized the Ghost Wolf was gone.

Des Moines, Iowa, East Village Area

Being very careful to stick to the shadows and alleyways, Nicholas...no, that name didn't fit him anymore. After what had been done to him, that creature's brief manipulations had made sure that he would never be Nicholas ever again. Between the little lump of flesh between his legs that no longer served any other purpose than waste removal and the small, undeniably budding breasts that jiggled on his chest, there was no point in denying that Nicholas was gone. Nikki had taken his place and between being scared, lost, alone, and hungry, she had gone into full survival mode and that included scrounging unthinkable places of necessities.

Thankfully, being in a major city that shared in society's wasteful culture, it hadn't taken much effort to locate food. A convenience store dumpster had yielded a veritable bounty of bread, snack cakes, and even bottles of pop that were only a day or two expired. True, the packaging was crusted with some kind of disgusting brownish-green slime that turned her stomach, but the contents contained within were at least consumable and didn't make her sick. She even managed to acquire the, without dirtying her clothes too badly.

Clothes was another issue she had partial success with. An American Red Cross donation box proved to be a treasure trove of various kinds of articles of clothing. Unfortunately, they were all either adult or very young child sized. The only thing that she found to fit was a black overcoat and even it dragged on the ground and its sleeves completely engulfed her hands with room to spare. Yes, technically it was stealing, but the lock had long since rusted away and she was desperate, so she figured the Red Cross would probably understand.

So, with her belly full and her body protected from the cooler night air, Nikki sought out somewhere that she might be able to hide and at least sleep. Given how she looked, the risk of rape and murder was paramount in her mind when it came making a choice of locale. She did briefly consider using her body to try and barter her way into a soft bed. After all, that's how she was able to get transportation to Des Moines in the first place, luckily with a man that had recently bathed before taking full advantage of her young, supple mouth. In fact, the idea of fulfilling someone's pleasure, and taking some for her own at the same time, in

exchange for creature comforts didn't repulse her nearly as much as it should have; and that disturbed her.

Thankfully, she'd been able to do a good job of avoiding people, though that didn't include the resident homeless population of Des Moines. So far, however, most of them seemed to be content to simply ignore her and one or two even offered her a cautious smile. Hopefully she wouldn't encounter one of the traditional vagrants that were constantly high on drugs and looking to use her as a cheap sex toy.

Slipping down another darkened alleyway, she spied a rather sizable cardboard box that probably had come from a washer or dryer. While it might have been cramped for an adult, to the diminutive twelve-year-old it looked like it would easily accommodate her. Unfortunately, as the first drops of rain splattered her face from the overnight storm rolling through the city, it would likely not survive very long against any kind of a downpour.

She had just resigned herself to using it and keeping as dry as possible when the scrape of metal drew her startled gaze to the large metal door she hadn't even realized was there slowly opening into the alley. As the steel yawned wider and wider, she could see faint, colored lights flashing from within the building it was attached to and low, thrumming music that seemed like I wanted to reach deep within her and caress things low in her body. She was frantically looking for a place to hide when the shape of a woman holding two bags of garbage stepped out the doorway and looked directly at her.

For several moments, neither said a word. While Nikki was frantically looking for a safe place to run, likely directly behind her, the woman, dressed in an imposing black suit that was a stark contrast to her golden blonde hair, coolly appraised the young girl with eyes hidden in shadow.

"And who might you be?" she asked with a purr in her voice.

"N-no one," Nikki stammered, slowly beginning to back away, "I'm just leaving."

"Stop."

The word was spoken softly, yet possessed a steely commanding to its tone that had the frightened girl stopping dead in mid-step. Casually tossing the bags of garbage into a nearby dumpster, the woman's stiletto heels clicked sharply on the pavement as she approached Nikki with a deliberate, yet sensual grace before slowly walking around her. "Interesting," she seemed to muse to herself until she was once again directly in front of her. "What have you got on under that rather ill-fitting coat of yours?"

She clutched the coat tighter around her, not wanting this woman to see just how wretched she looked. In fact, the one thing Nikki wanted to do more than anything was get the hell away from this person before they decided to take her to the police, who would likely send her back to the death sentence that was her home. Still, something in the woman's voice seemed to beckon to her. Not in the unstoppable, metaphysical way the demoness had, but more like a gentle lulling to her tired and chaotic thoughts. "Just clothes," she murmured, lowering her eyes in shame.

"Let me see, pretty one," the woman commanded gently. When Nikki only adjusted the coat more closely, she received a light tsking for her effort. "Now, now little one, do as Mistress commands."

Perhaps it was some kind of lingering effect from the demoness, or maybe this woman just had that kind of intrinsic dominance to her, but Nikki found herself helplessly obeying and parting her coat, revealing the tattered and stained schoolgirl outfit she wore underneath.

"Good lord," the woman said with what sounded like genuine surprise and concern, "What happened to you?"

If ever a question required a very long, drawn out explanation, it was that one, and Nikki simply didn't have the energy to even try to go into it or come up with some kind of abridged version. So, as a way of answer, with tears filling her eyes and spilling down her cheeks, she simply shook her head.

"Oh honey," the woman said, her tone changing completely from domineering Mistress to almost motherly as she took those brief steps that would

bring her within reach of the girl and gathered her into her arms. “It’s all right sweetheart, Mistress will take care of you, all right?”

Now reduced to a blubbing mess as all of the pent up emotions from the last several days came crashing down on her all at once, Nikki was helpless to do anything but weakly allow herself to be guided by the woman’s gentle, yet firm grip through the door in the building.

As the door closed against the world, the tired and frightened young girl couldn’t help dimly wondering if she was being led to her salvation or her damnation.