

Chapter Twenty-Eight

May 4th, 2021

“General Bonner, forgive my bluntness, but you’re fucking kidding me, right?” Andy asked the General as he stood in her office, with Lexi, Melody and Fiona waiting just outside for clearance reasons. “I understand there’s a high level of complexity to this issue, but your go-to move for these sorts of problems cannot be ‘hey, let’s add another member to Team Rook, that’ll make things easier.’”

“I understand your hesitation, Mr. Rook, but we’re in something of a pickle right now, and like it or not, when you agreed to do that *60 Minutes* interview, you became the public face of the Quaranteam project,” Lt. General Bonner said to him. “Besides, this is only the second time in six months that we’ve asked you to take on an additional member of your team. You make it sound like we’re throwing women at you left and right.”

‘Sure,’ Andy thought to himself, ‘but we’re already closer to becoming a Tier 6 Team than I’d like, and the last thing I want is to stumble into that blindly.’

“Tell me how everyone else is doing before we even get into that,” he said, sipping from a cup of coffee. The military had come by to pick up the bodies and the prisoners last night, and after the adrenaline had faded, the whole group of them had been ready to pass out, so they’d slept in a puddle in the bunker room, staff included. The Air Force hadn’t been the first to arrive, though. Nathaniel Watkins, one of New Eden’s billionaires who had taken a liking to Team Rook, had personally sent a portion of his security detail over to Andy’s house when Andy’s power had gone out, and his crew had been the first responders, getting there almost an hour before the Air Force had, something the General had seemed especially annoyed about. “I can’t say the Air Force’s response time thrilled me any.”

“It wasn’t our finest hour, Mr. Rook, by all admissions, but between your own defenses and that small private army your friend Mr. Watkins employs, it seems like you came through okay,” the General said to him. “Although I expect that was simply because he didn’t have his own Team to worry about at that moment, since no one was attacking his house, unlike the dozen or so locations we had to deal with along the western seaboard.”

“Everyone’s okay, though?” Andy asked. Sometimes getting a straight answer out of the General involved asking the same question a few times. It wasn’t as though she was being deliberately withholding from him; she was just a cautious person by nature.

“We’re still getting things settled in the Pacific Northwest and over at Valhalla Shores, but it seems like most of the invasion forces were defeated with only minor casualties on our end. We had some advance warning they were coming from your friends in the Empty Wives, because according to their leader, they did everything they could short of send up a signal flare to let us know they were invading. While the CCP were trying to move mostly fast and quiet, the Empty Wives were doing everything they could to get us aware of the snakes in our garden.

In addition to that, these women, all these women, they’re infected with DuoHalo. I assume you had a booster encounter last night or this morning, as you were instructed to?”

“I’m not being keen on being lectured when and where I need to fuck,” Andy said with a smirk, cutting through the euphemistic language. “But yes, I had a couple of fucks to boost my resistance this morning, figuring we might’ve been exposed to DuoHalo. We were under the impression China seemed to be in very dire straits, so this seems to confirm that. Have we decided what we’re going to do about their situation?”

“Do?” the General asked him, a curious tone to her voice. “What makes you think we’re going to ‘do’ anything?” She noticed the expression on his face and then chuckled. “I’m fucking

with you, Mr. Rook. Of *course* we're going to do something about it, especially since they're willing to acquiesce to a bunch of our demands. Of the old superpowers, it looks like most of them are falling by the wayside. In the last few days, it looks like both Russia and China are pretty well cooked."

"With us, Germany and the UK coming back to the forefront," Andy said. "That's more like a return to older times, isn't it?"

"That's the thing, Mr. Rook," the General said, carrying over a small stack of folders for him to look at. "New intel I want you to take a good look at right now, because it's going to have some pretty major impact on us, I think moving forward."

Andy frowned, looking at the outstretched folders before taking them from her hands and moving to sit down on the couch in her office. This was decidedly not the reason he'd come into her office, but new military intelligence regarding the Quaranteam serum and the DuoHalo virus was, as part of his duties on the civilian oversight committee, something he had to take deadly seriously.

In December of 2020, a shipment of the Quaranteam serum being delivered to Spain had been stolen by thieves out on the open waters. A boat transporting several refrigerated shipping containers of the serum had somehow 'lost' one in transit, which contained close to 50,000 doses of the Quaranteam serum. How that container disappeared off the ship or where it had gone to had been of great speculation for the military for some time.

New intelligence suggested the container had been split into two, loaded off onto a second boat somewhere in transit, and 25k doses had been shipped to two different countries – Algeria and Gabon. What was even more surprising, both of the countries had apparently been able to reverse engineer a 'working' version of the Quaranteam serum, although the Gabon version had some serious side effects, not the least of which was a sort of pacification effect on the men exposed to it. The men weren't any less intelligent or expressive, but they seemed to exist in a sort of a euphoric daze, incapable of aggression or violence.

For several of the nations of Africa, this hadn't been considered a 'side effect' but a 'benefit,' and explained why the demand from African nations for the serum had declined so rapidly in the early months of the year. Many of the African nations had undergone military coups led by women, and the idea of using the serum to keep their men docile and compliant seemed to have appealed to a lot of the nations that had been ravaged by warlords and terrorists for too long. There were even reports that Egypt, Algeria, Gabon and South Africa were talking about trying to create some sort of African Union, like the European Union, but this one led mostly by strong female leaders, although Algeria had some men on their council who had taken *their* version of the Quaranteam serum, and remained much as they were beforehand. That particular rift had, in fact, been the biggest sticking point on why the African Union *hadn't* formed yet, as the Algerians wanted to move all existing nations onto *their* version of the serum, and many of the nations were just trying to get the first one available they could.

The two versions of the serum didn't play especially well with the other, and a single woman with the Algerian serum introduced a Team built entirely off the Gabon serum would see that Team restored to normal, the docility effect completely stripped from the man within a matter of hours. Because of that, some nations had chosen to *only* accept the Gabon version of the serum, and Egypt was trying to not to mix the two but had additionally stopped taking on any further shipments of the US serum, instead taking only local versions of the serum, focusing on the Gabon version.

Men, in Egypt, were being treated more as property than people, even if the cage was

quite gilded.

It was a rather chaotic situation, varying greatly from nation to nation.

All of this had been happening remarkably quietly, off the world stage and behind closed doors, despite how Andy thought he and the rest of the world should've been seeing it on the nightly news. But, as he'd learned in the six months since he'd joined Oversight, much of the world's massive restructuring was happening in the shadows, and people would only see the end results, when it was too late to change or adjust things that might've been controversial.

That was the *first* folder in the stack.

The second folder was a detailed debrief from the Empty Wives, explaining what had happened. The new CCP was *desperate*, and they were falling apart at the seams. However strong they'd felt their grip was on the military, as it turns out, the Empty Wives had been working to change that, and they had turned the CCP into the minority, with the CCP loyalists making up only 10-20% of the remaining military forces. The Empty Wives were closer to 60-70% with the remaining undecided group trying to just find some kind of workable solution.

The two conflicting groups had presented such a problem that neither side had been willing to let the other take on negotiations with a country with the Quaranteam serum, and both sides had tried reaching out on the sly, only to have their delegates murdered by the other group. The CCP had reached out to Gabon, and the Empty Wives had tried reaching out to both the US and the Germans, with no success.

Andy had to make sure he was reading this carefully, because as far as he or anyone else at New Eden had known, no one from China had made contact of *any* kind, not even to *schedule* a meet. He checked it off in his mind as something that needed to be investigated, because if different groups within the US were going rogue on their own, that could be just as much of a problem.

As a last-ditch effort, the CCP had decided to send a strike force to the US. They'd gathered forty-two, divided into teams of three, to form twelve strike teams and two teams dedicated to their exfiltration from the US. The Empty Wives had found out about the teams, and followed them when they flew into Mexico, and took a ship to sail up along the west coast, dropping the majority of the teams off in the Bay Area before sailing up another day or so to Oregon and Washington. The Empty Wives contingent had been much smaller than the CCP had sent, only four members to spare, and so they had followed them into New Eden, trying to draw as much attention to themselves along the way as possible. But because they hadn't anywhere near the forces to take on the CCP, they'd just decided to follow the most vicious of the Communist teams and when it looked like things were going to get completely out of hand, they'd decided they had to intervene.

That was when they had attacked and worked to prevent Andy's abduction. They had stripped down to next to nothing to prove their intentions not to harm him or his family, and they were willing to do whatever it took to broker a bargain with the United States to get the serum shipped to China.

The discussions between the Empty Wives and the President had gone on almost immediately from when they'd been taken into custody until Andy's arrival early this afternoon. That was what the last folder was all about.

Operation: Faint Dawn.

It would be the largest deployment of the Quaranteam virus done in the shortest period of time, using up nearly all of the remaining stored doses to inoculate as many people from China as they could as quickly as they could. It would also involve quite a large number of military

forces, both US and Chinese, sweeping through the country from east to west, in an effort to save as many people as they could.

Deploying the Quaranteam serum into a woman with the sleeping plague would wake her up for about twenty minutes before she would fall unconscious again. Once paired with someone, however, the DuoHalo would be flushed out, and all other norms of pairings seemed to be holding.

All the things China would be giving up in exchange for this humanitarian rescue operation were listed on the page, and it was quite a sizable series of asks. Taiwan's independence had to be guaranteed and respected. North and South Korea would be reunited, under the South Korean leadership, with no official ties to China. China would need to hold democratic elections, and demolish the existing Communist government structure. And Operation Funnel Cake would apply as well, although only in more populated urban areas that had been doing their best to quarantine and survive.

As it turned out, the only thing China needed as much as the Quaranteam serum itself was men.

The United States was starting to run low on its pool of 'less desirables' and made that clear to China, and the Empty Wives had basically replied that they were out of options at this point, that they would take just about whatever they could get their hands on, shy of violent psychopaths and murderers. They were starting to consider even taking those, and just keeping them shackled and chained up, something the United States had no official stance on.

The last page of the second document made Andy sigh, shaking his head with a little laugh. It was a note from the President herself.

"Mr. Rook – I know your country asks a lot of you, but I am hoping we can trouble you just a little further. As part of Operation: Faint Dawn, the Empty Wives faction of China would get one person to work there, in New Eden, contributing and aiding to the Quaranteam research. I understand you met her a few hours ago – her name is Dr. Ming-Yue Chen. She needs a Team to join, and I would like to ask you to consider adding her as part of yours.

I am aware your Team is already quite large, but you are, frankly, one of the only people I can think to ask this of, and I feel like she has already proven her intentions by saving your life. I don't want to make a habit of asking things of you, but since you've gone far already, I hoped this one last step wouldn't be too troubling. It is a noble calling we ask of you, one born of honor and duty. Your country won't ask you to take on any additional Team members beyond this, but we have done our homework on her, and her file should be accompanying my note.

We ran her through Oracle against your last on-file test results, and you came up as a surprisingly high match, much higher than anyone else on the base. She actually matches up higher than many of your current Teammates. You can see the results for yourself. Talk about it with a couple of your wives if you need to. If you refuse, we'll have to redirect her to a Senator whose compatibility isn't even half of yours, just for security reasons, something I'm loathe to do. But right now, it almost feels like making it to Nov. 2022 is going to take every last drop I have in me.

It's a strange world we live in, Mr. Rook.

But it's the only one we've got.

President Nancy Pelosi

"Goddamn it," Andy grumbled beneath his breath. Then he looked at the file beneath the President's note. Dr. Ming-Yue Chen was 35, and a doctor specializing in nanobiology. She had

spent much of her life in Shanghai but had spent close to a decade in London getting her education in medicine, which explained the complicated nature of her accent. She came from a small family that had been at odds with leadership in the Chinese Communist Party but had done her best to try and fight DuHalo and Covid.

In many ways, she was everything a traditional Chinese woman was expected not to be. She was outspoken, bold, brash and loved to challenge authority. And yet, because of her brilliance, she had gone out of her way to excel in her field and lead research into nanotechnology. But the very first photo in the stack of pictures they had gathered of her was from her college days, and she was wearing a Nine Inch Nails t-shirt, black leather pants and stiletto leather boots. It was quite a daring look.

She liked her men thoughtful but decisive, contemplative but not so much that they were caught up in analysis paralysis.

Interestingly enough, she was a big fan of fantasy and science-fiction, but she had never heard of Blake Conrad (Andy's pen name) before seeing the *60 Minutes* story last fall, nor had she read any of the Druid Gunslinger books. Apparently the Mandarin translations were lackluster, and she had been hoping to get either the English originals or Cantonese translations.

The Oracle assessment had pegged her and Andy as being 94% compatible, the sort of number that was hard to ignore. She even listed her favorite movie as Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits*. How was he expected to argue against that?

"Looks solid on paper, right?" the General asked him, a slight smile on her often-inscrutable face. "I told you – the decision wasn't coming from me. It was coming from up on high."

"When the hell did my life become a Gilbert & Sullivan musical?"

"Farcical?"

"No, that's incidental," he replied. "I just meant the constant reminders about honor and duty."

"Some of us are called to higher things."

"Having a harem of what sounds like it's about to become 23 women isn't what most people would describe as 'higher things,'" he scoffed.

"And yet—"

"And yet here I am."

"Called to higher things."

"Oh stop," Andy sighed. "You knew I was going to say yes even before you even sent for me, didn't you?"

"You're a good and noble soul, Mr. Rook," the General said. "Yes, I expected you were going to do the right thing, no doubt in my mind."

"That only makes me want to say no even more."

"But you won't, will you, Mr. Rook?"

"...no."

"No?"

"No, I won't say no," he grumbled. "But the President's right in her note. You can't ask me to take on anyone else. I'm already far closer to being a Tier 6 team than I'd like."

"Don't worry, Mr. Rook, I intend to honor the President's deal with you – no more pairings without them being requested by you or the woman in question personally. Between the unusual circumstances regarding your pairings with Miss Brown, sorry, Missus Rook, and Miss Park, I'd say you already have more than your fair share of unusual aspects, don't you?"

“Much more than I’d like.”

“How’s she doing by the way? Hell of a thing, discovering the impressions window like that,” the General told him. “I’m sure she’s got morning where she doesn’t want to start the day with thanking you, but it not being up to her must drive her crazy.”

“She’s got a workaround for it that helps her manage.”

“Can I ask what that is?”

“She sends me a text message first thing every morning thanking me for allowing her into the family,” he said. “It just pops up as another message in our chat thread, so it satiates her need to thank me in the morning.”

“And the, ah, dirty talk?”

“Well,” Andy said with a wry smile. “I don’t mind that and neither does she, so we let her go as long as she keeps the volume in check, or we’re downstairs in a room that’s decently soundproofed.”

“And the Missus? Piper? How’s she taking to her... individualistic quirks?”

“She says you never fully get used to being able to *smell* another person, to be able to track them via scent, but it’s gotten to the point where she can at least *manage* it and it’s not driving her crazy or anything,” he told the General. “But she’s gotten more precise with it over last few months. “She can sort of determine what sort of mood I’m in by my smell, whether I’m calm or stressed. It’s almost like she’s got a sort of low-level empathy with me based on my scent. She says she feels like it gives her secret insight into how I’m doing. I know your people have been testing her blood and mine, seeing if you can find some way to replicate that ability. Any luck with that?”

“Nothing actionable,” the General sighed. “Which is a shame, because it would be a very nice tool to put into the toolkit of all security forces. How do you feel about the intel about the impending African Union?”

“I can’t say I’m especially thrilled about the Gabon variant of the serum, but I also can’t say I’m entirely surprised by it either,” Andy grumbled. “The minute that whole shipping container disappeared, we knew it was going to be trouble one way or the other. I just didn’t expect one of the countries was going to try and find a way to use it to pacify men like that.”

“Africa’s been so full of in-fighting for so long that it didn’t come as a big shock to me,” the General replied. “For decades now, warlords have gone driving from village to village, recruiting ‘soldiers,’ kids who weren’t even teenagers having a machine gun shoved into their heads and dragged off, never to be seen or heard from by their family again. I think the women of Africa have had just about enough of that bullshit, and they decided to do something about it, so good on them for that. I’d have suggested we do that here, but it seems like we went the political route here and just legislated men out of causing too much trouble.”

“You know,” Andy said with a laugh, “everyone keeps this shit up and I’m going to consider actually running for office, despite my promise to my wives *not* to. The MPA was scary enough, but if you’re going to start insisting men be stoned all the time, yeah, that’s not something I can get behind.”

“I believe ‘contained’ is the word I’d use,” the General said. “Men are now a political, social and economic resource, and as such, need to be protected for their own good. If you ask me, the MPA doesn’t go far *enough*. But that’s a discussion for another day. Can I ask how your visit to Valhalla Shores went?”

Andy glanced over at the General with cautious eyes. “I wasn’t aware that *you* were aware that I’d made a journey over there.”

“I’m meant to be in the loop on all things Quaranteam, Mr. Rook,” the General said with a tight-lipped smile. “Even the more ‘off the books’ things, like what the NSA is cooking up over at Valhalla Shores that they think the rest of us don’t know about.”

“You know what’s going on there?”

“I have an inkling about what’s going on over there, but certainly not the entire picture. That’s why I was hoping you might be able to fill me in a little more.” The General leaned against her desk, looking at him expectantly.

“There’s definitely *something* odd going on over there, but exactly what it is, I’m not sure,” Andy admitted. “My friend seemed nervous about something, and there was a sort of... strange conformity? Like most of the women there were moving and thinking and acting as packs, almost more like a flock of birds than people? I hope I’m just imagining things, but it was *uncanny* how in synch the women doing yoga in the park were. Like, there’s coordinated movement and then there’s precision coordination, and these women were at that level. I feel like we definitely need to go back there, and not just me and a couple of members of my Team, but a whole division of military police, ready to investigate whatever they’re up to.” He focused his eyes on her. “Unless you’re in on whatever projects they’re working on over there.”

“I know you caught Fielder up to some truly heinous shit over here, Mr. Rook, but I assure you, that man and I could not be more different if we tried to be,” the General laughed. “I’m on your side, in spite of what you may think.”

“Asking you to prove it might be rather complicated. But I suppose your transparency about this is a good start,” he said, patting the files. “Anything else I should know about?”

“A few things I want to key you in on, but I want to have a specialist come and brief you personally on it,” the General said. “We’re seeing a rather weird DuoHalo variation cutting through France and Spain right now, and it’s... well, it’s interacting with the Quaranteam serum in a rather odd fashion. I’ve got Dr. McKenna looking at it at the moment, but you’re definitely going to want to be briefed on it within the next few days, assuming your wife Aisling doesn’t go into labor early.”

“Ash seems like she’s going to take her sweet time about it, no matter how much she wants the twins out of her,” Andy said, moving to stand up. “I’m trying to trust you, General, I really am, but some part of me still clings to the memory of all the shit General Fielder did. So we’ll work past that. It’s just going to take time.” He moved over, handing her the files back before shaking her hand. “I’ll take your doctor off your hands for you and bring her into my Team, assuming that’s what she wants.”

“It is,” the General said as she released Andy’s hand. “Your two security officers and your wife have been talking to her the whole time we’ve been here, screening her for you as one last cautionary measure. You can take it from them whether or not she passes final muster.”

“You were that certain I’d say yes?” he chuckled with a suspicious grin.

“Gilbert & Sullivan, Mr. Rook,” she said with a smile, as she moved to sit behind her desk once more, flicking her hand to shoo him away. “You are nothing if not a slave to your sense of honor and duty. Go on. Fuck off. Show your newest partner what for and all that.”

“One final condition, before I go,” Andy said, standing at the doorway.

The General folded her hands atop the desk and shot him what he thought was her ‘I’m trying to be patient with you, but you’re annoying me’ smile. “Yes?”

“I want you to send a handful of workers over to repair the damages done to my house, courtesy of the Air Force,” he chuckled. “The least you can do is throw in the home repairs I need after a strike force broke into my home and threatened to C4 my basement unless I gave

them the QT formula. It's not that much – a handful of walls, a ripped-up section of fencing, nothing major. It's not like the C4 went off or anything..."

The General smiled and shrugged. "Yeah, okay. I suppose that's fair. I'll have people over today to size up what needs to be done, and we'll have the repairs finished within a week. Now go. It's impolite to keep a lady waiting."

When he stepped outside of the General's office, a couple of airmen were there waiting for him, and they escorted him down the hall to where Lexi, Melody and Fi were all talking quite animatedly with Dr. Ming-Yue Chen, who had been given her clothes back.

Fiona stood up first and moved over to him, rolling her eyes with a smile. "You're doing the right thing again, aren't you Don Quixote?"

"That's me, the Lord of La Mancha," he sighed. "It *is* the right thing I'm doing here, isn't it, Fi?"

"Seems like it from where I'm sitting," his wife told him, stroking his bald head with a smile. "We need this alliance to work, and she actually seems like your type. She sort of reminds me of me, back when we were in college together. Confident, self-assured, straightforward if maybe a bit *too* directly so. But she'll fit in fine, at least based on how she's done with me, Lexi and Melody so far. And I hear she scored exceptionally high in the Oracle pairings with you?"

"I saw the test results, and yeah, it's pretty comprehensive we like the same things in the same ways, which makes me feel better about going through with all of this," he sighed. "I really didn't want to grow the Team any bigger than it is already, but it's hard as hell to deny a President anything."

"You're doing what needs to be done," Fiona said, giving him an affectionate kiss for a moment before winking at him. "Besides, there's only so much complaining a man's allowed to do about having *another* beautiful woman to fuck, you know?"

"Oh, I get it," Andy chortled. "That's why I'm getting it out of my system now. I'm just tired and cranky."

"Hey, you know what I hear is a good cure for that?" Fiona teased. "*Fucking*. C'mon, you'll like Ming. She's a hoot."

They walked over and Andy moved to join them sitting on the couch, Fi standing as Andy took the spot where she'd been sitting next to Ming-Yue. "Hello again," Andy said with a slight smile. "I understand that the Oracle system thinks that we'd be a pretty good match, and that you've already signed off on the idea?"

"I thought you were quite a good-looking man when I saw you on *60 Minutes*, and how you were treating your partners, well, it was quite different than how men in Shanghai like to act around women," she said to him, taking his hand in her own, holding onto it firmly. "And in talking to your wife Fiona and two of your bodyguards, they both feel you are quite the remarkable man."

Having read her file, her accent made more sense now. Mandarin was clearly her primary language, but having spent a decade in London, her English was tinged with a very British tone, posh and refined, although he could still clearly hear her rebellious spirit coming out in it.

"Thank you, Dr."

"Please, my friends call me Ming, and considering you're going to be fucking me until my brains run out my ears, I think you're going to be at least that," she said with a wry smile, winking at Melody before turning her gaze back to him. "Assuming you've decided to accept me into Team Rook?"

"It seems like I'd be fucking up everyone's lives by saying no, so as long as you're

willing to put up with this insanely large house, that's fine."

Ming let out a deep sigh of relief, exhaling a breath that Andy hadn't realizing she'd been holding in, like him rejecting her had been a real possibility. "Excellent. If you don't mind, then, I'd like to get back to the house as quickly as possible and get myself imprinted," she said, her fingertips clenching Andy's hand a little bit more firmly. "I'm starting to suspect that whatever variation of DuoHalo leads to the sleeping plague kicks the need to get imprinted up a few levels. According to what Melody was telling me, I shouldn't feel like this unless it had been a couple of days since I was injected, but I'm fucking antsy..."

"Yeah, definitely be sure and make a note of that as something you'll want to tell your colleagues when you show up to work later, but for now, let's head back to the house," Andy said.

The drive back across New Eden was relatively short, and Andy suspected Lexi might've even been lead footing it a bit at portions where she knew she could get away with it. Ming had only a small bag with her, saying she would have some things sent to her from Shanghai, but until then that she would borrow from other women in the house or just go shopping with them tomorrow for new things. One thing Andy did note, however, was that Ming did not let go of his hand the entire trip, nor did her leg stop bouncing impatiently.

When they pulled up to the gate, Melody giggled a little. "Your first time coming in through the front gate," she said.

"Although I did go *out* this way earlier," Ming added with a smile.

He found it interesting to note the sort of differences between Melody and Ming. Melody was Korean-American where as Ming was classical Chinese. Melody was definitely stronger, more muscular, a result of training more than genetics, although Ming's build was slender and willowy. In fact, he realized that Ming was likely the thinnest girl on his Team. If it was unhealthy so, he was certain Lauren and Taylor would be all over her. Melody's skin tone was also a darker shade of tan than Ming's, whose was very light. The epicanthic folds on Melody's eyes, however, were much less pronounced than those on Ming's. Both women were staggering beautiful, but in very different ways.

As soon as the car pulled into the garage, Melody and Ming hopped out of the car together to run into the house. "We'll come get you in like five, boss!" Melody said before pulling Ming into the house with a giggle.

"They were talking about how Ming could make her first time with you different from your first time with anyone else in the family," Fiona said. "And Melody wanted to help her with that. I didn't think you'd mind."

"Just as long as nobody's outside of their comfort zone," he replied. "Oh, Lexi, starting tomorrow, we're going to have Air Force work crews here for about a week to repair the damages the CCP strike force caused, so if you want to inventory everything they fucked up, we'll get all the repairs done on the Air Force's nickel."

"Sounds good to me, boss," she replied as they walked into the house.

Sarah walked up to him, shaking her head with a smile as she wrapped her arms around him, tilting her head down to kiss him hard, her hands against the bare back of his hand, giggling when she broke the kiss finally. "Is it true? Did you agree to take on yet *another* piece of pussy for this household?" She didn't even wait for him to answer, smirking at him. "You're an absolute fucking softy, you are, Mister Rook."

"Well, the President asked me to do it..."

"And I suppose if the President also asked you jump off of a bridge," Emily said, moving

into the hallway to join them, stepping in before ducking under one of Sarah's arms to get into the middle of the hug, "then you would do that as well?"

"Of course not," Andy said with a grin. "I mean, first off, Lexi wouldn't let me."

"Damn straight," Lexi snorted. "President or no, bitch best step off threatening my supply of Vitamin D!"

Andy groaned, which made all the girls giggle, as they knew he hated being referred to as that, even if it was a fair assessment. "Second of all, no way in hell am I leaving my wives or partners to this mess without me. As long as I have any say in the matter, I'm not going anywhere."

"And how much say in the matter do you usually get?" Ash said, waddling into the room, Nicolette helping her get around.

"Almost none, but I'm doing my best." He pulled out of the hug and moved over to Aisling, sliding one hand across her belly, the other on her face. "How are we all doing?"

"Desperate as *fuck* to get your daughters out of my fucking body," Aisling laughed. "This whole wonder and glow of pregnancy bullshit? Yeah, I'm over it. Done. You best like these two soon-to-be spawns of yours, 'cause I don't know if yer getting any more out of me."

He laughed, giving her a tender kiss. "You're still beautiful, you know that, right?"

"Aw Jaysis, fuck off will ya now?" she giggled. "You've got someone new to take care of."

"You're not mad, are you?"

She rolled her eyes again with that wonderfully understanding smile of hers. "It'd be like getting mad at the sun for shining on everyone," she said to him. "Go on. But I'm telling you, if we hit 24, you and us wives are going to have a *very* long talk about what sort of emergency circumstances it would take for you take on a 25th, am I clear, Mister?"

"Crystal."

"Good. Now go. Have a good time or whatever," she said, slapping his ass.

Andy headed into the house proper and headed up the stairs. They were certainly dangerously close to running out of bedrooms, even with Ash, Fi, Piper, Niko, Sarah, Emily *and* Moira all choosing not to have a bedroom and always slept in the master bedroom. Emily and Sarah had turned one into a miniature studio; Moira and Fiona had turned another into a shared office for the two of them. But there were still a handful of open bedrooms, and clearly Melody had taken Ming to one of those.

He was wandering the hallway when a door opened and closed suddenly, Melody slipping out of it. "Give her two minutes, then go on in, okay?" Melody kissed his cheek and rubbed the back of his neck. "Have fun, boss!"

After a couple of minutes, he headed over to the door and knocked. "C'mon in, Andy," Ming's voice said to him from the other side. He stepped into the room, closing the door behind him before looking up to see her. She was dressed in grey thigh stockings and nothing else, sitting on the bed, legs crossed, hair done up in a bun with a pair of chopsticks through it to keep it locked in place. He'd seen her in just a bra and panties half a day ago, but the way she had positioned herself, and the stockings in particular, made it all feel a little bit more intimate. She had smaller breasts with tiny nipples, her areola not much bigger than quarters, the flesh a dark chocolate shade. "I wanted to really dial in on a kink you have that you may not have explored with other partners, so I asked Fi about which ones they'd explored a bunch with you and which ones you hadn't done much with, and so... long socks. I sort of feel like I'm back in college and I've brought a boy back to my dorm room to fuck him for the first time." She licked her lips at

Andy, seeing him just standing there. “You don’t get over here quick, mister, and I’m going to, what was it that Lexi said? Pull a Piper on you?”

That cut through the tension like a battleaxe and Andy laughed a little bit, kicking off his shoes and socks. “No no, anything but that,” he said with a grin. “Did they tell you the whole story?”

“No, but I’ll hear it soon enough,” she said, uncrossing her legs, moving to lay back on the bed. “Right now, Mr. Rook, you owe me one proper fucking.”

“Unless you want me calling you Doctor the whole time, you’d better start calling me Andy,” he said, peeling his shirt off, tossing it aside as he unbuttoned his pants, pushing them and his boxers down to the floor to leave him standing naked, as he heard her gasp a little bit. “It’s not that big, so you don’t make a big deal on my account.”

“No, I’ve...” She started giggling a little. “I’ve never seen one circumcised before. It’s... quite the striking look.”

“Looking isn’t what most people do with it.”

He started to crawl onto the bed and before he could get far onto it, she rushed forward, placing both of her hands against the back of his neck and pulled him in a searing kiss, the kind he was unexpecting, but returned in kind the best he could.

He was about to lean into her when she turned him and shoved him onto his back on the bed. The bedroom they were in wasn’t at all decorated, and felt rather spartan, although she’d adjusted the dimmer switch to set the lights at an appropriately moody half-power. “I know what I’m going to fucking do with it, if that’s okay with you,” she said, kissing his forehead.

“Hey, I’m just the delivery device at the end of the day,” he joked, although he saw a slightly sad expression cross her face. “I’m kidding. It’s just a weird life.”

“One I’m very happy you’re letting me enter,” she said as she straddled his waist, rubbing the tip of his cock across her slit. A few seconds later, she pushed herself down onto it, and let out an intense groan of ecstasy, her fingernails almost scratching into his chest, the priming orgasm taking hold of her as her body quaked, her head falling down, almost shaking her hair loose from the bun. “FFfuck they aren’t kidding about that first step being a fucking doozy...” she laughed, reaching up and pulling the chopsticks from her hair, tossing them aside. “They’d be falling out anyway. You don’t mind, do you?”

“It’s okay, you do you,” he said to her, feeling her hands on his shoulders.

“Well, no, I’m going to fucking do *you*, that’s the fucking point,” she giggled, her hair hanging down to her collarbone. “The other one, the next one... it’s really going to be stronger than that?”

“Don’t know anyone who’s said otherwise.”

“Then fuck me, Andy... c’mon and grind up into me... your cock feels so fucking good inside my tight little cunt... Were you turned on seeing me handcuffed on my hands and knees last night? I know I was... the idea of being all tied up and vulnerable and helpless against you...”

He was a little surprised at how wide she could push her thighs, almost doing the splits on him, each time she pushed herself down onto his cock. Despite as much sex as Andy got on a daily basis now, there was something definitely wild about it being someone *new*, someone whom with they didn’t quite know each other rhythms and patterns yet.

It was also wild knowing that she was bound to him already, and that until he got off, she *couldn’t*. He’d never really given it much of a thought before, but the expression on her face made it clear just how much she wanted that orgasm, how much she needed it.

Her ass bounced against the tops of his thighs and the sweaty slapping sounds of their bodies colliding over and over again filled the room, blending in with her whines, whimpers and moans.

“Fuck me, Andy... fuck me fuck me fucking fuck me!”

He was torn between wanting to give her a good first performance and between rushing his body towards a climax, but in the end, he knew that the longer he took, the more he was simply keeping her from that biochemical Everest that they would never quite reach again, even if they were close enough to wave at it each time they'd fuck. So he let her panting breath in his ear, and that constant stream of dirty talk that he suspected Fi or Melody had told her he liked, push him into the red zone quickly.

“You're gonna cum, aren't you? Fuck, I've never fucked without a condom before... it's so much fucking better, Andy... do it... please? *Please?* Fill up my tiny pussy and make me yours. Give me that cum...”

She mashes her lips against Andy's in the kind of wanton kiss he only associates with someone deep in the throes of priming, and when her tongue hooks onto his, his balls draw up and he begins to pump hot cum inside of her trembling cunt, sending her body over the edge, large shakes and shudders before the kiss breaks and she flops unconsciously atop of him, the word 'imprinting' escaping her lips over and over again, even as he rolls her onto her back and pulls a sheet up and over her.

He knew the rest of his day was going to be buried in questions, so before he left the room, he went to go take a long, hot shower in peace.