

Chapter 10

The truck is packed and we're ready to go on our 8-hour drive. Cody grabs a cooler to keep in the back seat. "Alright, I guess that's everything. You ready?" I nod and hop up into his truck. I've never really been anywhere and the idea of going to such a famous city crowded with humans is intimidating. I'm not going to lie, I'm terrified.

Cody reaches over to grasp my fingers in his hand. "Everything alright?" He asks as we pull onto the highway.

"I've never really been anywhere. My nerves are a little haywire right now." I admit.

He kisses my fingers. "Don't worry, Darlin'. I'll protect you from the big scary tourists." He chuckles at his joke, but I'm honestly grateful to know he'll be with me. "Since you're my trainer you get to be ringside for pretty much everything. I won't leave you anywhere alone. I already informed my publicist that I have you with me. She has passes ready for you." "Okay, that's pretty awesome. What hotel are you staying at?"

"We have a room at the Mandalay Bay. It's where everything is happening. You can pull up all the information on your phone if you want to check it out."

I do want to know everything that's going to be happening. I really want to know what's happening with the Griffin situation. Dad told me he was reprimanded for attacking a human, but hasn't said much else. Attacking a human is a big deal and usually results in major consequences, but Griffin is spoiled by his Grandfather and gets away with things no one else would.

While scrolling through the phone I find a lot out about Cody's fight. He's in the heavyweight class, but since he's fighting non-title, he can weigh up to 266 pounds. That also means his fight is three 5 minute rounds with one-minute breaks between rounds. "Not anymore. They recently changed it to five-round fights, which is good and bad. It's easier to see the gap of the more well trained athletes versus the not so well trained. But if two weaker fighters are in the octagon, it can get pretty boring pretty fast."

"That makes sense. Are you ready for five rounds?"

"I was questioning it there for a while, but after working with you and your dad, I'm more confident."

"I'm glad we were able to help."

He squeezes my hand. "Me too."

I keep looking up questions I have, but Cody fills me in on most of it. I've never actually watched a UFC fight so I'm excited. Cody mentions a few matches I can pull up on YouTube so I can get an idea of what to expect.

Vegas is a busy city, especially at 5 PM, the freeway traffic is crazy and busy with people swerving in and out of lanes with no signal whatsoever. At one point a driver is on Cody's ass so bad that Cody has to put his brakes on. The guy flips us off and speeds around us. Asshole. I hope he hits a road gator and damages his pretty little car. The strip is crowded with tourists and cars barely get through a light before a large group of pedestrians walk right out in front of them, regardless of the walk signal.

"I would never want to live in a place like this," I tell him as he pulls into the parking garage of the hotel.

"Me neither. On top of the traffic and crazy hot summers, their school system is terrible and the cost of housing skyrocketed. No, thank you."

We grab our bags and he takes my hand to guide me through the bustling casino until he finds the concierge desk. He checks us in and we head up to our room. I sniff the room to check for bugs and vermin but find it clean so I plop onto the bed exhausted from the long drive. Cody drops the bags and plops down beside me. "Ugh. Driving sucks."

"I can drive every once in a while. You don't have to do the whole trip." I let him know.

He rolls over to hover above me. "What would I do without you?" He asks then kisses me. His hand grips my hip while I wrap my arms around his shoulders.

One hand caresses his face which is prickly from not shaving over the last week. I hum liking the stubble look. "This is pretty sexy."

"You like hairy men, huh?" He asks then moves to kiss my neck.

I move my head to allow him better access. "No. Just you." I hum as he marks my neck. "Big guy, you better be careful. You keep doing that and I might lose all self-control."

"I can't help it. I just want to take a bite. You have no idea how much I crave you." Holy Goddess above, yes, please!

"I'm not opposed to letting you. I think I have a pretty good idea about that craving of yours. I want you in every way possible." I push him away so that rejection doesn't come over me. "Go shower then we can go to dinner." He grunts but grabs our bags to pull out a change of clothes.

"We'll meet with my promoter, Jocelyn, tomorrow morning, then we can work out. Later I have to meet with my promoter again. Friday I have weigh-in at 9 AM then ring time. But tonight is just us." He says as he pulls me into his arms. I run my fingers through his stubble. "You know, I think I do like the bearded look." Cody leaves a peck on my lips then winks just before getting into the shower. I get my clothes ready and when Cody walks out of the bathroom smelling so good I barely keep

from jumping on him, his towel is wrapped precariously low around his waist and his stubble is trimmed, shaped, and looking hot as ever.

He holds my waist to show me his face. "Do you like it?"

I have to swallow to bring moisture back into my mouth. "You can't be doing things like this if you still want to wait. My self-control is hanging by the wrap of that towel." A growl settles deep within him and my knees go weak and my panties moisten. "Holy fucking Goddess above," I whisper. Thankfully he's got a tight grip on me or I would've fallen over. I shove him away. He laughs and I rush to the bathroom for a cold shower.

Cody cleans up nicely in his slacks and charcoal gray button-down dress shirt. He still wears his wedding band around his neck, but I don't care. Audrey was his past and if it weren't for her, Cody wouldn't have Willow.

Cody places his hand on the small of my back and guides me to the restaurant he made a reservation for. "You look incredible." He whispers as he holds the door open for me. Indy did an awesome job packing my bags. The garment bag had four dresses to choose from. I chose the short navy cocktail dress with an open back. My hair is pinned up on one side while the rest cascades over my shoulder.

"Thank you, my handsome." Once we check in with the hostess we're seated right away. He holds my chair for me, ever a gentleman.

After dinner, we walk down the street to watch the water show at the Bellagio. My feet are killing me, I hate heels, but that's what Indy packed to wear with the dresses. Cody sits me up on the wall to remove my shoes. He checks my leg which is only covered by band-aids now. He turns around with his back to me. "Hop on, princess. We don't want you getting blisters."

I grip him around his shoulders and lock my legs around his waist. "You really are a saint." I kiss his cheek then he starts walking back to the hotel. "Cody. I love you. I can't wait to meet Willow then we can be together completely." He chuckles. "I love you too, Darlin'. But you want to meet my daughter just so I can deflower you?"

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I smack his arm. "Don't be an ass," I giggle. "I want to meet her because she's important to you. I'm looking forward to it."

"We still don't know what's going to happen. After Saturday's fight, you and have some serious issues to discuss."

I rest my head to his back. "I know. I've been thinking about it a lot. I want to be with you. I decided that I would stay with you if that's what you want."

He stops walking and spins me around to his front. "You would give up your tribe to be with me?" He looks back and forth between my eyes.

I shake my head. "No. I would give up my place in my tribe to be with you and Willow. I already feel connected to her through everything you've told me about her. I care about her and I love you."

His lips part then he swallows and licks his lips. "I, I don't know what to say. Your dad, your whole tribe. They need you."

"Not as much as I need you."

Cody grips my hair and kisses me. This kiss is different than our usual lust-filled kisses. This kiss is love, passion, and hope all rolled into one. A tear slips down between our cheeks. Cody pulls away and wipes my face. "I love you, Tessalee Denton, but let's wait to make any huge decisions. I would hate to keep you from your family and your home. I'm worried you would be unhappy. I can't bear the thought of causing

you unhappiness." I look between his eyes then nod. He's right, I would miss them terribly, but would I be unhappy?

He kisses me again then I rest my cheek against his chest. "Please take me back to the hotel. I just need to feel your body next to mine."

He nods. "We're almost there, hold tight to me."

Cody doesn't put me down the entire walk back to our room. Once inside, I unbutton his shirt and slip it off his shoulders. I run my hands down his chest then over his rock-hard abs. He unhooks my dress then removes his belt with one fluid motion. My insides turn to jelly, that has got to be the hottest thing ever. He chuckles at the look on my face. He grabs one of his t-shirts then removes my dress. I slip on the shirt then he holds my face. "Lay down, darlin' I'll hold you all night long." With a soft kiss on my lips, he pulls down the covers and I nestle down into them. He unhooks my bra and I drop it to the floor. Once he removes his slacks and joins me in bed, I cuddle into his chest, inhaling his intoxicating scent