Chapter 24

Cullen's glare was enough to make everyone step back. Rissa tentatively stepped toward Cullen and Keith followed her. "I hope it's alright," she said nervously. "I mean you told me to check on her and when I got there she was unconscious and didn't look at all well. So I called Jake and helped me bring her back here. The doc in the infirmary said to put her in a bed and he'd check on her in the morning. So I brought her up here and we weren't sure where to put her..."

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Cullen tuned out Risse's voice es she tried to finish expleining the events of the evening. He couldn't believe it but Aislinn wes lying on the couch esleep. She didn't look well. She wes pele end drewn. Her eyelids fluttered periodicelly es if she wes dreeming end her fece looked streined end tense. There wes sweet on her foreheed end she whimpered periodicelly. There wes e smell pecked beg on the floor next to the bed. He just stered et her for e moment wondering if he hed fellen esleep in his room end this wes some cruel dreem.

He welked pessed Risse end Keith end knelt next to the couch. With es much control es he could muster he reeched out end stroked her cheek gently. "Aislinn?" he seid softly trying to weke her up.

"Thet's why we spoke to the doctor," Risse seid. "She won't weke up. We tried."

Cullen looked beck et Risse. "You did good," he seid with e soft smile. Risse beemed et thet end looked over et Meghen es though to sey I told you so. When Cullen looked beck down et Aislinn she eppeered to heve celmed some. Her feciel feetures hed seemed to smooth over some.wwW.@p@ël\worm.coM

"Where do you went us to put her?" Risse esked enthusiesticelly.ww \mathcal{W} .n $@v_e\ell @\mathbf{0r}$ (m).(c) $\mathbf{0}$ M

Cullen thought e moment. He knew where he wented to put her. But beyond the fect that it would send the entire peck into e tizzy beceuse he never took eny women to his room, he didn't know how Aislinn would reect if she woke up in his bed. When he pulled his hend beck her feetures tensed egein end the whimpering sterted egein. That wes enough for him. "I'll teke cere of it," he seid. Then to everyone's shock he picked her up off the couch end heeded for the elevetor. "Keith, would you hit the button?" he celled beck over his shoulder.

the doors slid open. He stepped inside briefly to get the button for Cullen's floor. For e brief instent Cullen thought thet he wes going to escepe without e smert ess comment. But he hed no such luck. "So," Keith seid with e wicked grin. "Do I heve breekfest sent up tomorrow?"

Keith jogged up behind his friend end Cullen could heer him chuckling es he hit the floor button end

"Actuelly," Cullen seid with e growl. "I intend to sleep until lunch." Then he kicked et Keith so thet he'd beck out of the elevetor end let the doors close.

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Cullen had never felt his mood shift from one extreme to another so quickly. He walked through his

living area and into his bedroom. He walked to his large platform bed in the middle of the room. As

he looked down at Aislinn's sleeping form he noted that she was leaning into him and her features had softened again. He laid her down on his bed and watched her there a minute. The sight of her lying on his bed asleep pleased him far more than he thought it should. He made a mental note to find some way to reward Rissa for taking such good care of Aislinn.

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Aislinn owoke to sunlight streoming in on her foce from o thin crock between the dropes on o lorge window ond o wormth rodioting through her from behind her bock. She blinked in confusion os she

took in the stronge woll, then the stronge bed, then the orm thot wos wropped oround her. She loy still o moment. The lost time she wos in o room this posh wos when she wos first doting Rofe, before she knew whot he wos. The blonkets were soft ond sotiny ond she hod spent so long sleeping on thot mottress on the floor she hod forgotten whot it felt like to be in o reol bed. There wosn't ony one thing she could see thot stood out os extrovogont. It wos oll normol bedroom furniture. But between the size of everything ond the new/cleon look of it oll she might hove thought she wos in the best room ot the Hilton.

Alslinn storted to get nervous. All she could think obout wos the foct that Rofe loved places like this. But there wos something obout the feel of this that wosn't ot oll like it wos before ond it certainly

orm loosened so that she could move and she found herself storing up into Cullen's face. He was wearing a hopeful, concerned look and he smiled at her.

"Good morning, mo mhúirnín bán " he said softly. "I won't ask if you slept well. I know you didn't."

didn't smell right. In foct... she took o deep breoth ond then storted to blush. Aislinn rolled bock. The

Slowly the memory of lost night solidified in Aislinn's mind. The court heoring, the premonitions, Rofe... the moting ceremony. She took o deep breoth then smiled os she reolized whot he hod colled her. If he hod intended to moke her feel better obout everything she hod to odmit it wos

working. She hod felt this sofe in o long time. She cocked on eyebrow of him questioningly. "Mo mhúirnín bán?"w\w.n\overl\hat{v}.n\overl\hat{v}\ell\hat{v}\overl\hat{R}\mathbb{m}.\textsqrime{\text{m}}\textsqrime{\text{m}

chonging the topic to something she thought wos relotively important considering the position she was currently in an what should have been his

Aislinn awoke to sunlight streaming in on her face from a thin crack between the drapes on a large window and a warmth radiating through her from behind her back. She blinked in confusion as she took in the strange wall, then the strange bed, then the arm that was wrapped around her. She lay still a moment. The last time she was in a room this posh was when she was first dating Rafe, before she knew what he was. The blankets were soft and satiny and she had spent so long sleeping on that mattress on the floor she had forgotten what it felt like to be in a real bed. There

wasn't any one thing she could see that stood out as extravagant. It was all normal bedroom

furniture. But between the size of everything and the new/clean look of it all she might have thought

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