

Chapter 45

As they walked back out towards the Tesla, Alexis shook her head a little. "I'm not crazy about going to this house with these three strangers in the middle of the night, Andy, but if you think it's what we need to do, then I guess we'd better get going."

"Look," Andy said, climbing into the back seat of the Tesla. He wasn't happy about not being allowed to drive or even sit in the front seat, but Lexi and Niko had their rules and he was in their world now, so he was going to follow them. "Any time I think about doing something scary or difficult, I think about what Piper went through, and what I would do to keep her safe from that ever happening again. Beyond that, even, think of how many women may be paired to men they don't want to be. This is a chance to find a way to get them out from underneath those people's thumbs. We need to go find out if this woman's talking shit or if she really means what she told Phil."

"I saw the message she sent him," Niko said, climbing into the car next to Andy as Lexi got in the front. She had a kit for getting and storing a blood sample, something they were going to use on Eve McCallister tonight and again tomorrow morning. "It all sounded pretty legit, and Phil's taking it seriously, so that's enough for me. He's met her before, he said, and he said he's got good cause to believe her."

"Well, I guess we go over and gauge for ourselves." The drive took them down some back roads that Andy hadn't even seen in New Eden yet, a narrow little side street that was practically concealed around a corner, heading up along one of the hills, completely enshrouded by thick tree foliage providing like a camouflage for the area. "Jesus," Andy muttered, "if we weren't looking at the map, I think I would've totally missed this was even here."

"It really is sort of off the grid, isn't it?" Lexi said. "I mean, it's on the map, but it's pretty well constructed to discourage accidental discovery. You said there's two women here guarding the place, Niko?"

"Yeah, Master Sergeant Rodriguez and Second Lieutenant Pak," Niko told them. "They're part of Linda's strike team, too. We all came in with her when she arrived on the base in early February."

"Phil and his team knew about the virus that early?" Andy said. He knew Niko wouldn't be able to tell him everything, but he hoped to get a little better of a picture of the early days. "I had figured he hadn't had any idea about it until the big lockdown hit end of March."

"There was a lot of conflicting reports going around for the first few months, between Covid and DuoHalo, but by February, they knew it was going to get bad and quick, but nobody could say anything about it, no matter how much they wanted to," Niko sighed.

"Hey, I'm not mad at you or Phil," Andy replied. "I'm just saying, you'd think the government would get their shit together if they expected it to go this far south."

"Based on the response, Andy," Alexis said, "I don't think they did. Not at first. As someone who spent some time in the CIA, lemme tell you, the government is like one of those big 18-wheeler trucks. It's slow to start, even slower to turn, but once it gets going in one direction, it's very hard to stop. They wrote it off as something that would blow through and not cause much in the way of problems, and we're all feeling the repercussions of that."

The car slowed down on approach as Alexis saw the woman with an M4 approach, gesturing for her to roll down the window. "Alexis Coleman?"

"That's me," Lexi said.

"Hey Neeks."

"Hey K-Rod," Niko said to the woman. "All quiet on the western front?"

The woman, who Andy assumed must be Master Sergeant Rodriguez, nodded. "Mostly, yeah, although the woman's getting a little close to bouncing off the walls. She's gonna get her man before the end of the day, yeah? This him?"

"It's not him, but it's getting sorted out," Niko told her. "This one's *my* man."

"Oh!" the woman said, her demeanor softening almost immediately. "Didn't know I was in the

presence of greatness. Heard lots of great stories about you, sir. Glad you're taking care of our girl right. She's earned a bit of peace and happiness."

"I like to think *I'm* the lucky one, but maybe we're both lucky."

"We're here to talk to the woman before we bring a guy to her," Niko said. "The Captain should've called ahead, telling you we were coming."

"She said you were coming over, yeah, but didn't say what for."

"Pre-screening. What're they like?"

"The woman's whipsmart, although maybe a bit more uptight than she needs to be. The two guys mostly just speak Russian, so no idea what they're talking about. Pakky told me they're mostly just yammering about wanting to get out of the house, considering they've been in there for like three days now, since we smuggled them in under cover of darkness," Rodriguez told them. "Anyway, it's late. Go see'em and get what you need to get done done, so you can come back tomorrow and get that woman right before she completely loses her mind."

"We'll be quick about it," Lexi said.

"Go on then. They're expecting you."

She stepped out of the way and waved the Tesla onward, as the car headed towards the house that was well nestled up against a tree line. She stepped out of the car first, glancing around the area. Andy was about to get out when Niko grabbed his arm, holding him in place. "Wait."

Niko moved out of the car next, also doing a quick sweep of the area before gesturing for Andy to follow her. While the house was certainly nicer than anything Andy had lived in before his current address, it reminded him much more of the homes back in Ohio than it did the sort of mega mansions he found himself surrounded by these days.

Lexi moved up to the front door and rang the bell, and a moment later, another soldier answered, clearly Lieutenant Pak, a good looking Korean-American woman with a slightly exhausted look on her face. "You couldn't just bring the dude over *now*, Neeks?" she said, looking over Lexi's shoulder. "The woman's going to lose her shit soon."

"Just a little bit longer, Pakky," Niko promised. "Invite us in."

"Oh! Shit, yeah, sorry, c'mon in," Pak told them, stepping back in, giving them room to move into the house. The inside of the place felt more like a model home than a place anyone actually lived. Nothing seemed at all used, the halls were immaculate and the picture frames on the wall didn't just have the photos that came with the frames on them, some of them even had the plastic clingfilm still on. "She's waiting in the living room. When Linda said that she wasn't going to meet the man she's being assigned to tonight, she told the boys not to get up."

Andy wondered just how much Linda had told the two women about what Eve McCallister was doing here, and who the two men that had come along with her were. He suspected that they were keeping everything close to the vest and hadn't told them what Eve and her two men were *really* here for, although if Linda trusted these women enough to bring them with her, maybe they did know the whole story.

The living room was lit only by a single lamp that wasn't turned all the way up, and on the far side of the room sat Eve McCallister. She was a good looking woman in her late forties or early fifties, with dark brown hair cut short in wavy locks that hung just below her jawline. Her cheeks were almost a little inset, her skin a very pale white, and she looked very slender, holding a glass with what looked like scotch over ice in it in her thin fingers. "So, what," she said to Andy as he, Niko and Alexis entered the room. "Your boss doesn't trust me to meet me face-to-face on his own?"

"First, he's my friend and not my boss, Mrs. McCallister," Andy said.

"Don't call me that."

"Call you what?"

"Mrs. McCallister," she snorted. "After what that fucker's done to me, done to *all* women, I'm ashamed to have been married to him for as long as I was." She was wearing a huge white t-shirt that

was at least five or six sizes too large which hung down far enough that Andy couldn't even tell what she had on underneath, her legs folded beneath her on the couch. "The last thing I would've thought when I first saw his scrawny ass thirty years ago was that this was a man who was going to be in every history book for the rest of time, but then again, I suppose Eva Braun thought the same thing."

"And that's the second reason why Dr. Marcos isn't here himself, Eve," Andy said, stepping further into the room. "He, quite frankly, doesn't trust you, and can you blame him?"

"No," she sighed, resignation heavy in her tone. "No, I suppose not. Adam's well and truly fucked the entire world, but I assure you, he fucked me worst of all." She extended her hand to him. "Eve McCallister, which I'm sure you know. But I don't know you. You are?"

"Andy Rook," he said, shaking her hand, even as he felt Alexis and Niko crowding around him nervously, but if she could kill him by shaking hands, there wasn't much they could do anyway. "This is my partner and bodyguard, Alexis Coleman, formerly of the CIA. And this is my fiancé and other bodyguard, 2nd Lieutenant Niko Redwolf. They're here to ensure my safety and *I'm* here to ask a handful of questions and then tell you how this is going to work."

"I figured as much," she said. There was something heavily weathered about the woman's general demeanor, but weathered was not broken, and he felt like this woman wouldn't break no matter what the world threw at her. She was fidgeting, though, and Andy chalked that up to her having gone so long without having a connection fix. "So where do you want to begin?"

"Let's start with confirming some of the basic facts," he told her as he moved to sit down on the other end of the couch from her. "You are Eve McCallister, former wife of Dr. Adam McCallister, yes?"

"*Doctor* Eve McCallister, yes."

"Sorry, I didn't realize you were also a doctor. Specializing in what?"

"Biochemistry, the same as my ex-husband."

"You're divorced?"

"I will be as soon as a court hears my story," she said.

"Did you also work at the base?"

"My god, you really don't know anything about the project at all, do you?" she said with a soft laugh. "No, I was working for a pharmaceutical startup here in the Valley called Ceravanatos, developing anti-carcinogens, things to actually fight and cure cancer. That's what it was supposed to be, until our CEO started bragging that we were one to two years away, when really we were at least five to ten away from something actionable."

"So you probably understand some of what's going on with the Quaranteam serum, I imagine."

"The...? Is that what they're actually calling it?" She laughed, shaking her head. "I guess I should be glad they're not calling it the McCallister formula, at least."

"The impression I got was that Dr. McCallister had piggybacked a lot onto the existing research that Dr. Marcos and Dr. Bridges had done before he was brought onto the team," Niko said, sitting down in one chair while Lexi leaned against the wall next to the door.

"Oh yes," Eve said. "Adam felt like they'd never let him forget that he came onto the project late, after a lot of the heavy lifting although knowing how little a sense of humor Adam had, they probably just make a joke about it once, and Adam turned it into a deeply held trauma. That's just the kind of man he is, I'm afraid. Regardless, yes, I understand about 60-70% of what's going on with this Quaranteam serum, which is why I know what I have is quite valuable." She looked over at him and licked her lips in a way that made Andy feel a little uncomfortable. "You're *certain* you're not the man I'm going to be getting partnered up with?"

"Assuming the questions go well, tomorrow I'll bring over Nathaniel Watkins over, and you'll join his family."

"Wait, IllumEyeNation *founder* Nathaniel Watkins?"

"That's the one," Andy told her. "I assume that passes with your requirement of being paired to someone who'll let you maintain the lifestyle that you're used to?"

“Oh, I don't really give a shit about any of that,” Eve told him with a smile. “But I wanted to be sure I'd be safe and that my partner would be safe, so I figured the only way to do that would be to get paired up with someone very high up the food chain. That way I wouldn't worry about being part of a small household where a bad fall could wipe me out. Yes, Nathaniel Watkins will do just fine.”

“We need to do a blood draw both before and after, Eve,” Niko said to her, moving over with a needle and an empty vial attached to it. “So we can track the changes.”

“Yes yes,” Eve said, sliding the shirt up to bare one of her arms for Niko. “I get all of that. But you'll find everything works as I said it did in my initial communique.”

“We need to go over all that again, though,” Andy stressed. “Just so we've got it all down, and make sure nothing got lost along the way. So this man you've brought—”

“Sergei, yes.”

“Sergei's sperm functions as a de-assignment fluid?”

“Essentially, yes,” Eve said while Niko tied off her arm, patting to bring the vein to the surface. “It needs to be ingested or implanted against a soft membrane tissue, so oral consumption is the easiest, but putting it inside a vagina or rectum will work just as well. But what it does is give a relatively quick system shock that strips the serum of the connective DNA it's been attached to, and sends it back into 'awaiting pairing' status. That means the woman's going to rapidly go into a sort of sexual frenzy, but that she can be reassigned to a new partner without any hazardous side effects or the previous man being dead. So she'll need a new partner basically on site when she's about to take this, but yes, a woman can be reassigned to another man, although the process is a one-and-done affair, and won't work multiple times. In fact, it's dangerous to even try. The serum develops an immunity to it after that first shock, and past that, you'd need to go the necrotized semen route for an additional reassignment.”

“You think with research, though, it might lead to a series of reassignment serums?”

Eve put her other hand up in the air. “When it comes to the black magic hoodoo voodoo that that base block serum is capable of, I don't think there's anyone alive who can tell you exactly how it functions and what it will and won't do. Shit, those two other doctors didn't even see what Adam had spliced into the serum before it was too late for them to go back.”

“Wait, you're telling me your husband did this *intentionally*?”

“Adam's a more horrible man than you will ever be able to comprehend, young man,” Eve sniffed as Niko drained blood from her arm. “He's done all this according to some kind of plan, and even worse things still. So much worse.”

“I'll leave that to other people to delve into, I guess. You implied it can also pair two men or two women. Is that true?”

“If they haven't been paired with anyone before now, yes,” Eve said. “If they have, it's the same rules as a woman being reassigned – it can happen once before the reset becomes ineffective.”

“I thought the baseline DuoHalo vaccine was toxic to men.”

“Sergei's sperm contains a modified version of it that works on a binary system, rather than the original system it was put together in,” Eve told them. “That means it essentially splits into two non-toxic halves, one in each of the two people paired together. It isn't as resilient as the baseline Quaranteam serum, providing only, say, 50-60% resistance to the virus, but it makes sure DuoHalo won't be fatal in all but the most extreme of cases. It'll be a starting point, but not an endgame.”

“And what happens if a woman's exposed to Sergei's sperm a second time? Standard Quaranteam rejection?”

“In women, yes, but in men, absolutely nothing,” she said while Niko slid the needle out, a small vial of blood ready to be corked off. “That's why Andrei is still paired to him. After first exposure, Sergei's sperm is just like anyone else's. The Russians learned that the hard way when they tried to use his semen to keep moving a particular woman between men. Thankfully it just burned the inside of the woman's mouth, and didn't kill her, something I've heard has happened here?”

“We've regrettably had a fatality in New Eden, yes,” Andy admitted. “Something we're hoping

that this reassignment sperm of Sergei's will help alleviate from happening again.”

Eve scratched at her arms a little bit, as if the blood draw had given her an itch. “Like I said, it's a start, but don't think of it as a catch all solution to all your problems, because it isn't. It's a stopgap, but it will mean women can't be imprisoned to one man.”

“How the hell did they discover this?” Niko asked Eve.

“The Russians found they couldn't get any woman to successfully imprint on Sergei, who was hiding the fact that he was gay. Any woman they brought to him just kept going into reset mode,” she told them. “So they brought him into the lab for Adam to study, and one night Sergei's boyfriend Andrei came to break him out, and I insisted they take me with them, telling them I could get them asylum and protection here in America. Tell me you aren't going to renege on that promise.”

“I swear to you, we aren't,” Andy said. “But Phil trusts most of the people on base right now about as far as I imagine you trusted the Russians.”

“They aren't *all* bad people,” Niko told her, storing the blood vial in a container Phil had given her at his house earlier. “The Russians or the people at the base. But we suspect some of the people working at our Air Force base have different interests in mind, so Dr. Marcos wants to be ready just to release the modified serum into the wild if it turns out there are elements in the government that don't want to cooperate. He's a good man at heart.”

“Not to keep pressing on the issue, but how long did you say before I was going to get to get reset and imprinted on the new man?”

Andy glanced at his watch. “Twelve to fourteen hours? You think you can hold out that long.”

Eve scowled but nodded. “Fourteen is about my outer limit. Twelve would be better. I'm already pushing past what I should be without getting a fix, but Adam is half the world away, thankfully, and I'm never getting near that man's sperm ever again.”

“I'll see if I can get Nathaniel up and over a little earlier than planned, to try and make this easier on you,” Andy told her. “We're really not trying to be mean about any of this – it's purely for safety and security.”

Eve offered him a soft smile. “I get that, really I do, but the biology of it all will not be trifled with, and it will not be taken for granted. I'm doing everything I can to keep my head clear, but eventually physiology's going to win out and I'm going to become feral, just like Adam intended.”

“Adam *designed* it that way?”

Eve's lips pulled into a slight sneer. “He wasn't quite the chauvinistic pig when we got married, but over the years, there were more than a few fights where he said, 'This would be so much easier if you would just let me make all the decisions.' He had a bad habit of saying the quiet part out loud. He's always been a control freak, but it's only gotten worse the last several years.”

“What do Andrei and Sergei want out of all of this?” Niko asked her.

“Nothing exceptional. A small home the two of them can share. To be shielded from reprisal by the Russian government. Neither of them speak very good English, but given the time, they'll pick it up I'm sure. Mostly I think they just want to be left alone together.”

“That's something we can arrange, assuming Sergei's willing to help us for a month or two with developing some new work based on his semen.”

Eve nodded. “He gets that's part of the deal, and he'll be willing to provide as much as is needed. I think mostly him and Andrei will just be happy not to have to pretend to be straight any more. When I told them we were fleeing to a place near San Francisco, they were both thrilled by that.”

“How did you even get over here?” Andy asked, not entirely sure Eve would answer him.

“Andrei was a soldier over there, so he was able to sneak us out under cover of darkness and get us to an airfield, where we took off in a relatively small plane which Andrei piloted. We flew low and west out of Moscow to Latvia, where we smuggled onto a boat in Riga. There are plenty of human traffickers ferrying people out of that area to escape DuoHalo, among other things, and so I paid them with all the jewelry I'd brought with me in order to secure passage for the three of us.”

"The smugglers," Niko said. "Were they Russian?"

Eve shook her head. "Icelandic. Apparently they'd been doing this with political refugees before the pandemic. They got us to upstate New York, where I reached out to Dr. Marcos, and he had us smuggled across country on board one of the cross-country transport planes, pretending to be just like any other pick up and drop offs until we arrived at Oakland airport, and the two women guarding us squirreled us away in the middle of the night and brought us here." Eve seemed exhausted, and hearing her story, Andy could understand why. She was jet lagged on top of fighting the very intense biological urge to get fucked. "I even brought a sweetener for the deal, just in case all of this wasn't enough. I have a copy of most of my ex-husband's research done while he was in the custody of the Russians up until I left, all on a thumb drive that I will provide once I've been reassigned to Mr. Watkins."

"You've been sitting on that since you got here?" Lexi asked, annoyance in her voice.

"And you've been keeping Mr. Watkins from me and haven't had me reassigned since I got here, so I think that makes us even, wouldn't you say?" Eve didn't sound bitter about it; simply resigned to the cost of doing business. "Once I'm imprinting again, Sergei has instructions to give you the USB stick. I won't make you wait until I wake up from the process, especially since the second imprinting takes significantly longer than the first one does."

"How long does a reimprinting take?" Andy asked, more for his own curiosity than anything.

"About twenty-four hours," Eve said, "although it can vary about six hours in either direction. Unless of course the serum is doing physical restorations, in which case it can run almost two days."

"You know about that?"

Eve smiled with a look that had both kindness and sympathy mixed into it. "My boy, I imagine you come from a fairly sizable house at this point, considering you have not one but *two* women dedicated to your personal security, but I can assure you, I have seen more women being imprinted than you can possibly imagine. For the last several months, I have been living an utter nightmare. Now that I'm here, once I'm reassigned, I will happily aide in studying the imprinting process, developing formulas for managing the side effects and provide as much military intel as I can about the state of the Russian military and government right now, based on what I saw in my time over there. They're very much not in a good way, if that's at all relevant."

"Any information we can get about how other countries are managing, we'll take," Niko told her. "With so many global leaders dead or dying to DuoHalo, communication lines have gone through some relatively major breakdowns. I don't know what's going on in Washington, but I know it isn't quite as bad as it is in a bunch of other countries."

"My dear, you have *no* idea how bad it is out there for some of the countries, and completely unaffected others are," Eve said, looking away for a moment. "Can whatever else we have to discuss wait until after I'm reimprinted? I'm afraid Mr. Rook's presence here is starting to get to be a rather sizable distraction, and I'm concerned I might slip my focus accidentally."

"Don't Andrei and Sergei cause the same problems?"

"They..." Eve said, starting before stopping. A moment later she started again. "When a woman's closer to her breaking point, her senses are elevated. Andrei and Sergei aren't bonded to *any* women, so... for lack of a better way of explaining it, they *smell* differently. I can tell they aren't someone I can safely pair with."

"Couldn't you safely pair with Andrei, even if he is paired with Sergei?" Andy asked, trying to get a handle on it.

"Yes yes, which is why Andrei is staying on the other side of the house from me, and Sergei is staying in between us at all times," Eve said. "Andrei also has a slightly different scent to him, a pheromone letting me know he's not interested in women. Most women can only detect that kind of thing in their most desperate throes of need, but I'm a little more perceptive than most. Mr. Rook doesn't have that scent about him." She sniffed the air, a slightly coy smile on her face. "In fact, he's got quite the number of partners, including both of you, doesn't he?"

Lexi frowned. "Okay, so that's a little creepy."

"It's simple biology and chemistry, my dear," Eve said to her. "And congratulations to you, Niko. It isn't far along, but you're going to have a very healthy child. Anyway, please take your man from my presence, and I will see you all in a few hours, yes?"

"Alright," Andy told her, glancing at his watch. "It's nearly 1 AM, but I'll try and get Nathaniel over here around 10 or 11. We're at the mercy of his schedule, but I think he'll be pretty open to it. It'll settle our ledger, and I get the impression he doesn't like being in debt to anyone."

"Thank you again, Mister Rook," Eve said to him. "For your honesty and candor above all else. I know that all of this can seem rather maddening, but being straightforward and direct with me has given me nothing but faith in taking you at your word. I would shake your hand," she said with a weak smile, "but I'm afraid if I did that, I would not let it go. You know the way out. Forgive me for not walking you there."

Andy, Lexi and Niko made their way back to the door and out of the house, getting back into the Tesla immediately, heading back home.

"Jesus, the shit luck that poor woman has had," Andy muttered.

"Some of it was of her own making, Andy," Niko told him. "But yeah, I can tell she's very much had a shitty go of it for the past few years."

On the way back to the house, Andy texted Nathaniel, asking if a 10 AM meet up would be acceptable, and was pleased to see the man should him back a text that said, "Whatever you need. See you then, my friend." Andy wasn't sure that he and Nathaniel were really friends, but it was nice to see himself described as such.

The trip back home was uneventful, and once home, Niko immediately went to refrigerate the blood sample and Lexi headed back to her room to get some sleep, knowing they would have a long day tomorrow. Andy, however, just wasn't ready crash yet.

He headed to the main living room and was pleased to find Aisling sitting on the couch, watching one of the Ballerina Badass movies, although she had the volume set low so that the bass rumbling wouldn't risk accidentally waking someone sleeping. "Jaysis, Andy," she said, seeing him walk into the room. "Who spit in your Guinness?"

She held her arms up invitingly to him and he kicked off his shoes, crawled up onto the couch and slid into her grasp, letting her fold those arms around him as he sighed. "I've been good to you, to all the girls, right Ash?"

"Fer feck's sake, Andy, where's all this coming from?"

"I think Gregor's being held hostage by the Russian secret police, and I met Eve McCallister, the soon-to-be ex-wife of the woman who rewrote the world," he said, nuzzling in against her as she smoothed one of her hands against the back of his shaved scalp.

For the next few minutes, he relayed all of what had happened over the last few hours to her – the message from Gregor, the strangeness at the man's front gate, his conversation with Phil and Linda, and, most importantly, meeting Eve McCallister.

"You are absolutely nothing like that monster, Andy," she told him. "It sounds like he never gave a thought as to what his wife may have wanted, and you are going the opposite direction. You have twenty women you're taking care of, Andy, and you make a point to spend at least ten minutes a day with each of them, as close t' one on one as you can get. Nobody asked you to do that. Nobody said you had'ta do that. But you do. If I thought any o'the women in this house felt even a tenth of the way about you that it's clear this Eve does about her ex, we'd have started talking about it long, long ago."

Andy could feel himself starting to tear up a little, and so he wiped his eyes and shifted so he could look up at Aisling with adoration. "How the fuck did I get so lucky to have a woman like you enter my life?"

Aisling smiled, blushing a little bit. "Dunno, but I'm jus' as lucky to have you, hon. Ye could've been a right git, the kind of man just like Adam McCallister, or that asshole who Eric's girl Jenny had to

run away from. Or worse still, I could've gotten saddled with some truly awful shite like Covington," she said, her fingertips gently caressing his skin. "But we both lucked out, and got lucky together."

He kissed her, not one of intense passion, but of the most deeply held love he'd ever felt in his life. He loved all of his fiancés, naturally, but the bond between him and Aisling had been given the most time to take root, and he couldn't imagine his life without her. "You tired, or can I convince you to stay up a bit longer?"

"Mmm... I was watching our girl Sarah kick the shit out of some French spies," she teased.

"You think you have something better than that?"

"I certainly hope so..."

"Does it involve fucking me so good I need you to carry me up to the inevitable shower we're going to need afterwards?"

"I think it might," he said, kissing at her neck tenderly.

"Then I think you can convince me to stay up a bit longer."

They stripped out of their clothes slowly, tenderly, taking turns to kiss the exposed flesh each time one of them peeled another layer off, in between locking lips and gazing into each others eyes. They knew each others sensitive spots best and knew exactly how to get the other wound up without making them go off too quickly.

Aisling refused to be rushed, but also refused to let him not do his own fair share of work. His hand was between her thighs, stroking against her pussy, long before her fingertips had even pulled his pants off. In fact, she had to mash her mouth against his when her first orgasm seemed to take her by surprise, as if Andy had tapped into some previously undiscovered pocket of delight. When their lips parted, she was laughing, breathless and dazed, her eyes struggling to focus for a moment. "Shite, didn't see tha' comin'."

"You want me to stop?"

"Nae, I want you inside me, Andy," she whispered softly at him, undoing his pants. She was laid down on her back on the couch, with him in between her thighs, and she did her best to push his jeans and boxers downward, but couldn't get them much further down than midthigh. "I'm a greedy little girl tonight, but I want to feel you again, so you feel my love all around you... I love you, Andy Rook."

"And I love you Aisling Blake."

She shook her head. "It'll be true soon enough, so I wanna hear you call me it."

"It?" Andy said with a chuckle.

"Y'know what I mean, ye daft bastard..." she giggled.

"Okay then," he said, pausing just a moment before looking into her eyes deeply. "I love you..." he started, as he lined up his cock and pushed it inside of her twat on the last two words. "Aisling Rook."

She moaned, her eyes almost crossing for a moment before she looked up at him and nodded quickly. "Do it, love. Fuck me. Love me. I love you, I love you so fuckin' much. I'm gonna be your wife, the mother of your children, an' I'm gonna be with you until one of us kicks it."

His hips had started thrusting, the massive amount of clothing they'd refused to take off slowing them down a bit, but it somehow made all the sensations more intense, made the connection more personal, and they kissed again and again, confessing their love for one another endlessly as he fucked into her, and her thighs clung to keep him from pulling too far away.

The tempo started slow, like a waltz, but rapidly picked up pace, until they were colliding into one another like a drum roll, a constant rat-a-tat motion of his hips into hers, her cunt clamping around his cock in the same rushing rhythm until he came and it sent her right back to the walls of orgasm a second time, their moans fusing together within their joined mouths that had formed one single cavern of adoration.

He'd come harder over the last several months, but he'd never once felt as satisfied.

Andy looked down at Aisling's face, and she had a warm expression of affection on it. "I love

you, Aisling Rook.”

“An' I love th' shite outta you, Andy Rook,” she said, kissing him kindly. “An' I'm comin' with ya tomorrow when you take Nathaniel over to meet Eve.”

“You sure, Ash?” he asked.

“Mmmm,” she confirmed. “Gotta make sure she stays the fuck away from my man. Now let's get a shower and get to bed.”

“It's a good thing we're rich now,” Andy joked as he moved to stand up, pulling up his jeans and boxers before helping Ash to her feet.

“Why's that?” she said, turning off the television.

“I have to take like five showers a day, so our water bill must be through the roof.”

Andy nearly had to slap his hand over Ash's mouth, she started giggling so loudly.