Eve stretched her lithe body, instinctively reaching for her wife. Her fingers did not feel the soft warmth of Lainey's skin. Instead, they were met with cool sheets. That meant Lainey had been awake for a while.

"Again," Eve muttered grumpily. She didn't want to believe the "honeymoon" was over with Lainey. It certainly wasn't for Eve. But Lainey had been absent from their usual morning routine more frequently the past couple of weeks. Eve flopped back onto her pillow and groaned. She could have really used a romping round of lovemaking this morning after the dream she had. Of course, her dream was most likely the reason she was taking Lainey's absence harder than she should. It wasn't Lainey's fault that Eve dreamt of losing the love of her life to some unseen. . .wife stealer.

Eve laughed at herself for being ridiculous. She knew for a fact that Lainey hadn't lost interest. No one could fake the emotions — and orgasms — Lainey had last night. Eve threw the sheets off her naked body and stretched again. It amazed her that she could still be sore after vigorous sex. Both she and Lainey had been insatiable since they finally realized they belonged together. Eve smiled. She didn't mind the sore muscles. In fact, she hoped they never went away. They were proof that Lainey was incredibly open to experimenting.

"Which is why you're being absurd with your stupid dreams and insecurities," Eve mumbled to herself. She shrugged into her robe and set off to find the object of her thoughts. She stopped cold when she saw Lainey shutting the door to her home office. There was a smile on Lainey's face that created a pang of jealousy in Eve's heart. "Lainey?"

"Oh!" Lainey's hand flew to her chest. "You scared me, honey."

"Sorry. I live here, too, you know."

Lainey chuckled. "I know that, silly. I just wasn't expecting you to be standing right there."

"I was expecting you in bed." Eve inclined her head towards the closed door of Lainey's office. "Something in there more exciting than me?" She tried keeping her tone light and playful—a difficult task when she felt she wasn't being entirely truthful with Lainey. Eve wasn't used to being anything but honest and open with Lainey, even if the subject was hurtful.

Lainey sauntered up to Eve and planted a passionate kiss on her wife's lips. "Nothing is more exciting than you. I'm sorry I wasn't there when you woke up. I just wanted to get a few things done before our trip."

"Your boss must be a hard ass making you work on the day you leave for vacation."

Lainey smiled. "I'm my boss."

"Ah, so you've replaced me?" Eve wrapped her arms around Lainey's waist. She willed her body to relax and her mind to shut off the bad thoughts.

"You, my love, are irreplaceable. But once we got married, you stopped being my boss and became my partner. In all things." Lainey patted Eve's robe-clad butt. "Now, get dressed. I'm going to see if the kids are up. Would you like some breakfast?"

Eve gazed into Lainey's green eyes and saw love staring back at her. I'm ridiculous. "Waffles?"

"Eggs and bacon, too?"

"You know me so well."

Lainey tapped the tip of Eve's nose. "Don't you forget it." She gave Eve a quick peck and took off towards Bella's room.

"Lainey?" Eve called out and waited for Lainey's smiling face to turn back to her. "What were you working on?" Did her smile just falter?

"Just sending out some emails and tying up loose ends. Nothing too pressing, but things I didn't want to leave unfinished." Lainey grinned, winked, and headed off once again.

Eve stood there for a moment, staring at Lainey's door. She could just go in. It wasn't uncommon for the two of them to interchange offices. What's mine is yours and so forth, Eve thought as she opened the door. As soon as she walked in the door, she could smell Lainey's subtle scent. Eve loved that scent. Lainey never wore perfume and didn't need it, in Eve's humble opinion. The lavender soap Lainey used in the shower was an excellent complement to Lainey's natural scent.

Eve sighed as she sat in Lainey's chair. So fucking ridiculous, she thought again as she looked for anything out of place on the tidy desk. Eve smiled at the family photo that held a special spot directly in Lainey's eye line. Still, Eve couldn't shake the dreadful thought that Lainey was keeping something from her. She wiggled the mouse, but

Lainey's computer was shut down.

"Doesn't mean she wasn't sending emails and then logged off," Eve told herself. She sat back in Lainey's chair and looked around. Everything in this office reminded Eve of… well, herself. Her paintings adorned the walls, along with pictures of Eve or Eve and the kids. That was proof that Lainey hadn't fallen out of love, right? Eve covered her face, disgusted with herself for having any kind of doubts about her wife. She was going to have to tell Lainey about this. No secrets. That was their promise to each other.

"I better come prepared for that wrath," Eve chuckled as she opened the top drawer of the desk and took out a pencil. She searched for a piece of paper, but this one had nothing on it that didn't belong there, unlike Eve's desk. "How do you not have scrap paper at your fingertips?" Eve wondered as she started a search of the other drawers. Even they were orderly. Eve chuckled about her wife being a neat freak, then stopped. The third drawer she tried was locked. What the hell? She tried pulling again and was met with the same resistance. Why would she lock her drawer? Before she had time to think of an acceptable answer, the house's intercom sprang to life.

"Oh, dear wife. Your food is ready."

Eve cringed out of guilt and uncertainty. She got up and went to the intercom box. "Be right there. Tell Kevin to keep his grubby hands off my bacon." There's a perfectly reasonable explanation for all this. Take your head out of your ass and talk to Lainey. Eve made a promise to herself right then that she would speak with Lainey about this on the plane to Paris.

Lainey looked up with a welcoming smile that quickly turned into confusion when Eve walked into the kitchen. "I thought you were changing."

"Hmm?" Eve looked down at her robe. Shit. "Oh, right. I, um, got distracted."

Lainey's brows furrowed as she watched Eve walk back out of the kitchen.

"Is she okay?" Kevin asked, his eyes on Eve as well.

"Yeah," Lainey answered, albeit a bit unsure if that was true. Something was… off with her wife. Lainey had a feeling she might know what it was. "I'll be right back. Don't eat all the bacon." She pointed at all three kids, smiling when Bella giggled as she took another slice.

Eve jumped slightly when she felt soft hands on her torso. A t-shirt had her "tied up" and "blindfolded." Eve relaxed when those hands helped her finish the task of putting on her shirt then smoothed the fabric gently.

"You didn't trust that I could get dressed by myself?" Eve teased.

"Well, you did come to breakfast still wearing your robe. So, I thought I'd come give you a hand." Lainey kept her hands on Eve's hips.

"Sure you weren't just looking to cop a feel and a peek?"

"Added bonus," Lainey winked. She reached up and took Eve's face in her hands. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, of course." Eve leaned in for a kiss. Talk to her! "I. . ."

"It's Paris, isn't it?" Lainey guessed. "You always get a little twitchy when we make plans to go there."

"Twitchy?" Eve chuckled. "I do not get twitchy."

Lainey tickled Eve's sides, causing her to laugh and squirm away. "You do so. It takes at least three orgasms to calm you down once we get there."

"Now I know you're lying. It's at least five!"

Lainey snickered. "I was trying to be nice."

"Five orgasms are extremely nice," Eve wiggled her eyebrows. She wrapped her arms around Lainey and brought her close. "I'm fine, baby. Paris doesn't hold the same dread for me as it used to. Especially when you and the kids are with me. I will admit to getting — what was it?"

"Twitchy," Lainey supplied readily.

"Right. A little. But it's nothing I can't handle."

"We can't handle. I'm always here for you, Eve."

There's your opening. Stop being a coward. "I know. Lainey. . ."

"Moms! The pancakes are getting cold, and Bella is eating all the bacon," Darren called out.

"Oh dear," Lainey laughed. "We should probably get out there."

"You're right. There better be one piece of bacon left for me."

“I’ll make you more if it’s all gone,” Lainey promised. “Hey, was there something you needed to talk to me about?”

Eve brushed her lips against Lainey’s cheek. “It’ll keep. Unlike my breakfast with my bottomless pit of a daughter.”

“Alright!” Lainey clapped to get her broods’ attention. “Is everyone ready? Bags?”

“Check!” The kids — and Eve — called out.

“Passports?”

“Check!” Eve and Kevin called out while Darren and Bella looked at each other nervously.

“Uh, Mommy?” Bella said sadly. “I don’t have my pathport.”

Lainey bit her lip to keep from laughing. Bella’s two front teeth were missing, and it affected the way she said the letter S. It was too cute!

“Me either.” Darren checked his backpack just to make sure.

“I have both of yours,” Lainey reassured them. She brought them out of her purse to relieve their worry. “Now, did everyone go to the bathroom?”

“There’s a bathroom on the plane, dear,” Eve laughed.

“Fine. But I don’t want to hear any complaining on the way. Understood?”

“Yes, Mom!” All the kids — and Eve — answered at the same time, causing Lainey to laugh.

“Get out to the car. Go! Shoo!”

Lainey pushed her family out the door. Their driver stood, ready to help put the bags in the black Suburban. Lainey handed her bag to him and turned back toward the house.

“Where are you going?” Eve asked. “Did you realize you needed to use the bathroom before we left?”

Lainey made a face at her wife, sticking her tongue out at her. “Ha. Ha. I — yes. I need to use the restroom.” She kissed Eve quickly on the cheek. “Go get settled in. I’ll be

right there.”

Eve waited for a beat, then leaned in the entryway and watched Lainey. Her heart plummeted when Lainey made a detour into her office and not the bathroom.

“She lied to me.” It took effort to calm her raging insecurities enough to walk to the SUV and get in, acting as if nothing was wrong — even though her heart was breaking.

“Where’s Mommy?” Bella asked as Kevin secured her in her booster seat.

“She, uh, had to use the restroom,” Eve answered with a small smile.

Bella giggled. “Mommy had to pee-pee!”

Kevin snorted with laughter. It was fun having a little sister. If he said that about his mom, he would get “the look.” He kissed Bella on the forehead when she was all buckled in, then climbed in to claim his seat. As he did, he bumped into Eve’s shoulder.

“Oops. Sorry, Mom.”

“Hmm? Oh, it’s fine.”

Kevin frowned. It was the first time he had called Eve mom, and she didn’t react at all. He had been working himself up to it for a while now. The response was anti-climactic. And a little hurtful if he were honest. Then he saw the look on Eve’s face. She had been laughing and smiling not five minutes before. Now, she looked as though she could cry. Or rip someone’s head off. It was a toss-up.

“Everything okay?”

Eve blinked. “Um, yeah.” She shook herself, hoping it would help get her out of the funk she’d felt she’d been in all morning. “Just have a lot on my mind.”

Kevin shrugged. Getting Eve to open up was like getting Bella to eat her broccoli. His mom would always tell him they couldn’t force it. They had to let her do it in her own time. Bella and her momma were very much alike.

“Hey, Darren. You gotta put your seatbelt on, dude.”

“We’re not even moving!” Darren whined.

“But we will be. And your nose is stuck so deep in that game you’ll forget. Just get it over with now, and you won’t have to deal with it.”

Eve forgot her anguish for a moment and grinned at Kevin. “You sound like your mom.”

Kevin beamed a smile at her. “Thanks!”

Lainey hopped into the vehicle just then. “Okay! Are we ready?”

“Are you?” Eve mumbled.

“Mommy, you had to pee-pee!” Bella bellowed with a loud giggle, interrupting any response from Lainey about Eve’s grumpy response.

Lainey glanced at the driver, who had the good sense not to react. Then she glanced at Eve, who… was not looking at her. What is going on with her?

“Brian, we’re ready.” Lainey tickled Bella’s tummy as payback for embarrassing her.

“Yes, Mrs. Sumptor.”

Lainey smiled. She loved being called Mrs. Sumptor. It didn’t even matter that it got confusing at times whether people were talking to her or Eve. Either way, she loved hearing it.

“Um, mom?”

Lainey tore her eyes from the back of Eve’s head and focused on her son. “Yes?”

“What’s going on with Eve?”

“What do you mean?”

Kevin rolled his eyes. “When are you going to treat me like I’m almost eighteen and I’m not blind?”

Lainey sighed. “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know when you’re going to treat me. . .”

“I don’t know what’s wrong with her. I thought it was the ghosts of Paris, but she said she was fine.”

“Obviously.” Kevin looked over his shoulder at Eve, then back at his mom. “I called her mom.”

Lainey’s eyes widened. “You did?”

Kevin nodded. “Do you mind?”

“Of course not. It makes me happy that you’re comfortable enough to call her that.” Lainey leaned in closer. “Darren asked me if he could, but he wasn’t sure she was ready.”

“Maybe she’s not. She didn’t react at all.”

Arched brows furrowed. “Nothing?”

Kevin shook his head. “And now she’s over there with Bella and Darren instead of here with you. That’s just not how things work on the plane. She never leaves you alone since you’re afraid to fly.”

“I’m getting used to it,” Lainey defended herself. But he was right. Eve was usually by her side, keeping her mind off taking off to be thousands of feet in the air. “I’m sure she’ll come to me when she’s ready.”

Kevin laughed. “That’s your answer for everything.”

“Forcing someone before they’re ready never works, sweetie. It just causes more conflict. So, I’ll wait.”

“That’s our biggest difference, I think. I’m not that patient. I need immediate resolutions.”

“And how does that work out for you?” Lainey smirked. “You nearly get expelled.”

“That doesn’t count,” Kevin rolled his eyes again. “I still think you should talk to her. Something is up, and I don’t like it.”

“Oh, you don’t like it. Well, that changes everything. By all means, get her over here so we can hash it out,” Lainey retorted sarcastically.

“Good idea. Eve!”

“Kevin! I was being facetious!”

Eve looked over at Kevin, avoiding Lainey’s eyes. “Yes?”

“Could you come here, please?”

Eve took a breath, then stood and made her way to mother and son.

“Here, take my seat. I’m gonna go play PlayStation with Bella and Darren.”

“Kevin Stanton!” Lainey hissed. She looked at Eve when she sat in front of her instead of beside her. “Sorry. He thinks something is wrong, so he’s forcing the situation.” When Eve didn’t respond, Lainey continued. “Okay, something is definitely wrong. What happened between the bedroom and now?”

Eve contemplated lying. Lainey did it. Why couldn’t she? But they had eleven hours with each other on this plane. As roomy and luxurious as it was, it could feel cramped when things were tense. Though, if Eve confronted Lainey, that tension could skyrocket. We don’t lie to each other. That was the deal. Eve had to know what Lainey was hiding from her. She looked back at the kids who were engrossed in their game.

“Just lay it out for me, Lainey,” Eve said finally.

“Lay what out?”

“Whatever it is, whoever it is, rip the band-aid off quickly. Maybe I’ll bleed to death, but at least I’ll know.”

Lainey frowned. “What are you talking about, Eve?”

“You’ve been hiding something from me. The late nights and early mornings. Lying to me this morning. The locked drawer in your desk.”

Lainey couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Her wife didn’t trust her. After everything they had been through, Eve didn’t trust her. She sat back in her seat and folded her arms.

“Are you kidding me?”

“You haven’t denied anything I said,” Eve shot back.

Lainey grabbed the bag next to her and angrily rifled through it. She brought out a leather-bound book. “Your birthday is coming up. This was supposed to be a surprise. That’s what I’ve been doing.” She tossed the book onto the table in front of Eve.

Without another word, Lainey got up and left. She closed herself in the bedroom at the back of the plane and threw herself on the bed. She would allow herself to have one good cry, and then she would… what? Wait for Eve to come groveling back?

“Yes,” Lainey whispered to herself.

Back out in the main cabin, Eve stared at the closed door for a long time before she picked up the book Lainey tossed at her. She carefully untied the leather straps and opened it.

“Oh, Lainey.” Eve closed her eyes, willing the tears not to come. Once she thought she had her emotions under control, she looked at the book again. The sketchbook was filled with drawings. Amazing art adorned each page in different mediums, from charcoal to colored pencils. All with a dedicated subject matter. Eve.

“What happened?”

Eve shut the book quickly since most of the images were not kid-friendly. “The locked drawer,” Eve murmured. God, could she feel any worse for accusing the love of her life of doing something nefarious?

“Sorry?” Kevin plopped himself down in Lainey’s vacated seat.

“I really f—screwed up,” Eve said dismally. She held the sketchbook to her chest as though it were a precious child.

“Wanna elaborate?”

Eve looked at the young man. He had Lainey’s eyes, though slightly more hazel than green. Eve and Kevin had become closer since she and Lainey got married. He’d been a great help with transitioning Darren and Bella into their new lives. Not to mention, his being gay helped Lainey and Eve be more comfortable expressing their affection around him. But should she involve him in their disagreements as well? Disagreements? You practically accused Lainey of cheating!

“Mom?” He tried the moniker once again to see if it would jar Eve into talking. Or maybe to make her feel more at ease with him.

Eve gave him a small smile. “I heard that in the car, too. I’m sorry I was too distracted to respond.”

Kevin shrugged. “No biggie. Were you distracted by whatever is going on with my mom?”

“First, it is a biggie. And I should have reacted appropriately.” Eve sighed. “That wasn’t — I meant. . .” Eve sat back and blew out a breath. “What I mean is. . .”

“Mom, I get it. It makes you feel good to hear it, but you can’t focus right now on

anything but my mom." Kevin scratched his head. "I think I'm going to have to come up with something other than mom for you since I call mom mom." He waved his hands in front of him as though wiping the slate clean. That was a conversation for another day. "Anyway, back to you and mom. Does it have to do with that?"

Eve saw Kevin gesture to the book in her hands, and she held on tighter. "Yes. Unfortunately, I didn't know that before I opened my damned mouth."

"What is it?" Kevin squinted, then his eyes opened wide. "Whoa! Is that… is Mom drawing again?!"

Eve sat upright. "Again?"

"Yeah. She sometimes draws when…" He paused to think of all the times he'd seen his mom put her talents on paper. "Holy crap. Can I see those?"

"Um, no. They're… private."

Kevin blushed. "Yeah, okay. Um, well, here's the thing. Mom used to draw with Darren and me when we were little. It was like our daily ritual. When we got older, went to school, and had other things to occupy our time, she stopped. I kinda missed it, but I didn't want her to feel bad, so I didn't say anything. Then, when she got the job working with you, she started drawing again. That's around the time Darren started doing his comics, too. I was hoping that he would ask her to work with him, but Jack probably scared Darren out of that. She stopped again when you two broke up."

"Broke up?" Eve asked quietly.

"Yeah. Look, I don't claim — or need — to know everything that happened back then. I just know she had a job, then she didn't. You came around, then you didn't. She was drawing again, then she wasn't. Now you two are married." Kevin nodded towards the sketchbook. "She's happy. That's when she's creative."

Eve scoffed. "She's definitely not happy with me right now."

Kevin tapped his fingers on the table. "She's probably annoyed with you if you did something stupid. But she's still happy. I've never seen Mom as happy as she is with you. So whatever you did, fix it."

Eve raised a brow. She wasn't used to anyone other than Lainey speaking to her so bluntly. But he was right. Eve made this mess, and she would move heaven and earth to fix it.

"Keep the kiddos entertained, will you?"

Kevin grinned. “You got it, Boss,” he said with a salute.

“Boss is not an acceptable replacement,” Eve laughed and stood up. “Keep working on it.” She kissed him on top of the head and made her way to Lainey. You better hope you didn’t lose the love of your life forever.

“Lainey?”

Lainey wiped her tears but didn’t answer. She felt too raw to trust herself not to say something they’d both regret. She didn’t even dare move when Eve sat on the bed next to her.

“I’m sorry,” Eve said quietly. “What I did was despicable. I have no excuses for my behavior. I let my insecurities and stupidity eclipse my trust and love for you. I know in my heart of hearts that you would never hurt me. I allowed myself to see things negatively, and I ruined what would have been the most beautiful gift I’ve ever received other than your love.”

Lainey sniffled. “Well, geez. You really know how to take the angry air out of my balloon.”

Eve smiled sadly. “You have every right to be angry with me. I betrayed your trust by going through your things…”

“Eve, that’s not what upset me. What’s mine is yours. You know that. The only reason that drawer in my desk was locked was because Bella loves to look in there for paper to draw on.” Lainey pushed herself up and sat cross-legged next to Eve, but not touching her. Yet. “What upset me was the way you accused me of being with someone else. Do you think I could do that to you? That I would want anyone else when I have you?”

Eve bowed her head. “No, I don’t. I believe you love me as much as I love you. I just. . .”

“You think that because I cheated on Jack. . .”

“No,” Eve said firmly. “I know our hearts, Lainey. What we did wasn’t to hurt anyone. We belong together.”

“Then why?” Lainey asked softly.

“Other than my stupidity?” Eve sighed.

“You are not stupid, Eve.” Lainey studied her wife. “You are affected by Paris. Whenever we make plans to go there, that’s when you’re at your most vulnerable. Do you still believe your past taints you?”

“I’m not sure if I like that you’re still reading those psychology books,” Eve teased. “I have my moments when I feel I don’t deserve you. Or, more accurately, you deserve better.”

Lainey reached over and took Eve’s hand. “One day, my love, you will stop thinking that. And I’ll do better at making sure you know how important you are to me.”

Eve squeezed Lainey’s hand. “Oh, baby, you already do that. This isn’t on you. This is all me.”

“Not true. I know what Paris can do to you. But I was so excited about doing something special for your birthday that I didn’t think about it when I was being secretive. Wait,” Lainey said before Eve could argue. “We promised each other we would be open and honest. I should have found a better way to surprise you.”

Eve chuckled. “Is this the way we’re always going to argue? Each of us taking the blame instead of placing it on the other?”

Lainey smiled. “No. I’ll definitely tell you when you’ve screwed up. Which you did when you carried this with you rather than talking to me about it.”

Eve groaned. “I know, I know. I told myself to talk to you. Then I thought I was just crazy. I’d driven myself insane by the time I said that shit to you.”

“That’s your defense? Temporary insanity?” Lainey laughed.

“Who said it was temporary?” Eve winked. “You drive me crazy every day.” She reached up to cup Lainey’s cheek in her palm. “I really am sorry, baby.”

“I know. So am I.”

They both leaned in at the same time, their lips coming together in a kiss that told them everything they needed to know.

“We can’t do this,” Lainey panted against Eve’s lips. “The kids.”

“It was your kid who told me to come in here and ‘fix it,’” Eve said, then kissed Lainey again—after a few more glorious moments of heavenly bliss, Eve forced herself to calm down. What she really wanted to do was erase Lainey’s tears on this bed and replace them with something much more pleasurable. However, Lainey was right. The kids

were right outside the door.

“Consider things partially ‘fixed,’” Lainey rasped.

“Partially? Need I grovel more?”

“No, you need to finish what you just started. Tonight, honey.”

“It would be my pleasure.” Eve took a long, deep breath. “Now, let’s see if I can keep my hands off you for the remainder of the flight.”

Lainey grinned. She certainly would have loved the alternative, but. . . “Did you look at the drawings?”

“I did.” Eve stretched to get the book off the dresser she had laid it on when she came into the room. “Lainey, these are incredible. How did I not know you had this talent?”

Lainey shrugged. “I haven’t done it in a while. Life always gets in the way.”

“Our oldest seems to think you are your most creative when you’re happy.”

Lainey thought about that for a moment. “I guess he’s right.” She looked up at Eve, who was busy thumbing through the explicit drawings Lainey had done of her. The old Lainey would be blushing now at the thought of Eve knowing how Lainey saw her. Now, it was arousing. “Thank you for calling him ours.”

Eve glanced up and smiled. “He is ours. They all are. He, uh, called me mom.”

“He told me. Darren would like to, as well. How do you feel about that?”

“Honored,” Eve answered honestly. “Though Kevin calls you mom, so he says that would get confusing. I think he’s trying to figure out an alternative. Think he’s too old for momma?”

Lainey snickered. “Maybe. You’re going to end up being Ma with the boys.”

Eve’s nose wrinkled as she thought about that. “Ma. Eh, I suppose I can get used to that.” She crawled further up on the bed and leaned back on the headboard. “Come here, baby.”

Lainey snuggled up against her wife. She was glad their little spat didn’t last long. It always hurt her heart when she and Eve were at odds. It didn’t often happen, thank goodness.

“This is nice,” Lainey murmured.

Eve closed her eyes. She didn’t know what she would do if she ever lost Lainey. Thankfully, Eve hadn’t driven Lainey away with her idiocy. Still, Eve had a lot to atone for — even if Lainey didn’t think so. She had planted that little seed of doubt in Lainey’s heart that Eve trusted her with everything inside her. She would do everything in her power to keep that seed from growing.

“I would like to adopt them,” Eve said suddenly.

Lainey tilted her head up to look at her wife. “Excuse me?”

“Kevin and Darren. I realize Kevin is rapidly approaching eighteen. But if they’re serious about calling me Ma or Mom or any other version they come up with, I would like to make it legal.”

Lainey glanced up at her wife. “You’re not doing this to stay on my good side, are you?”

“Baby, I would do anything to remain in your good graces. Except lie to you. I truly want this.”

“I was only half kidding, honey. I think we should talk to the boys and ask if they would like that. I’m sure I already know the answer, though,” Lainey smiled.

“Their thoughts aside, how do you feel about it?”

“I feel like I love you even more than I did ten minutes ago,” Lainey responded, snuggling closer to Eve.

“Ten minutes ago, you probably didn’t like me much,” Eve reminded her.

“Not true. No matter how pissed I am at you, I love you.” Lainey sat up a little so she could see Eve’s eyes. “But that can never happen again, Eve. We voiced our concerns and resolved this. If it happens again, we’re not learning from our mistakes. I understand having insecurities. I struggle with them, too.”

“Am I doing something that makes you feel uncertain of my love for you?”

“No, honey. But it’s no secret that you’re attracted to either sex. I have my moments when I wonder if I will always be enough for you.”

“Whoa, whoa.” Eve sat up and turned to her wife. “I’m only attracted to you.”

“I know you are now, but. . .”

“No, not ‘now,’ Lainey. Listen to me, okay? I have never felt anything close to what I feel when I’m with you. Sex has always just been about the physical. But with you? Oh, baby, I feel your hands, your mouth, your body with my entire existence. My heart, my body, my soul. You are my soul mate, Lainey. No one else exists in my world.”

“It is so not fair that you say those things to me when I can’t rip your clothes off and make your entire existence tremble.”

Eve breathed in through her nose, holding her breath for the count of ten. She slowly blew her breath out while she stared at her seductive wife.

“That was mean,” Eve managed.

Lainey kissed Eve with the passion that invariably radiated between them. By the time they came up for air, hands had joined in on the fun.

“What happened to waiting until tonight?” Lainey asked, her voice barely above a husky whisper.

“You kissed me like that,” Eve responded breathlessly. She cleared her throat and straightened Lainey’s askew shirt. “Perhaps we should go hang out with the kids.”

“In a minute,” Lainey pleaded gently. “Snuggle with me?”

“Always a pleasure.” Eve readily obeyed by positioning herself back against the headboard and holding her arms out to Lainey. Once Lainey was tucked in by her side, she sighed happily. “Good?”

“Perfect.” Lainey scratched Eve’s belly softly, eliciting a soft moan. After a few moments of comfortable silence, Lainey asked the question swimming around in her brain. “Do you think Adam would let me adopt Bella?”

Eve kissed the top of Lainey’s head and smiled. She loved how much Lainey adored Bella and vice versa. The two were practically inseparable — when Eve wasn’t occupying her wife’s time. Lainey was even teaching Bella how to crochet. Something Eve knew absolutely nothing about. It was also something new she had learned about her wife, which was always fun.

“Yes, if we throw enough money at him,” Eve answered.

“Oh, honey, I don’t want it to be like that. I don’t want to buy my daughter.”

“Just think of it as the adoption fee, baby. Whatever it takes.”

Lainey sighed. “He hasn’t called her in months. He doesn’t even FaceTime her.”

“I know.” And it pissed Eve off. “Would you like me to talk to him?”

“Is he going to ask you to come back to him again? Like every time you talk to him?” Lainey rolled her eyes.

Eve chuckled. “He can ask until he’s blue in the face. I’m exactly where I want to be.”

Lainey looked up at her wife. “I already forgave you for insinuating I had a side piece, honey. You don’t have to keep sucking up.”

That caused Eve to laugh heartily. “It isn’t sucking up if it’s true.”

Once again, they snuggled serenely. Each had their own thoughts. But per usual, those thoughts focused on the other.

Eve was the first to break the silence this time. “May I ask you a question?”

“Of course.”

“Will you keep drawing?”

Lainey smiled. “I’m pretty sure I will.”

“They won’t always be of me, will they?” Eve asked carefully.

Lainey glanced up. “You don’t like them?”

“I love them! They’re magnificently explicit. However, since I am the subject, they’re not something I would want to display in galleries that I own.”

“Hmm.” Lainey sat up abruptly. “Wait, what?”

“I want to put your art in our galleries,” Eve said evenly.

“Honey, just because we’re married — and you own the gallery, that doesn’t mean you have to placate me with biased notions of displaying my drawings.”

Eve raised a brow. “Excuse me, my love, but I am not biased. Well, not when it comes to this.” When Lainey gave her a look, Eve continued. “Lainey, this isn’t me speaking to you as your wife or a gallery owner. This is me speaking to you, artist to artist. Your

talent needs to be seen. And I would be honored to have my work displayed next to yours."

Lainey wiped a tear from her cheek. "You know you don't get extra credit for future arguments, right?"

Eve grinned. "Well, then I'll just have to watch myself. Besides, it hurts me in here," she placed a hand over her heart, "when we are at odds with each other."

"Me too," Lainey confessed. "I don't want to promise you that I'll draw something other than your incredible tits, but I'll try."

Eve sucked in a breath. "You are not nice. Have I mentioned I love it when you're bold?"

"A time or two," Lainey winked. "Especially when I'm trying something new with my tongue."

Eve groaned. "Okay. It is definitely time to get out of here and join the kids. Otherwise, I will not be responsible for what happens next."

Lainey's lips twitched. "Fine," she said with a touch of mirth. "On one condition."

"Anything, my love."

"Tonight."

That one word carried the entirety of Eve and Lainey's devotion to each other.

Lainey stood on the balcony of her and Eve's bedroom, thinking about their day in Paris. The five of them had been there before, but this trip felt different. Bella was old enough now to be more vocal about what she'd like to do. Needless to say, a lot of gelatos were consumed. Darren was excited to see Sumptor Gallery, Paris. He was determined to get the "pop culture" wing opened in every one of Eve's galleries. He even carried a tape measure and took notes on this visit.

Kevin had been overjoyed at seeing how well his friend Mia was faring at Sumptor House. Mia was happy and thriving. Her dream of becoming a doctor no longer felt like an unachievable fantasy but a guarantee. Kevin could see the physical changes, as well. The smile on Mia's face was radiant. She no longer had gaunt, sunken-in cheeks or dark circles under her eyes. Now, those brown eyes were as bright as her future.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Eve slipped behind Lainey and wrapped her arms around her.

“If you don’t think about the bowels of the city where atrocities happen, yes.”

Eve’s brows furrowed. Lainey usually tried to see the beauty in everything. It was rare for her to accentuate the negative.

“Are you okay, baby?”

Lainey sighed. “Yes. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. Tell me what’s on your mind.”

“I’m frustrated, honey. Yes, Paris is beautiful. But Sumptor House is already at capacity. It kills me to have to turn away girls who need us.”

Eve hugged Lainey tighter. Lainey’s compassion never ceased to amaze Eve.

“So, we’ll open another one,” Eve suggested.

“If only it were that simple, honey. This problem is everywhere. Look at Dani. Maybe she would still have her legs if she would have been helped more. The world is broken.”

Eve turned Lainey until they were face to face. “Baby, the world has always been broken. We do what we can, but we can't save everyone as much as I would love to. However,” Eve continued when Lainey looked crestfallen. “We can open more Sumptor Houses wherever you’d like.”

“You would do that?”

“If it’s what you want, it’s done.”

Lainey studied her wife. “Is it what you want?”

Eve smiled. “I want to make you happy, Lainey. And I want to help as many girls as we can. But it’s not as simple as just building a facility. There’s finding qualified personnel, deciding which girls need help the most. . .”

“Having the correct licensing and permits,” Lainey interjected. It was a daunting dream, to say the least. “We could pool our resources.”

“Also known as recruiting our friends and exploiting their talents?” Eve teased.

“Exactly,” Lainey grinned. “It’s for a good cause.”

“Our friends do love a good cause,” Eve laughed.

“And I love you,” Lainey said softly.

“I love you, too, baby. I’ll get started on all that business stuff soon. But first, I have more pressing matters to attend to.” Eve leaned in and kissed Lainey. She had been waiting for “tonight” all damn day. Seeing Lainey interact with the girls at Sumptor House or being a mother to Bella and the boys filled Eve with such intense joy. There had never been a time in her life when she was happier. And it was all because of her family. A family she couldn’t imagine when she was in that tiny, dark room, contemplating if life was worth it.

Lainey followed Eve into the bedroom. Her heart was pounding, and the butterflies in her stomach were working overtime. This feeling never failed to astound Lainey. She had made love to Eve countless times. Would this “first-time” sensation ever go away? God, I hope not, Lainey thought as Eve undressed her.

“Any special requests for tonight?” Eve asked quietly. Her body was alive with sensation. Every breath Lainey took, every touch, every kiss, Eve felt them deep in her soul. Eve hadn’t been appeasing Lainey when she told her about this intense awareness.

“I just want you, honey,” Lainey answered breathlessly. Her breath hitched when Eve’s lips wrapped around a taut nipple. Eve’s use of her tongue and teeth was causing havoc for Lainey’s already ramped-up nervous system. And Eve hadn’t even touched Lainey below the waist yet.

“You have me,” Eve whispered. “Always.”