

Quaranteam: North West

Chapter 14 (Beta)

By BreaktheBar

The following story is based on the fantastic [Quaranteam](#) series by CorruptingPower over on Literotica. You can continue to expect general themes of light Mind Control, bonding and Harems from the original, but with a slightly edgy and alternative cast. In this chapter you can expect political movement, new toys, community check-ins and some new faces.

“Alright, Black,” the State Trooper Sergeant mumbled. “Come on. Meeting time.”

The clanking of the keys in the cell doors was a metallic knife in my ears. I hadn’t been able to get any sleep sitting in the cell in the back of the State Trooper outpost, and judging by the light beaming in from the window high on the wall it had to be mid-morning by now.

I’d sort of expected it, but the Stateys hadn’t exactly come in soft on Kyla and I. They hadn’t been overly rough either, but with multiple bodies on the property and a gun battle in a residential area, none of them were in the mood for leniency up front. The only thing that stopped me from being frustrated by the whole thing was that they hadn’t gotten rough or handsy with Kyla in any way. We’d each gotten put into the back of a cruiser, and I’d sat there for about an hour as the Troopers started to process the scene and interview Mary. They were just starting to check the other houses on the block when Kyla and I were driven away.

We didn’t get booked when we were brought in, which I took as a good thing. Instead I was brought back to the cells and Kyla was brought to an interrogation room - she’d claimed Diplomatic Immunity and rattled off an ID number, and I had a feeling the Troopers weren’t sure what to do about that.

I groaned as I sat up on the rough wooden bench that I’d been laying on. Thankfully I’d been the only person in the cell so I’d felt safe enough to lower my mask as I tried to find the soldier zen to relax on cue. But it hadn’t come, and now here I was with only a couple of hours of sleep in me and an adrenaline crash leaving me with a mild headache.

The Sergeant waved me through the cell door and led me out to the front. The station was small, just an outpost that housed a service bay for the Trooper’s cars, a couple of meeting rooms and offices, and a break room. Most of the crime in the area was petty theft and vandalism, public intoxication and DUIs, and speeding. Or maybe it was more than that and I

just didn't know about it. I was learning a lot about the shit people were willing to do to each other even out in what I considered the most beautiful place on earth.

Inside the conference room, the table was almost full already. Kyla was sitting next to Captain Bloomberg, who gave me a quick and analytical once-over to make sure I was alright. She looked like she was running low on sleep as well, and I wondered how fast Miriam had woken up her second-in-command to help deal with this. But she also looked sharp as hell in her military dress blues.

Also at the table was a State Trooper Captain who looked highly annoyed to be there, and the Sergeant followed me in. He had been in control of the scene - or as in control as one could be when there were only three troopers and four dead bodies.

"Mr Black," the Captain said. "Please sit, let's get this over with." He was the kind of guy who probably played linebacker way back in his high school hay day but had slowly started heading to pasture. His gut hung over his belt and his moustache was silver and grey as his medical mask slipped down his chin.

I sat, knowing better than to speak without being asked a question. I still wasn't sure what the state of things were, so offering up any information freely could fuck up whatever Bloomberg was working on.

"Well, we're all here now," Captain Bloomberg said. Everyone was wearing a mask which made it harder to really get a read on her. "Sergeant, will you be suggesting to the ADA that charges should be filed?"

The Sergeant cleared his throat and sat forward. "Ah, no Ma'am," he said. "Our preliminary investigation and witness reports say Mr Black was acting in defence of another at their express request in a time when emergency services were unavailable, and his actions were against clear and present looters." He glanced at the Captain and then continued. "We are ruling our investigation closed at this time."

"Good," Laura nodded tersely and then turned to the Captain. "With that cleared up, the jurisdictional matter?"

"I still think if he wants-" the big man started, but Laura raised an eyebrow and he grumbled and seemed to change his mind. "We were already short-staffed in this area for the ground that needs covering, and I've lost three of my six troopers already. Do whatever the fuck you want."

"Wonderful," Captain Bloomberg said dryly and then she picked up a book and held it towards me. "Put your hand on the bible."

I raised an eyebrow but did so.

“Do you swear?” Laura asked me.

“I... do?” I answered.

“Great,” she said. “By the power invested in me, I hereby appoint you the new, duly elected County Sheriff for Black County. Congratulations.”

“What is going on?” I asked.

“I don’t know how, but somehow there is a new, tiny county in the state located right outside of Jewell,” the Trooper Captain said. “And apparently there was an election this morning for the position of County Sheriff and that’s now you.”

I opened my mouth behind my mask and then clicked it shut and blinked. “What?”

“Now that that’s out of the way,” Captain Bloomberg pushed on. “Jurisdiction, Captain?”

The Captain took in a breath and blew it out slowly into his mask, clearly exasperated. “Sheriff Black, we will extend you jurisdictional courtesy in the town of Jewell and the surrounding area so that you may handle emergencies which our office may have a delayed response to. In return, we hope you could help with some of the community-related duties our officers are having a hard time keeping up with.”

I looked at Laura and Kyla, who both nodded. “Sure, Captain,” I said. “I’d be happy to help with that.”

“Great. Wonderful,” the Trooper Captain grunted and turned to Laura. “We done here? I’ve got about a hundred other things that are more important than this piling up on my desk.”

“Thanks so much for your help, Captain,” Laura said and I could hear the patronizing customer service smile hidden behind her mask.

The Captain grumbled something to himself and stood up, squeezing his way out of the small room and slamming the front door of the station on his way out.

“Am I needed for anything else, Ma’am?” the Sergeant asked. “He’s not wrong, we have a lot going on and my guys could use me out there.”

“Just the return of Sheriff Black’s firearms and other property,” Laura said.

“Ma’am, those are going to be in evidence-”

“Just the return of Sheriff Black’s firearms and other property,” Laura said again, a little sterner.

“Ah, uh, yes Ma’am,” the Sergeant said and stood. On his way out I could hear him muttering about not knowing how to do the paperwork for all of this.

“Alright,” I said once he was gone and we were alone. “What the hell is going on?”

“The Colonel thought it would be prudent to expedite some political paperwork for the community,” Captain Bloomberg said. “Black County became official at 8:01 AM this morning, and at 9:01 AM a verbal election was held of all current residents of the county. Your election was unanimous with the 78% turnout.”

“I can tell you’re having fun with this,” I said.

“What, me? Having fun running roughshod over all sorts of legal and possibly constitutional issues? I’m an officer of the court and of the United States Airforce. I wouldn’t ever dream of having *fun*,” Captain Bloomberg said.

“She’s having way too much fun,” Kyla said.

“OK, what does this actually mean though?” I asked.

“As much as you want it to,” Laura said, cutting to the chase. “The community that’s going to be built on your land was always going to become its own county because that was going to help with jurisdictional governance issues. In reality, the entire county is going to remain under the federal jurisdiction of the Air Force so there isn’t a need for any county political or infrastructure systems. But Miriam seems to think that if we don’t make you some kind of official you’re going to keep getting into shit that I need to dig you out of. So I came up with giving you a badge and letting you do whatever it is you’re going to do - you’re still the contracted security for the site, which encompasses the entirety of Black County, but with that agreement with the State Troopers you just made you can go looking for all the trouble your heart desires.”

“This is insane,” I said.

“And yet it’s happening,” Kyla said.

“Just don’t do something stupid enough that someone files a complaint against you,” Laura said. “We’ll get you a badge and some more equipment under the guise of your security work, and you can fly under the radar and help whoever you’re going to help. Or, I’m just putting this out there, you could try keeping your head down and not making my life quite so fucking interesting so that I can handle the two and a half feet of legal paperwork that is currently forming a new leaning tower of Pisa on my desk.”

“Thank you, Captain,” I said.

“You’re welcome, Sheriff,” she said with an audible smirk.

The Trooper Sergeant came back and met us at the front desk with all of my firearms, including the 1911 in its hardcase that had been pulled from my truck. Unfortunately, the truck itself had gotten towed since it had multiple bullet holes through the windows and front end.

“Don’t worry about it,” Laura assured me. “Miriam is going to take care of you.”

“But I *liked* my truck,” I said.

“She’ll take care of you,” Laura said again.

Outside the station we piled into the blacked-out sedan Laura had apparently driven down in, and she was going to give us a ride back home before heading back to Portland. I took a moment before getting in the car, and after setting the firearms in the trunk, to wrap up Kyla in my arms and kiss her tenderly.

“Thank you again for last night,” I said quietly to her.

“You don’t need to thank me,” she said.

“Yes, I do,” I insisted. “You risked your life, and let me risk mine. You took life as well, which I know you’re feeling right now. So I need you to hear me when I say thank you, and I meant what I said. I’m falling in love with you, more and more.”

She hugged me back softly, but with her fingers clutching the sides of my shirt tightly. “You’re welcome,” she said softly.

On the ride back, now that we’d gotten our phones back, Kyla began texting back home while I called Mary. She was happy to hear things were working out, though I didn’t go into details about how exactly that had happened. Her little girl Charlie seemed to have forgotten the whole thing almost immediately, but Thomas was asking lots of questions and she was having a hard time answering them. She’d also found out that many of her neighbours were missing - the police told her that it was difficult to tell because of the looting, but some likely left the area to be somewhere else during quarantine. Others, though, were just gone. And she’d witnessed a delivery truck of some sort come by that morning, and it had picked up the bodies of the men Harri and Kyla had killed along with a half dozen other body bags from more of the houses on the block.

That made me flinch. The diseases weren’t just in the city or confined to the outbreak on the site. It was in my town, for sure and for real.

I told Mary that I would come by in a day or two to assure Thomas, and that I’d try and fix what I could of her front lawn where I’d probably torn up the grass. She, of course, said I didn’t need to do that and I told her it was no trouble.

“What did I say about keeping your head down?” Laura asked as I hung up the call.

“What?” I asked. “I’m just offering to fix her front lawn.”

“And soon you’ll be running a soup kitchen on the site and setting up a pet rescue,” Laura grumbled. “You have a serious hero complex, Black.”

“You’re not even the first person to tell me that in the last twenty-four hours,” I said. “I’m just doing the right thing.”

Kyla leaned forward from the back seat, reaching for my hand. “Harri, sometimes that’s the same thing.”

I sighed and rolled my eyes, but inside I felt my heart beat a little harder. It was nice to know a woman I was falling for, and another one I respected, saw me in that kind of light. Even if Captain Bloomberg was making it more of an accusation.

When we got back to the site and the compound we saw that there was another one of the National Guard cleanup crews working away on the office buildings, sanitizing the place and recovering what they could of records and documents. As Laura pulled up in front of the compound she put the car in park and turned to me. “Now that it’s official, I’m sure the Colonel is going to organize a delivery of equipment for you sometime this afternoon or tomorrow. Just do me a favour and try not to go overboard. Or get into situations where you need to call her in the middle of the night again. She was happy to help, but it doesn’t look good if that sort of thing keeps happening and it’s my job to keep her clean, alright?”

“I know,” I said. “And I’m sorry for the trouble…”

“But it had to be done,” Laura nodded. “Just do me a favour and text Miriam a picture of the kids you saved so I know what I did all this for. And throw in a nudey of that hot chick from last time for good measure if you can.”

Kyla snorted, and I shook my head. “The kids I can do, but a picture of Dani is a bit much.”

“She’ll do a topless one for sure,” Kyla said. “Don’t worry, Captain. I got you.”

That made Laura bark a laugh and actually crack a smile.

Everyone was coming out of the compound at this point to welcome us back, and Laura ended up needing to wait for all the hugs and kisses and backslaps to happen before I could get to the trunk and retrieve the firearms. As I shut the trunk I got a view of Dani lifting her shirt and pressing her boobs to the driver’s side window as she giggled and Kyla smirked with an ‘I’ll do you one better’ kind of expression on her face. When Dani pulled back she saw me looking with

wide eyes and she took a moment to wiggle her boobs at me with her tongue sticking out at the corner of her lips in a silly expression before putting them away.

They were really great tits.

Kyla and I got a 'welcome back from jail' party, which the girls had planned once Erica had gotten an update call from Miriam about what was going on. I had no idea when the two of them had traded numbers, but it was the kind of thing that I was learning to just roll with at that point. My girls in particular rewarded my heroics after lunch with a game of 'Whose mouth is this?' back in the RV as they blindfolded me and proceeded to kiss, lick, and eventually blow me. Even Kyla participated despite her usual avoidance of our group sexual dynamics, laughing along with the others.

It was later in the afternoon when I took a ride out on the ATV with Erica up to the spring pool and allowed myself to finally feel the crushing pressure in my chest and shoulders.

"Just let it out, babe," Erica crooned as she held my head in her lap and stroked her fingers through my hair. We were both fully clothed still, sitting next to the babbling spring.

"I can't," I said. "I- I don't know why." I could feel the tears somewhere behind my eyes. The immense weight of what I'd done again. It had been seven years since I'd left the service, and almost seven and a half since the last time I had taken a life. It wasn't any easier now than it was back then.

"Just try," Erica whispered. "Cry. Scream. Yell. Hit the ground. Do something. You can't hold it in."

I rolled onto my hands and knees and crawled the few steps to the spring pond and shoved my head under the cold water, laying on my stomach over the little rocky rim that one of my ancestors had built up. And then I screamed into the water. 'Shouted' would have been more manly, but I screamed. And I screamed. I emptied my lungs into those cooling, peaceful waters and yanked my head out, sucking in a huge breath and dropping right back in. I did that a couple of times, then flopped back away from the water as my chest heaved trying to catch my breath and I clutched at the grass and dirt with my hands.

"Shhh," Erica soothed me, coming to me without a care for the water and cradling my head to her bosom. "Shhh."

When I was feeling 'better,' which was hard to judge, we rode back without having had sex. It might have been the first time that we'd gone out and not at least snuck in a quickie since we'd gotten together. But it wasn't the time, not with the mental state I was in.

And when we got back, Erica sent me to cuddle with Ivy and she took Kyla out on the ATV, just the two of them.

Ensnared in the back of the RV with Ivy, my little Quebecoise lover hummed some sort of a wordless lullaby to me as she brushed out my tangled hair slowly, and then gave my scalp a soft massage. And when she was done she had me lie down and she laid down on top of me, her slight form like a weighted blanket as she hugged me softly.

“Mon amour, I wish I knew what I could say to make it better,” she whispered to me in the darkness.

“I know, I’ve,” I whispered back, my hands resting on her back.

“I- I want to do more for you,” she said quietly. “Erica, she is so strong. And Vanessa has her work. And now Kyla, she is your partner in crime in these things. I don’t know where I fit in, Harrison. And I-” she cut herself off, burrowing her face in my chest.

“This is perfect, ma dulcinée,” I said. “You are perfect.”

“No I’m not,” she said.

“Are we really going to argue about this?” I asked.

“Yes, we are,” she said, and then rolled off of me and sat on the bed next to me with her legs crossed under her, taking one of my hands in both of hers. “Harri, we have not talked about my past. Not a lot. I’m not this perfect girl you see me as. I am not...”

“You are everything you need to be,” I said.

“But I’m *not*, Harrison,” Ivy said. “I have never felt like this before. All my life, I have lived without regrets. But now that I have you, I regret- I regret so much.”

“I’ve, what are you talking about?” I asked, sitting up and encouraging her to straddle my lap, getting even closer so we could talk while holding each other.

“I’m not a good person,” Ivy whispered, resting her head against my shoulder so she wasn’t looking me in the eye. “Even now, I am making this about me somehow when I want to be comforting you.”

“Ivy,” I said sternly, making her look up at me because of the tone, but she found my eyes soft and caring. “Ivy,” I said again, softer now that she was looking at me. “You could tell me you went through a cannibalism phase and I would still think the you with me now, the one who gives her heart so fully and pours her love on me unconditionally, the Ivy I am in love with, is a good person.”

“Then why do I feel so guilty?” she asked, tears in her eyes.

“What do you feel guilty about?” I asked.

“Stripping,” she said. “Letting other men see me the way only you should have. Being promiscuous with boys in high school when I thought it didn’t mean anything. I wish I could give you the gift of being my one and only like the priest used to talk about in bible school. I wish I could be pure for you, because I feel like I don’t deserve you. I don’t deserve how good you are, and how courageous, and beautiful.”

“Stop,” I whispered, pressing my forehead to hers. “Ivy, stop. I don’t want some pure little virgin. Erica, Vanessa and Kyla all have pasts too. I want you, Ivy. I want you. The you that is here with me, with all the ups and downs that you’ve gone through to get here. I love every little scar, and every tattoo, and every thing about you, because they make you who you are. And fuck that priest and making you feel guilty. Tell me his name and I’ll give him a piece of my mind.”

She smiled at that, and one tear dripped from clinging to her eyelashes. “I’m sorry,” she said.

“Don’t be,” I told her, hugging her tightly.

“What can I do for you?” she asked.

“This,” I said. “Just this. Be with me like this.”

We held each other for a long time. Long enough that we drifted to sleep in each other’s arms until Vanessa came to wake us up for dinner.

I checked in with Kyla quietly at dinner, and she smiled softly and told me that she and Erica had a long talk and she was doing alright. Then she pulled me down into a kiss and told me she needed me after dinner, and we slipped off as soon as our food was gone and made love out on the edge of the forest close to where I’d planned my date with Erica.

We were back and sitting around the fire pit when my cell phone rang. It was sitting closer to Erica than to me, so she picked it up with a grin and answered. “Sheriff Black’s phone, who may I ask is calling?” she asked in a played-up secretary voice.

Someone spoke on the other end. “I’ll see if he’s available. One moment please,” she said, then lowered the phone. “It’s a Colonel Abarbanel calling for you. Should I tell her you’re busy and to call back during business hours?”

I rolled my eyes and stood, holding my hand out to Erica.

“Transferring you now,” Erica said into the phone with a playful grin at me as several of the other girls around the fire gave little chuckles.

I took the phone and sighed, shaking my head at Erica's little game before raising it to my ear. "Colonel?"

"Just calling to check in, Harri," Miriam said from the other end. "And I'm off the clock."

"You sound beat, Miriam," I said, stepping away from the fire.

"Because I am," she said. "I haven't slept since you woke me up last night."

"Shit," I said. "Well, thanks again for answering. And for everything else."

"Yeah, well, it's the Everything Else that has been keeping me working," she chuckled.

"Any shot of you getting a day off and coming up to visit?" I asked.

"I would love to, but no chance," Miriam sighed. "Not for a good while yet, anyways."

"Well, I think we're up to a steak dinner, champagne and chocolate lava cake for dessert on my tab," I said. "One more favour and I'm going to have to learn how to properly grill a full-on tomahawk steak to properly repay you. That or find some wagyu."

"Remember that time you saved me from my blackmailing senior officer and stopped him mid sexual assault?"

"You already paid me back for that," I said.

"How so?"

"You got me out of the military, which led me to my best friend and my fiancée, and all of this."

"Fiancée?" Miriam asked.

"Oh, right," I said. "We haven't really made it a big thing, but Erica asked me to marry her. I said yes. We're not sure on any logistics yet, but that's our new label."

"Congratulations, Harri," Miriam said, and while I could hear the smile in her voice there was also a touch of what I thought might be... annoyance? "That's really great, I'm happy for you two. How are the others taking it?"

"Good," I said. "We're still figuring out our dynamics a little, but it's been weirdly smooth sailing to get there."

“That’s what some of our reports are showing,” Miriam said. “Or at least what’s being reported when people bother to ask about the well-being of households outside of ‘Is the vaccine working?’ Seems like everyone is doing the best they can to make this work.”

“Well, I hope no one else is going through with the other shit we are,” I said.

“Hmmhmm,” she chuckled softly over the phone. “I doubt any other vaccine tester has gone through what you have, Harri.”

“So what’s up with the late-night call?” I asked. “Did you just miss the sound of my voice, or is there something going on?”

“Yes, and yes,” she teased. “I’m sending up a care package to you tomorrow morning. Just wanted you to know to expect it. Have fun, but don’t go wild, OK?”

“Is that a euphemism?” I asked. “You’re not sending me another partner, are you? I don’t have room in this RV bed for another body.”

“Hah! No, nothing like that,” Miriam laughed. “I’m sending you some toys, buddy. And Laura told me she gave you some warnings, but I wanted you to hear this from me personally. Don’t go getting yourself into trouble if you can help it, I don’t know if I could handle losing you after giving you the tools to get yourself done in.”

“I’ll try my best,” I promised her. “But I want something in return.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“You to get a solid nine hours of sleep tonight,” I said. “And that’s a full nine. Not eight. You need to sleep to be effective.”

“I’ll give you eight,” she said.

“Miriam,” I said crossly.

“Fine, fine,” she said. “Nine, as long as you’re seriously promising not to get yourself killed, you bastard.”

“Done,” I said.

“I’ll hold you to it,” she said. “You go and get yourself killed, and I’ll hold it against you. I’ll never sleep more than six hours for the rest of my life just to teach you a lesson.”

“Noted,” I snorted a laugh.

“How’s the lady and the kids?” Miriam asked.

“Safe,” I said. “For now, I guess. She’s a little traumatized, but she’s been that way since her husband disappeared early in the quarantine when he went looking for work. Her little boy is feeling it the most, from what I understand, but I’ll go over there to try and help him feel a little better.”

“You know you’re too good a guy, right Harri?” Miriam asked.

“Don’t you have some sleeping to get to?” I shot back.

“Fine. I do,” she said. “Be safe.”

“You too, Miriam. Thanks for calling.”

“Thanks for picking up,” she teased lightly.

When I stepped back to the fire Erica was smiling at me. “What?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she said, and reached over and took my hand. Then she glanced to Vanessa, who gave her a little smirk back.

“You know I don’t like you girls keeping secrets from me,” I said.

“We know,” Kyla smiled over the rim of her tea mug. “That’s not going to stop us from doing it though.”

I rolled my eyes and reached for my beer.

* * * * *

“Holy shit,” I said as the flatbed truck lowered the brand new Ford F-150 from its bed. It was blacked out except for a white band across each side and a gold-lined ‘SHERIFF’ decal plastered in bold letters. And ‘Black County’ in smaller white letters underneath. It had a heavy duty push bar and brush guard on the front along with a winch, a light bar on the roof of the cab and another with some spots mounted to the back.

“Captain Bloomberg wasn’t joking,” Kyla said. Everyone had come out to witness the delivery. “Where do you think Miriam got this from?”

“Probably got it from some other sheriff’s department, or police, or something,” Erica said. “Think she could get us one of those supercharged mustangs or chargers, too?”

“We are *not* asking for more cars,” I said, looking at the beauty of a truck touch down and settle on it’s shocks. “Well, not yet.”

I had to sign for the delivery, along with a crate that had also been strapped down to the back of the flatbed, which turned out to be an awkward process of the guy filling out the paperwork on a tablet, then sanitizing it and handing it over to me to sign with my finger, then sanitizing it again when he took it back. Once the delivery guy was driving off and disappeared around the site offices Dani, Ivy, Aria and India all immediately wanted to check out the truck while I went into the storage containers to fetch a crowbar to open the crate.

They had already figured out the lights when I came out, and we all got blasted by the siren for a moment which was super loud. Then we got blasted by a massive air horn sound that left our ears ringing.

“Sorry!” Dani called from inside the cab with Ivy. Aria and India were in the back seat, which was separated from the front by a heavy plexiglass of some sort. I wasn’t sure I liked that, but it was what it was. Aria and India sure didn’t seem to mind as they giggled and made out in the back seat of a cop car for what I had a feeling wasn’t the first time.

When I cracked the seal on the crate we found a little trove of police equipment. There were a couple of bullet proof vests with ‘Black County Sheriff’ patches, a bean bag shotgun, a couple of tasers, handcuffs and zip ties, new flashlights and other gear. At the bottom was a hard case that I pulled out and opened to reveal a note laying on top of several firearms packed in foam. At a glance I recognized that I’d been sent an M4 rifle with attachments, an MP5, and a pair of Beretta M9s along with ammunition for all three firearms.

“Dear Harrison,” Erica read as she opened the note while I ogled the firearms. “Don’t make me regret this. Miriam. PS - Better make it a tomahawk steak after all.”

I spent the rest of the morning learning more about the truck and checking over all of the equipment. We set up a little range backstopped by one of the hills and I practiced with all of the firearms to remind myself what shooting them was like - the M4 was standard issue military and easy to remind myself of once I dialed in the simple precision sight I mounted to the rails, and the Beretta’s were standard issue sidearms that came with underslung flashlights. I still preferred my own to the new ones only because I was used to the grip of it, and these new ones had a slightly different pattern in my palm. The MP5 was the big new thing for me - a submachine gun wasn’t exactly standard issue for an infantryman or Military Police, so while I’d had a couple of chances to shoot one in the past I’d never really gotten comfortable with one.

I ended up running a bit of a firearms clinic with the girls and Leo, everyone but India wanting to at least try shooting once now that the opportunity was available. I started Ivy, Aria and Vanessa off with a couple of my personal pistols and let Dani take over with them while I showed Erica the new toys. We prioritized safety first, and the girls didn’t do anything stupid trying to be silly.

Dani then got a shot at the new guns along with Kyla while I taught the newer girls about rifles and they each took a couple of shots with the hunting rifles.

By the time lunch was coming around we'd burned through a decent amount of bullets and we all had sore, or achey, shoulders from the kick of the rifles. Dani also had a new appreciation for Kyla, who had proven herself more proficient than the Aussie with both the M4 and the MP5. The two of them were talking guns, wearing clear protective glasses with their hair tied back in pony tails.

"God damn, you two look hot," I laughed as I was packing up the other guns.

"You think?" Dani laughed, hefting the M4 to prop it on her hip in a pose, being careful not to point it anywhere dangerous.

"I should take a picture and send it to Guns and Ammunition magazine," I said.

"How about we just be hot for you and Leo?" Kyla asked as she set down the MP5 and knelt down to kiss me.

"Deal," I said with a grin.

"I dunno, I think I'd make a good firearms model," Dani laughed as she rolled up her shirt to under her breasts and made another silly pose, this time with the M4 and the 1911 pistol in her other hand.

"Alright, Lara Croft," I laughed with her. "Let's put these things away."

We got everything except the M4 packed into the gun safe. The bed of the new truck had a hidden, locked compartment built into it that could hold it, and I was running out of room in the safe. When we walked back into the compound lunch was being served and my girls were discussing who would get to christen which part of the new truck.

I ended up spending the early hours of the afternoon fucking Ivy in the back seat and then Vanessa in the truck bed. Erica was supposed to be next, bent over the hood, but I begged off for a rest as I needed to go check on Mary.

It was weird, driving the new truck off the property and knowing that I was the vehicle on the road that made other drivers check their speedometers quickly and clench their butts if they worried they were going too fast. Not that we were passing many other drivers. Erica came with, holding my hand as we drove after quickly programming the radio to our preferred music stations.

Mary was confused, and Thomas was elated, by the police truck. Erica plucked him up and sat him in the driver's seat, standing outside the open door and showing him the different buttons.

Soon enough Charlie wanted in as well and was standing on the passenger seat and giggling away as she hit the siren button several times rapidly turning it on and off. Once we made her stop because it was so loud she lost interest and just played outside. Thomas took a little while longer for the novelty to wear off, but ended up heading back into the house to leave Mary to talk with us.

I gave her the quick rundown - a more full version this time, about my family land and my old connections to the military and how I was a real Sheriff at this point. The county I was a sheriff of just happened to only consist of our family.

“You do realize this is kind of insane, right?” Mary asked, looking at the truck again.

“That’s what I keep saying,” I sighed.

“But it’s real, and he deserves it all,” Erica said, hugging my arm.

It was at that point that Charlie started wandering in the direction of the road, and the skid marks I’d left on Mary’s front yard. There was little danger even if she did play on the road - there wasn’t a car in sight and little likelihood of one based on the number of homes that were currently taped over with police crime scene tape. Still, there was broken glass hidden in the grass from my truck windows getting shot out, and Mary called Charlie back but the little girl just giggled and gave a ‘come catch me’ look.

“I got it,” Erica said, “Enjoy the break, Momma.” She patted Mary’s shoulder and then jogged after Charlie as the little girl giggled and tried to race away.

“Harri,” Mary said quietly as she watched my Fiancee quickly catch her little girl and scoop her up into her arms as they both laughed. “I don’t mean to pry, especially not after that night, but... who was that woman you were with?”

“Oh,” I said. “Oh! No, Mary, it’s- OK, it’s not easy to explain. That was Kyla, Erica knows everything. If you want the longer story then you’ll probably want a glass of wine and some chairs.”

Mary did, in fact, want the full story and soon we were sitting out in her back yard sharing the last bottle of wine I’d brought her. Erica did most of the storytelling, filling in some of the gaps we’d left out when they’d been introduced, and picking and choosing what juicy details to tell Mary about. She never got raunchy, but she didn’t hide the fact that the vaccine was making us all hornier than normal, and I was doing a good job of keeping up with the demands of four women.

By the end of it, Mary was blushing furiously and more than a little shocked by the scandalous nature of it all, but I could also see her nipples had become a little pokey under her shirt. She had some questions, mostly about how we were keeping everything straight between us, and

how there weren't more catfights going on. She'd been a cheerleader and knew how a group of women could get, especially if they were looking for attention from the same guy.

The two of them had finished the bottle by the time Mary's questions were answered, and the afternoon was wearing on. Charlie had gotten tired of playing in the backyard, but Thomas had come out and occupied her some until he was bored too. Mary had to make them dinner, so Erica and I said our goodbyes - I never did get to fixing her lawn, and as we walked around the side of the house I made a mental note that I should fix the side gate that I'd barrelled through as well. I promised I'd come back the next day with some more groceries and would bring Vanessa to help me out and meet her.

"Harri," Erica said once we were in the truck. "I think she has a thing for you."

"She's married, babe," I said. "And I'm not risking what happened last time with Vanessa."

"It could just be you," Erica said. "We'd all understand. She's cute, especially if she keeps getting back her regular weight. And she needs companionship."

"That doesn't change the fact that she's married," I pointed out.

"We both-

"We don't know anything," I said. "Not for sure. And until that happens, I'm not treading on anyone's wedding vows."

"OK, babe," Erica said, taking my hand from the wheel and holding it. "And just so you know, I'd never break our wedding vows either. Which means they are probably going to be pretty weird if we're going to caveat all the face-sitting and cunt-licking."

I snorted and the truck bounced a little as I laughed.

* * * * *

"Alright, good to know you folks are doing well," I said. "Remember, this thing is real. Mask up and glove up when you're going out, and try to stay to yourselves as much as possible."

"Whatever," said the guy standing in the doorway of the home.

"Thank you so much, Sheriff," the wife said, beaming from beside him. "I really appreciate you taking the time to come out and answer our questions."

"No problem, Ma'am," I said. "Just remember that our system is pretty strained right now, and we want to keep our emergency lines open for the big stuff. You can always leave a message on the State non-emergency line and someone will try to get back to you."

"I totally understand, Sheriff," she nodded along.

I said goodbye to the couple and went back to my truck, stepping up into it and closing the door.

"Just one more," Kyla said from the passenger seat. "Though I'm really not sure why you're doing so many of these. You said you'd help out, not do their jobs for them."

"This *is* me helping out, Kyla," I said, throwing the truck into reverse and pulling out of the driveway. "The Staties are dealing with more looters, and all the other ramped up crime, and they have to be present when the dead are getting pulled out of places. These welfare checks are easy to manage and make people feel better."

"Not us," Kyla pointed out. "I've seen more dead bodies in the last three days than I have in my life."

I'd taken a few days to get acclimated to the truck, the firearms and my new title before I called up the local State Trooper Sergeant and let him know I was ready to fulfill my end of the deal. In that time I'd also fixed up Mary's place with Vanessa, who had become little Charlie's new favourite person, and had spent time out in the forest with Kyla as we talked through the mild nightmares she'd been having.

She'd decided the best thing to do was to find a purpose - she couldn't dance, at least not in the professional way she was trained, and while fucking and brushing up on her housewife skills was a great way to spend her time she needed more than that. So we had decided that she should become my volunteer deputy and partner and come along with me.

The Trooper Sergeant had needed to figure out what he could give us to do, since 'community policing initiatives' often involved things like presence at local fairs, presentations at schools and all sorts of things that were closed down at the moment. He'd landed on following up on the requests for welfare checks from the community as people had been calling in with questions and concerns about what was going on.

Kyla and I had quickly found that there were two kinds of stops we would make - the first was like the one I'd just done. I knocked on the door, and someone answered and were glad to see someone in uniform there to talk to them. Half of the folks tried to invite me in, but I would always refuse and let them know how serious things really were, and we'd talk on the stoop or the porch. A few of them would be agitated and try and shout me down about civil rights and liberties, but I would make a couple of attempts to talk them around and if they refused to listen I'd wish them a good day, and to stay safe, and leave.

The other kind of stop I would knock on the door and no one would answer, even if there was a car in the driveway. Then Kyla would join me, and we'd put on our vests and start walking around the house, peeking in windows. Sometimes I would need to give her a boost up to check

higher ones. And about half the time one of us would see a body, or signs of blood. And we'd back off and call it in, and then we'd leave. We weren't equipped to handle the dead - EMTs weren't doing it either. There was some group organized through the National Guard that were collecting the bodies and bringing them off... somewhere. A State Trooper had to ride with them, and I didn't envy them that job at all.

"Where's the last stop, hon?" I asked, reaching over and rubbing the inside of her thigh to try and comfort her. She didn't need it necessarily, she wasn't worked up, but I could tell she was frustrated with how little we could really do about things. Not for the first time I wondered if maybe this wasn't the 'purpose' Kyla needed right now.

"Head back home," she said. "But keep going up the highway. It's about fifteen minutes passed us. Says it's a place called Valkyrie Falls."

I frowned. "Never heard of it," I said. "Does it say anything else?"

"No," she shook her head.

"Well, I guess we'll find out."

It was a peaceful drive and we made it with the windows down. The hot spring and early summer sun had finally given way to our usual weather, and the soft cloud cover and the light rains that swept through had cooled everything down to the point that we didn't need to blast the air conditioning anymore and could enjoy the natural fresh air. As we drove Kyla took my hand from her thigh and wrapped her fingers in mine, leaning down to kiss my arm softly and then turning to look out the window.

Things with her since the shootout had changed slightly. Or maybe it was since we'd said that we were falling for each other already. Before then, it felt like we'd been making an effort. It had been easy to do, but we were still trying to make it happen. Now... now it felt natural. It felt like those little touches we'd been doing without words all the time. We could sit in silence, just the wind and the soft hum of the radio turned down low between us, and it felt good.

"I love you, by the way," I said.

She turned to me, raising her eyebrows.

"Just thought I should let you know - I'm done falling, and it's real. I love you."

"I'll never stop falling," she said. "I never *want* to stop falling. Every time I think I see who you are, Harrison Black, I quickly find you're deeper and wider than I could imagine. I love you too."

"God, if I'd known you would get poetic I would have tried harder to come up with something like that," I teased her softly with a smile.

She laughed warmly and squeezed my fingers. "I wasn't trying to be. And I liked the way you said it."

We drove past the entrance to the site, the booth standing empty, and continued up the highway just over fifteen minutes before Kyla signalled I should make a left into a little side road that looked like any other that dotted the area and led up to someone's cabin. Instead, after half a minute of driving down the brush-lined single lane, we came to a gate. It was black steel, covering the entire roadway, and mounted into cement pillars that had been sunk into the ground. A little plaque on one of them read '*Valkyrie Falls*', and there was a buzzer intercom just below it.

"Weird," I said.

I put the truck in park and we got out. Looking around, there wasn't anything but trees and brush around us except the path back to the road, and the path beyond the gate.

At the buzzer, I pushed the button and the little speaker grill made a staticy buzz noise. We waited about thirty seconds and nothing happened, so I pushed it again a little longer.

"Oh, shit. Hello?" A woman's voice came from the other end.

"Yeah, hi. This is Sheriff Black, I'm here to do a welfare check?"

"Oh fuck, um, one minute," she said. Then, presumably without taking her finger off the button, the woman yelled to someone. "Abi! The cops are at the gate!"

"Really? Alright, tell them I'll be down there in two minutes," another voice called faintly.

"Alright, I will," said the first voice, then she must have turned back to the speaker. "The owner will be down in two minutes."

"Thanks," I said as I grinned at Kyla. I released the button and went and leaned against the front bumper of the truck.

"Well, it's probably not a cult," Kyla said.

"Doesn't sound like it," I agreed. "It's got to be some sort of business, right?"

"Maybe it's some Bed and Breakfast place," Kyla guessed. "It would make sense."

"Guess we'll find out," I chuckled.

It took a little longer than two minutes for someone to come walking down the dirt road beyond the path, and I was a little shocked by her. This woman had to be my height, maybe even a little taller, and she was *built*. She was wearing a jacket but it was open, showing off an athletic bra and a set of abs that rivaled any pro athlete I'd ever seen. Her legs were clad in a skin-tight yoga pant, making her thickly muscled thighs and calves obvious as well. She had broad shoulders, though maybe not so broad as mine, and a wide jaw as she smiled before putting a mask on as she got closer. Her dirty blonde hair was pulled back in a simple pony tail.

"Hi, I'm the owner," she said as she got closer. "Can I help you?"

"Abigail Jónsson?" Kyla asked.

"That's me," the giant of a woman nodded. Her accent was odd, maybe nordic, though she didn't didn't stumble through any words and was perfectly clear.

"I'm Sheriff Black, this is my deputy Kyla," I said. "Did you call in a wellness check request?"

"Um, sort of?" Abigail said. "I called in with some questions about what was all going on and what we should be doing about the pandemic. Different news stations and sites are saying different things."

"Totally understandable," I nodded. "The State Troopers are super busy right now, so I'm sorry if it took some time for us to get back to you. We'd be happy to give you a quick rundown of things if you'd like."

"Sure," she nodded. "Do you want to come up to the property? I'm sure all the girls would like to hear something official."

"As long as we stay outside," I nodded.

"Great," she nodded, and then she unlocked the gate. "You can drive on up, theres a parking lot where you can turn around when you leave instead of backing out."

"I'll bring it up," Kyla said. "You walk with her."

"Sure," I said and handed Kyla the keys.

I was already masked, so I fell in beside Abigail as we walked. At my best guess she was probably an inch taller than me, which meant she had to be something like six and a half feet tall.

"So what kind of business is this exactly?" I asked.

"It's a women-only athletic retreat," Abigail said as we walked. "My business partner and I bought the place a couple of years ago and built it up with money we got from our sponsors."

"What do you compete in?" I asked.

"CrossFit competitions," she said. "Though I was already backing away a bit from the big ones before the pandemic to focus more on the business. But we provide a retreat for any woman who wants to take their physical training super seriously."

"I had no idea you gals were up here," I said. "I live about fifteen minutes down the highway."

"Mmm," Abigail nodded. "We've kept things pretty quiet. We're not looking for regular gym goers locally, we're really focused on high end athletes. We've had a couple of Olympians come and train for a month or two, and several national soccer players during their off season, plus CrossFitters and weight lifters and that sort of thing. Hey, did you see all the commotion that happened a week ago up your way?"

"Commotion?" I asked.

"Lots of big army trucks and stuff," she said.

"Ah, yeah," I said. "That- Well, that's a bit of a story I can tell you about."

We made a turn through the trees, Kyla keeping the truck a dozen paces back behind us, and the space opened up into a shaded clearing. The building itself looked like it was almost pre-fab concrete and not the cabin I was expecting. Knowing now that it was an athletic retreat, I thought it was pretty impressive and looked a lot nicer than I expected. Where it wasn't concrete it was tinted glass windows, and the building itself was built into a U-shape with a central courtyard that was fenced off from the little dirt parking lot that had almost a dozen cars parked in it, but could hold almost double that number. Inside the courtyard was an outdoor gym with a half dozen women pumping iron, doing chinups and pushups, and generally sweating their asses off.

"Wow," I said. "This is... wow."

"Thanks," Abigail said, the grin behind her mask obvious. "We can max out at twenty athletes in residence at a time, plus me and my business partner and a nutritionist chef we had on staff, but we're down to ten right now since we went into quarantine and several of the ladies decided to drive back to wherever home was for them to ride this out. Think the courtyard would work out for your talk?"

"Sure," I said. "Just round everyone up and I'll meet you in there."

“Great,” Abi nodded and jogged off as I went to where Kyla was parking the truck. I didn’t miss the fact that she had a great, muscled butt that bounced as she moved.

“This place is impressive,” Kyla said as she got out of the truck and handed me back the keys. We were both dressed in black button-down shirts and black pants and wore the utility belts to try and make us at least look a little official - I didn’t even technically have a badge yet. We could have worn the bullet proof vests with the ‘Sheriff’ patches, but that felt a little militaristic for the duties we were doing and could put people more on edge.

“It’s full of athletes caught out here in the middle of training,” I said.

“Very cool,” Kyla nodded. “You really didn’t know this was here?”

“Not at all,” I said. I started leading her towards the door in the fence that Abigail had used. “Apparently it’s a well-kept secret, which makes sense I guess if any of them are trying to stay away from cameras or stalkers or something.”

“Fair,” Kyla nodded. “What do you think, should I sign up for a membership? I haven’t worked out properly in months and Ivy’s routine works decently, but I could use some weights.”

“If you do, I might,” I chuckled. “I could do to pump some iron.”

“Sorry, hon,” she smiled at me through the mask. “Ladies only, remember?”

We stepped through the gate and closed it behind us, looking around at the equipment and the women that were finishing off their sets and starting to gather. There was a variety of equipment, but it all looked like it had been chosen to be permanently outside. The free weights were heavy iron on stainless steel racks, the fixed equipment made of the same metal. There were open tracks with big heavy ropes and old tractor tires.

And then there were the women.

They seemed to be in all sizes, but one thing was clear - they were all fit. Whether squat and powerful, or lean and graceful, each one had clearly defined muscles.

“Hey,” one woman said, bouncing over seemingly full of energy after she racked a couple of free weights and shook out her arms. “So, is the world ending or what?”

“Not quite,” I said, trying to project warmth through my mask. None of the athletes were wearing one, but if they were all quarantined together and weren’t going out, then it made sense that they could do that. “And we’ll try to make sure this little paradise you’re in doesn’t suffer anything.”

“Cool,” she said, then held out her hand. “Josie Draper, better known as Joss the Boss.”

“Nice to meet you, Josie,” I said, peeling off my glove and shaking her hand, then taking out a bottle of sanitizer. Kyla did the same thing.

“What, am I that gross?” Josie asked.

“Not at all,” I assured her. “But this thing is very real, and we can’t be too cautious. Right now Kyla and I are more of a threat to you than you are to us, so sanitize.”

“Sure,” she nodded and accepted the spritz of sanitizer. Josie was a pretty woman with a sharp nose and a nice smile, though her natural expression seemed to be more of a frown with a dominant curve to her upper lip. Most of her hair, likely brunette based on the roots but mostly dyed a silvery blonde, was back in a ponytail for her workout except for two shocks of bangs that framed her face. She was wearing a peach coloured athletic bra with a thin white, baggy overshirt overtop, and lime green stretchy shorts. She also had a full sleeve of tattoos in a variety of designs down her right, muscled arm. Her entire body was muscled, really, though she was striking a balance between the heavier build of Abigail and something more lean.

“What sport do you compete in?” Kyla asked.

“I’m actually a professional wrestler,” Josie said with a flash of a grin. “I’ve worked the Indie circuits for a few years and before all this I had a call-up to try out for the big times, so I booked time out here to try and get myself in the best shape of my life. I’m fire on the mic, and I have the technical skills, but I lack certain assets the TV likes.” She grabbed her chest, which was certainly on the small side compared to her body proportionately. “But then Quarantine happened, and everything went into lockdown and I wasn’t going to have anywhere to work, so when Abi offered to let us stay if we could chip in for groceries there wasn’t a shot I was passing up that opportunity.”

“That explains the nickname,” I nodded along.

“Mhmm,” Josie grinned. “Joss the Boss, corporate queen, ready to lay the smackdown on any bitch with the gall to challenge my authority.” She raised an arm and flexed as she grinned, her bicep impressive.

Abigail came out of the main building from what looked like a big eating area with a few tables, followed by a few more women, and Josie said it was nice to meet us and went back to the group. I couldn’t help a glance down at her ass, which was of course perfect.

“Sheriff Black, this is my business partner Sara Sigurdsdottir,” Abigail said, introducing us to the other blonde giantess. She wasn’t quite as tall as Abigail or myself, but was still taller than most of the other women who were gathering around. She was pretty in a different way than Abigail, with slightly sunken eyes and a sharper chin, but similar body proportions.

“Nice to meet you, sir,” Sara said, her accent thicker than Abigail's.

“You too, Miss,” I said. “This is my deputy Kyla.”

They said hello and soon the two women gave way so that I could speak to the whole group. I let them know that I was impressed with their commitment to safety and following the quarantine guidelines and that unfortunately things were about as bad as people were saying. The pandemic was as dangerous as the news reported, and staying quarantined was the best option for all of them to stay safe and healthy. I ran them through the steps to keep themselves as safe as possible, basic stuff that they were already following, and to try and limit any outings they made off the retreat campus. Several of the women had questions and concerns. Some couldn't reach family members or friends and asked if I could help with that - I had to tell them it would be best to call in a welfare check to whatever local police department their loved ones were located near, but to likely expect a slow response due to the overloaded system. One woman asked why Kyla and I were still doing this if it was so bad, and that brought a little smirk from me as I saw Kyla give me a look.

That led to me giving a brief explanation that I was ‘newly elected’ to my position, and was helping out the State Troopers. I also told, in brief, the story of the outbreak on the construction site to really nail home the importance of following the rules. Kyla chipped in information here and there that she thought they would need, and fielded a couple of questions including one saucy one about if it was hard working with a big hunk all the time that got all the girls laughing. Kyla just winked and said she'd figured it out pretty quickly, which then got some ‘oooohs’ from the little crowd of women.

When they ran out of questions, Abigail took charge and soon several of the women were starting up their workout routines again, while others were sent inside with Sara to help prepare the evening meals for the different nutritional needs of the levels of athletes.

“Do you want to see some of the property?” she asked, raising her eyebrows a bit hopefully. “I love showing off our namesake.”

“Sure,” I said after checking with Kyla that she'd be fine taking a bit more time here. “We'd love to.”

“Good,” Abigail nodded, and then turned to the women around us. “Spencer, we're heading up to the falls. Come on.”

Spencer turned out to be a shorter woman wearing a bulky, baggy sweater that hid most of her physique. She was very pretty in a middle-America sort of way with a roundish face and big blue eyes, and looked like she could have fit right into a period drama about pilgrims just as easily as modern life. She had a mass of thick, golden blonde hair piled up on her head messily in a loose bun. She smiled eagerly when she heard our destination and jogged off to get her boots.

The younger woman joined us as we rounded the side of the building and found the head of a decently worn trail marked by a couple of posts in the ground. Kyla shot me a quick look and then joined Spencer as a walking partner, starting up the path and chatting with her, as Abigail and I walked behind them.

“So if I could ask, Abigail, where are you from?” I asked her to make conversation. “Your accent is lovely, but I can’t place it.”

“Iceland,” Abigail said. “Sara and I both emigrated here a few years ago because the opportunities were greater here in the United States for us with CrossFit sponsorships and competitions. And no, not all Icelander women are as big as us. Do you know the man who played the Mountain on Game of Thrones?”

“Of course I do,” I said. “Great show-”

“-Except for the ending,” she nodded with a smile behind her mask. “Yes, everyone thinks so. Anyways, he is my third cousin and Sara’s fourth. We aren’t as big as him, obviously, but the genetics certainly help.”

“Well, I think you look amazing, and the hard work and dedication you clearly put in is really impressive,” I said.

“Thank you,” she said, smiling with her eyes at the compliment. “But you do not look so shabby yourself. Do you work out?”

“I did a lot, but haven’t for a few years,” I said. “I really need to get back to it.”

She asked how I fell out of it, and that led me to explain my background in football and the military, and life since the military. I’d kept myself in the gym while I’d lived in Portland, but ever since moving out to the family homestead, I’d stopped since there weren’t any good gyms around (that I knew of) and I had more than enough activity outside to not put on too many extra pounds.

“You should come get a workout in with me,” Abigail offered. “See what you can do. You have the shoulders and arms to really bulk up if you want.”

“That would be nice, but I thought your place was women only?” I teased.

“Ah,” she scoffed playfully. “The perks of being the owner. Plus, I think it would be good inspiration for the girls to be able to drool over you from afar just a little bit.”

“Healthy competition, huh?” I asked.

“Exactly,” she nodded. We were catching up to Kyla and Spencer on the path, who had stopped ahead of us, and I soon found out why.

“Wow,” I said, my eyes going wide.

“This is why we named the place Valkyrie Falls,” Abigail said with a big grin.

It was like the side of the rocky terrain had been sheared by some big knife in ages past. The cliff wall was maybe twenty feet high, and a pretty little waterfall had dug a groove into the centre of it and trickled out into a pool below before winding off in a stream through the brush that I would bet connected to the Nehalem River just like the spring pond and stream on my own land. The thing that really made the place stand out was the water against the rock face that seemed to glitter even in the shaded light of the cloudy sky.

“The best we can figure when we hiked down to check is that someone broke apart these things called thunder eggs and they wedged the shards into the rockface,” Abigail explained. “We don’t know who, or how, or when, but we’re just enjoying it. If we tell any experts, Sara and I have a feeling we’ll lose it.”

“Definitely don’t tell anyone,” I agreed, shaking my head as I looked at the pretty display. I could only imagine what Kara would think if she heard about this kind of a site - undoubtedly there was some old story from the Tribe about a glittering waterfall or something, and they would try their damndest to grab up the land as a heritage site.

It felt weird, knowing that it was here. Only fifteen minutes down the road from the place I’d grown up, hidden by the woods.

“Alright, Spencer,” Abigail said. “You know the drill.”

Spencer smiled and went over to a big tree that had a low-hanging branch. The branch itself looked oddly worn, and I quickly realized why as the thickset girl jumped and grabbed ahold of it, adjusted her grip, and then started doing chin-ups.

“She’s our intern,” Abigail explained to Kyla and I as my eyebrows slowly rose at the steady pace the girl was able to do a dozen chin-ups in a row before dropping to her feet and putting her hands down to her knees as she breathed steadily. “Spencer is a pretty successful fitness influencer who wants to learn from the best trainers.”

“Well, I can tell she has the face for Instagram,” I said.

“Oh, she has more than that. Watch this,” Abigail said. “Come on, Spence. One more set.”

“OK,” the woman said with a tired smile and after one more big breath she pulled off the big baggy sweater she was wearing and jumped up to catch the branch again.

Spencer was yoked. She had amazing arms as she started her next set of chin-ups, and they might have been her most impressive feature on any other woman. Her hips and thighs were astounding, as thick as my own, and while her torso wasn't as obviously muscled as Abigail or Josie, I could see the power she had in her core. But to top her off, she had big tits. Maybe even bigger than Erica's. It was hard to tell with them crammed into her heavy-duty athletic bra, but she was clearly blessed in the chest department.

"Holy fuck," Kyla muttered. "She could turn me gay and I'd call her mommy."

"Right?" Abigail chuckled quietly. "Give me one more Spencer, get your chest up there... perfect!"

Spencer dropped back to the ground, panting hard from the exertion of the sets and then stretched out her arms which did amazing things to her body.

"That was really impressive," I said as she came back over to us, bundling her sweater to find the arm holes and pull it back over her head.

"Thanks," she said with a soft blush and a smile. "It's fun. I've been working out since I was thirteen."

"Well, it shows," I said, judging she was probably in her early twenties. "Great breath control when you were doing it, too."

"Picked that up from Abi here," Spencer smiled. "She's got my reps up almost double to what I had last summer."

"Any openings for new clients?" Kyla asked Abigail. "I'm a different kind of fit than all your clients that I saw, but I was telling Harri that I could use a workout."

"If you think it's safe, I wouldn't mind if you came out," Abigail said. "And I bet Spencer would love to put some of what she's learned to use on the coaching front."

"You could be my first real client," Spencer said. "If that's OK, of course."

"Sure," Kyla said and started the two of them back down the path. "Sounds like fun. Now, what do you know about dance and flexibility?"

I took another look at the falls while I stood with Abi before following, giving the younger women a chance at a private word about whatever they were going to work out.

"So it's bad?" Abigail asked me. "Out there?"

"It is," I nodded. "I- I didn't want to panic anyone, but you should know that if anyone talks about wanting to go into Portland, or travelling anywhere really, it's a very bad idea."

"I appreciate you telling me the truth," she said with a sigh.

"I appreciate you sharing this with me," I said, gesturing back at the waterfall. "It's a gift."

"Well, you're the first man up here since we built the place," she said. "I figured I should get an outsider perspective."

"Keep it secret, keep it safe," I said, quoting Gandalf.

She gave me a look. "Really?"

"What?" I asked.

She just shook her head and chuckled before starting us back down the path towards the retreat. We chatted a bit more about her background competing, and by the end of the walk Abigail was inviting both Kyla and I up for a workout and trading numbers with us. Spencer had disappeared as soon as we got back to the parking lot, apparently excited to start building out a comprehensive workout plan for Kyla, but Josie shot us a whistle from the outdoor gym area and waved a goodbye of her own.

Once we were in the truck, Kyla lowered her mask and smirked at me. "Valkyrie Falls, huh?" she asked.

I just laughed and shook my head, putting the truck into drive and starting us back down the path to the road. Abigail would follow us on foot to lock up the gate again when we were gone.

"Abigail liked you," Kyla said. "Would you go for a woman like her?"

"She was just being friendly," I said. "They've been isolated up here in a group for months. We were a couple of friendly new faces, that's all."

"Josie liked the looks of you, too," Kyla said.

"How would you know that?" I asked.

"Call it women's intuition," Kyla said. "Plus, Spencer asked if you gave good hugs, which I think was innocent-girl talk for her being horny for you."

"Please tell me you're not texting all of this to your group chat right now," I sighed, glancing over and seeing her smirking as she typed away quickly on her phone.

“OK, I won’t tell you,” she chuckled.

“I am so in for a razzing when we get back, aren’t I?”

“Of course you are, hon,” she said, breaking a smile. “Of course you are.”