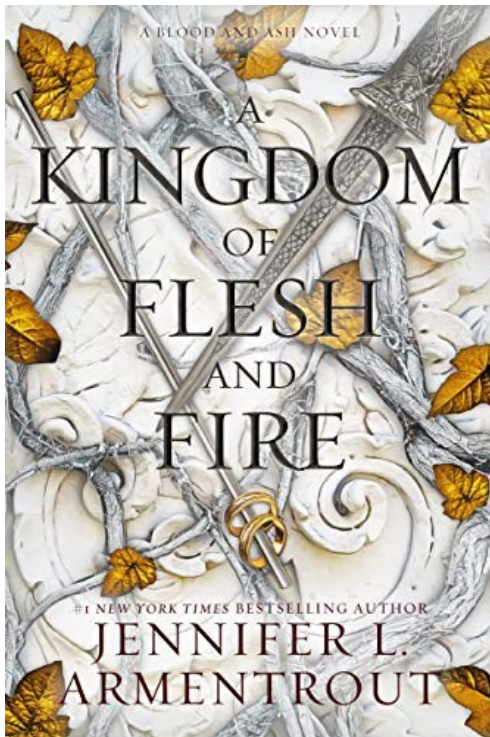


A KINGDOM OF FLESH AND FIRE



Adult

By Jennifer L. Armentrout

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CONTENT WARNING

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Book Summary:

A young woman tries to distinguish truth and from lies as she falls in love with a powerful man.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity; alcohol use; and violence.

4 /5

Not For Minors
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
59	"Your penchant for violence isn't anything to be ashamed of. Not with me. Haven't I told you it turns me on?"
60	Casteel caught my hand. "Then I guess it would be repetitive of me to tell you how much you're turning me on now?"
61	Casteel hauled me against his chest without warning. Before I knew what he was even about, his mouth was on mine, stealing my breath and scattering my thoughts. The kiss was hot and raw, a clash of lips and teeth. I was reminded again of how, as Hawke, he'd held himself back when he kissed me, and how much he hid. It wasn't just the fangs, it was also the power- his power.
168	"That wasn't the only games being played here, Princess." His thumb moved along the inside of my hip, causing my stomach to whoosh.
188	Muscles curled low in my stomach, and I really responded to his heated stare, and the glimpse of those fangs. It answered with a heady flush that I could only hope wasn't as visible as it felt. It also called forth a sharp, intense throbbing that settled in an area that made me want to squeeze my legs together. And I really hated the knowledge that he knew exactly how I responded to him.
251	"Just pretend?" I trembled as the tips of his fingers skated down the side of my throat, around to the nape of my neck. "Pretend." His lips hovered above mine once more, right there, teasing.
252	Impatience burned through me. Lifting my hands from the shelf, I gripped the front of his tunic and pulled him against me. "I thought you were going to kiss me." "Isn't that what I'm doing?" I shook my head. "That's not what you can do." He chuckled against my lips. "You're right. It's not." Then he truly kissed me. He claimed my lips as if he were staking a claim to my very soul. The possibility that he was already well on his way to doing so should've served as a dire warning, but I was far too immersed, far too gone at the feel of him, lost in how demanding his lips were. He tugged on my lower lip with his fangs, urging my lips to part. Gasping, I yielded to him. The kiss deepened, and his tongue slid over mine. I let out a little breathless moan against his hot mouth. The taste of him, his smell...all of him invaded me, scalding me. We kissed and kissed, and I...I still wanted more. Wanted to keep pretending as liquid fire poured through me, erasing the icy touch of Lord Chaney, washing away the suffocating feel of the room where death had surely come and gone by now, and all the unknown of what awaited. He knew this, sensed this, and he gave me what I desperately needed. His hand finally, finally moved from my cheek, trailing down, smoothing over my breast. There was a reverence to his touch, as if he worshiped me as he slid his hand under the hem of my sweater. Flesh against flesh. My body jerked as his fingers skimmed over the patchwork of scars and then moved farther up, over the lines of my ribs, the bottom swell of my breast. I moaned into his mouth as his thumb reached the turgid peak. Sharp spikes of pleasure twisted through me. He made a deep, dark sound that rumbled through me as the hand at my neck

Page	Content
	<p>dropped to the small of my back. He pulled me away from the cupboard, against the hard length of his body, and still, he devoured me with his lips, branded me with his touch. The hunger in him should've scared me, but all it did was inflame the same need within me.</p> <p>We were only pretending...</p> <p>But this felt so very real.</p> <p>He felt all too real, his lips against mine, my chin—his touch at my breast, my back, and against my body. My head fell back as his mouth trailed a blazing path to the healed bite. I felt the hot wetness of his tongue, the wicked sharpness of his fangs as he scraped them along my flesh. I cried out, my entire body tensing, coiling in delight and forbidden anticipation.</p> <p>"Poppy," he breathed, maybe pleaded. I wasn't sure. His tongue flicked over my skin.</p> <p>Would he bite me?</p> <p>Did I want that?</p> <p>Would I stop him?</p> <p>My body already knew the answer as I reached up, sinking my hand into the soft strands of his hair.</p> <p>"You want that?" he whispered against my sensitive skin. "Don't you?"</p> <p>I shuddered, unable to answer. "You do."</p> <p>An aching pulse stole my breath, and then, in a feat of impressive strength, he shifted his hands under my thighs and lifted me as he turned. My back hit the door as he hooked my legs around his waist. His body met mine, and he pressed in, the hardest parts of him against the softest parts of me.</p> <p>I moaned as his mouth closed over my neck. He drew the skin between his sharp teeth, and my hips lifted from the door, pushing against his.</p> <p>He drew harder on the skin, wringing another cry from deep within me, but he didn't break the flesh. He didn't draw blood. Instead, he teased and taunted until every nerve ending felt stretched to its breaking point, until I rocked against him, with him.</p> <p>And when his mouth finally returned to mine, I knew we were both quickly losing control.</p> <p>We were pretending.</p> <p>Even as he kissed as if he drank from my lips. Even as he ground against me, and I dug my fingers into his shoulders and then the material covering his chest. We were pretending.</p> <p>Slowly, the kisses slowed, his hips still pinning mine to the door. He was breathing as raggedly as I was when he lifted his mouth from mine. "I think...I think that is enough." Was it?</p> <p>Letting my head fall back against the door, I nodded as I swallowed. It had to be enough because this was insanity—it was leading to more insanity. It seemed like he was minutes away from stripping me bare and taking me against the door. It felt like I was seconds away from begging him to. My grip on his shirt loosened as I opened my eyes.</p> <p>Casteel stared down at me, his lips swollen, eyes a vivid, molten gold. Gods, he was shamelessly beautiful, and he looked as thoroughly undone as I felt.</p> <p>He made a deep, rumbling sound.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>"Don't look at me like that." "Like what?" I didn't recognize the throaty voice. "Like you don't think that was enough." His hand smoothed over my hip, cupping my rear as he pulled my lower body away from the door and against his ridge of thick hardness. He caught my gasp with a quick, deep kiss I wanted to sink into. But the kiss ended, and he gently eased my legs down.</p>
266	<p>"There's just us. No one else." His lips brushed my cheek, causing me to gasp. "Like earlier, in the pantry, we can pretend." I closed my eyes. "Right now, in the dark, I'm just Hawke." His arm eased from my waist as his hand drifted over my hip and down my thigh, to where the gown tangled around my legs. "You're just Poppy, and I can help you." Maybe it was the nightmare. It could've been the darkness and the sudden, throbbing ache that sprang to life. Or perhaps it was because in the darkness we could be Hawke and Poppy, with no past and no future. And pretending... pretending made none of this real. Maybe all of those things were the reason I turned my head to his. Our lips brushed. "Pretend," I whispered, and I...I kissed Casteel let me explore his mouth, holding himself still, all except for his hand. He slowly drew his palm up my hip, my stomach, and moved it between my breasts, dragging the hem of the gown up until it gathered below my neck. Cool air followed, teasing my exposed skin. I kissed him, trembling when I felt his palm on my breast. The tip hardened to an almost painful point. His thumb moved lazily over the peak and then to the other as he said, "I wish you could see what I'm about to do." I wet my lips as he pulled away, his thumb dragging over the rosy, puckered skin. Then he did something with his thumb and forefinger, causing my entire body to jolt, and a rush of wet warmth to pool between my thighs. "Gods," I gasped. "Mmm." His mouth coasted along the skin of my neck again. "You like that?" There was no point in answering that. He knew it, and he did it again. My hips moved on reflex, spurred on by the rapidly building ache between my thighs. He hadn't—we hadn't—touched like this since the woods after I'd stabbed him, but my body hadn't forgotten. I was blossoming with heat. His mouth closed over my breast, and the combination of his tongue and the sharp rasp of his fangs caused me to kick my head back. A breathy moan left me as my eyes peeled open wide. He tugged at the skin with his mouth as his hand drifted down my stomach and lower, over the very center of me. It was the lightest, softest touch, teasing and taunting. "You're very wet, Poppy," he murmured against the aching peak of my breast. "I like that. A lot." Incapable of embarrassment or being shocked by the rawness of his words, I could only whimper as his finger moved in slow, lazy strokes. "I also like how quickly you respond to my touch." He nipped at the skin of my other breast as he swirled his thumb around the sensitive flesh. "Want me to do something about it?" I panted for breath. "Yes."</p>

Page	Content
	<p>Casteel answered by pressing down on the bundle of nerves. Crying out, I arched against his hand, and I felt like I was drenched, drowning already. Just as his mouth closed over my breast once more, he slipped a finger inside me. A strangled sort of sound left me, and there was no room for thoughts of a night from long ago or worries for the morning that was quickly approaching. My heart thundered in my chest.</p> <p>He dragged that finger in and out as he lifted his head, and even though I couldn't see, I knew he could. I knew he watched his hand between my spread thighs. I knew he was fixated on what he was doing, on the way I lifted my hips to meet his thrusts. He watched as he eased another finger into the tight wetness. My eyes drifted shut again, and I knew this was what he'd wanted to do earlier, in the pantry. I gave in to this, into the wet heat and the darkness and the wickedness of his touch. Casteel groaned as I ground my hips against his hand.</p> <p>"That's it." His voice was rough. "Ride my fingers."</p> <p>I did just that, rocking against his hands as the stirrings of release ratcheted up. Then tension, still painfully unfamiliar, spun and spun until it felt like too much.</p> <p>"Oh, gods, I can't.. ." I pressed my hips against the bed.</p> <p>"You can." He kept going, thrusting his fingers inside me. "You will."</p> <p>It was too much, too intense, and there was no escaping it. He hooked his fingers deep inside me, and lava flowed through my blood. And just when I thought I would surely erupt into flames...</p> <p>"That's it." His voice was gruff and thick.</p> <p>Biting down on my lip as the tension curled and twisted deeper, tighter, I buried my face against the crook of his arm. His lips brushed my cheek as he pressed his thumb to the tight bundle of nerves. My hips lifted from the bed as all the tension shattered. It was like lightning in my veins. The sweetest kind of agony, scattering my thoughts as the release rippled and eased as he withdrew his fingers. Sated and stunned, I went utterly boneless, exhausted and limp as Casteel gathered me close. The blanket settled over me— over us—as he pulled me against his chest. Under my cheek, his heart thudded steadily.</p>
272	<p>I didn't dare breathe too deeply as his fingers worked the buttons under my throat. I tried not to focus on how close he was or how- I swallowed a gasp as the backs of his fingers brushed my breasts, reminding me of last night.</p>
286	<p>"Impersonal? Is that so?" His hand drifted lower, over the flap of buttons on my pants.</p> <p>My breath hitched. "Yes."</p> <p>"Truly?"</p> <p>"Yes," I hissed.</p> <p>"Interesting. It didn't seem impersonal last night," he murmured, and then caught the lobe of my ear between his teeth. I gasped, my eyes wide as the little nip set fire to my blood. Slowly freeing the sensitive flesh, he chuckled as his lips touched the space behind my ear, and then I felt the indecent thrill of his sharp teeth dragging over the skin of my throat.</p> <p>For a moment, all thoughts scattered. My boiling blood roared in my ears, through my body, tightening my breasts and settling between my legs, where his fingers ventured dangerously close. They made those tiny circles that tugged at</p>

Page	Content
	<p>the seam of my pants, rubbing it against my very center. My back arched without thought, and a hidden, reckless part of me wished I could will those fingers lower—"And now?" he repeated. "Sure doesn't feel impersonal."</p>
298	<p>"Are you part dog, or do you like to suck on things?" he asked, switching the club to his left hand. "If you beg nicely, I got something you can suck on." He reached down, grabbing what I could only assume he was referencing. "Your face may be a mess, but your mouth looks just fine."</p>
319	<p>Not only that, the bed was wrapped around my waist, my hip— My eyes flew open. Tiny particles of dust floated in the morning sunlight seeping through the terrace doors across from the bed. The curtains had been tied back, and I knew I hadn't done that before I fell asleep. And I wasn't lying on the bed, at least not completely. What was under my cheek wasn't a pillow. It was a chest that rose and fell steadily. Beneath my hand wasn't the worn texture of the blanket, but a stomach. The bed wasn't wrapped around me. It was a heavy arm over my waist and a callused palm against my hip—my bare hip. Oh my gods, I was using Casteel as my own personal pillow. And based on the fact that I was lying on him, it was me who had sought him out in my sleep. When had he even returned to the room? Did that matter at the moment? It didn't as I became aware of every place our bodies met. This was nothing like curling up together while camping on the road. There was no excuse for being all tangled up in him. I lay there frozen, my breath in my throat. My breasts were pressed against the side of his body. One of his thighs was tucked between mine, the soft buckskin of his breeches nestled against a very, very intimate part of me. The robe had parted below the sash in my sleep. There was nothing between his palm and my skin, and that hand spanned my hip, the tips of his fingers resting against the curve of my rear. A sweet, hot feeling swept over me, and my eyes drifted shut. I knew I shouldn't feel this. It was reckless and stupid and felt oh so dangerous. Instead of basking in how his body felt against mine, I should be plotting a way to somehow extract myself from him without waking him up, but my brain went in a totally different direction. It was almost like I could...pretend again. That this was okay. That Hawke was holding me in his sleep, and that this was just one of many mornings we woke up like this. He'd kiss me and touch me, fitting our bodies together, and this would happen because we were lovers about to marry for no reason other than the fact that we wanted and desired and needed each other. My breath caught again, and my pulse quickened. Heated lightning danced over my skin and zipped through my veins. I could almost imagine the hand on my hip slipping more to my behind and then lower still. Those fingers of his were capable of eliciting sensations I hadn't even known were possible, not even after reading the scandalous diary of Miss Willa Colyns. My entire world concentrated on the memory of his fingers skimming over the sensitive skin of my inner thighs and then slipping inside me. A throbbing ache settled in my core, and a tiny part of me wished I had never experienced such pleasure at his hands. If I hadn't, I wouldn't want this now, but that was only a small part. The rest couldn't regret</p>

Page	Content
	<p>experiencing something so powerful and beautiful when I'd spent most of my life being forbidden to know what pleasure felt like.</p> <p>But I shouldn't be thinking about this— about what it had been like for him and me, and how he made me feel even now. Because in the early morning hours, when it was just me, I could admit that what he elicited from me went beyond the physical.</p> <p>It didn't seem to matter that I really shouldn't desire any of this, but my body didn't care about what was right and wrong. I still shivered with need as my toes curled.</p> <p>Casteel shifted against me, and my heart seemed to stop in my chest. He was asleep, but could he still... sense my desire? His arm tightened, pulling me more firmly against him. His thigh pressed against the apex of mine. A shocking, aching pulse ricocheted through me in hot, tight waves. Suddenly, even my brain betrayed me. I was bombarded with images and sensations—the wicked memory of his mouth nuzzling my neck, the slide and scrape of sharp teeth, and the burst of pain that had so quickly turned into intense pleasure. There was a wildfire in my blood, pooling in my core. In the furthest reaches of my mind, I knew this was the slippery slope I feared would come with this... arrangement of ours. Sharing a bed. Pretending to be... in love. Touching and kissing. Pretending...</p>
324	<p>Shock splashed through me as I felt the curve of his chin against my lower stomach. Oh, gods, what was he doing? I snatched up the blade, sitting up as far as I could with one hand still pinned to the bed by his. I pressed the dagger against his neck.</p> <p>He seemed completely unaware as warm breath danced lower. Tension clamped down on my chest, and coiled even lower- unexpectedly and crazily. Because he was-</p> <p>Oh, gods.</p> <p>It didn't matter what I thought. Neither did the indecent throbbing echoing from within me or the way my entire body seemed to clench tightly as his breath neared the space between my thighs. Another growl came from the back of his throat, this one different, deeper and coarser.</p> <p>...My heart pounded as I tugged on my left arm, the one still pinned to the bed beside my waist. His grip loosened, and he then let go, but he didn't move. I was overly aware of how close his breath, his mouth was to the most sensitive part of me and where I knew a major artery waited. His head turned just the slightest bit, and his chin grazed the crease of my thigh. Several inches lower, closer to the knee, were the gouges in my skin that looked like claw marks but had been made by the teeth of a Craven. I felt none of the horror and fear as I had then, nor the revulsion and certainty of death. All I felt was a delicious ache.</p> <p>The hand that held the knife to his throat trembled as a forbidden pulse of arousal thundered through me. It was wrong, and I shouldn't feel the heat, the dampness gathering there. But it also felt right, and so natural, even while none of this seemed natural.</p> <p>He made that sound again, the rolling rumble, and my entire body shuddered. I could barely breathe, let alone think. My senses were firing all at once, and when he dipped his head, my arm went lax, bending to accommodate. My fingers spasmed open, and the knife fell to the bed beside me.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>What are you doing? What is wrong with you? What are you — ?</p> <p>He gripped my hips with both hands, lifting me, and then his mouth was on me, obliterating the panicky questions. The air left my lungs as his tongue sliced over the very center of me. This wasn't like the last time, the only time. There was no teasing, slow exploration as he guided me into the wicked act. This time, he devoured me, capturing my flesh with his mouth, delving into the warmth and dampness with firm, determined strokes of his tongue. He fed from me as if I were the sweetest nectar, the source of the very life force he needed. I was consumed.</p> <p>Crying out as my head kicked back, I was lost in the raw sensations. My body moved of its own accord—or tried to. He held me firmly in place, and there was no matching the sinful assault, no escaping it even if I wanted to. Fierce heat built inside me, twisting and tightening as everything in me seemed to concentrate on where he was. My back arched as I grasped the sheets fitted to the bed. His lips moved against me, his tongue inside me, and the sharp graze of his teeth scraped the bundle of nerves. The sensation echoed in the healed bite mark on my neck. It was too much. I screamed as I shattered, breaking apart into a thousand satin-garbed shards of pleasure as intense, stunning release rolled through me in undulating waves.</p> <p>I was still trembling when I felt him lift his head. Blinking my eyes open in a daze, I lowered my chin and what little air had entered my lungs left me.</p>
327	<p>His entire body jerked as if an invisible hand had grabbed him by his shoulder and pulled. Chest rising and falling in rapid, short pants, his back bowed as his hands landed on either side of my hips. He didn't move. Not for several long moments, but slowly, through my abilities, I no longer had the charred taste in my mouth, and I felt something under the hunger- a cyclone of shame and sadness.</p> <p>...His gaze met mine, and a long moment stretched out between us. Swallowing thickly, I dropped my hand as he looked down.</p> <p>"Honeydew," Casteel whispered. He grabbed the halves of my robe, tugging it over my hips and my thighs. His hands lingered there, a faint tremor coursing through them as he lifted his gaze to mine once more. "I'm sorry."</p>
354	<p>"When a bonded elemental takes on a partner, the bond can be extended to that person. It requires an exchange of blood between the three- or the four if the partner is also bonded. And the exchange of bloo...well, it is quite..." He cleared his throat as his cheeks flushed. "It can become very intimate. In a way that would most likely make you very uncomfortable."</p> <p>...Even as sheltered as I was, I had a pretty good idea of what Alastir was trying to say thanks to Miss Willa Colyn's diary.</p> <p>"Do you mean sex?"</p> <p>His face was as red as mine felt.</p> <p>"Unfortunately."</p>
371	<p>Thoughts scattered as an ache blossomed to life low in my stomach and between my thighs. I tried to remember that Kieran was there, monitoring my pulse, and what we were doing was almost like...like a life-saving procedure, but I couldn't hold onto any of those thoughts. With each pull against my skin, each tug that seemed to reach all the way to my toes, that throb pulsed, and the ache grew and</p>

Page	Content
	<p>grew, heating my blood and my skin. ...My body jerked with a pounding flood of desire that weakened my legs. ...Each breath I took seemed too shallow as the ache moved to my breasts. Tension coiled tightly inside me, to the point of near anguish- a razor-sharp type of pleasure that left its own version of scars. ...His mouth moved against my neck as his hips jerked against my belly- Oh, gods. I could feel him against me. I could feel him inside me- his desire and mine, churning and twisted together. A dull roaring sound filled my ears, and I was suddenly drowning in a torrent of sensations that came at me in endless waves. ...Shame over the rush of slick dampness Casteel answered with a grind of his hips as his hands dropped to my waist. Desire that somehow merged with something deeper, something irrevocable, and disbelief as I curled my arm around his neck, as I held him, wanting to drown in this fire. Until I realized I already was. ...I didn't know- I didn't know anything when Casteel's hands trembled as they slid down my thigh, over the robe. He lifted me onto the tips of my toes, and then higher, drawing one leg around his waist. The lower half of the robe parted and the upper part slipped off my left shoulder. When his hardness pressed against the softest part of me, all I knew was that I had become the flames in my blood, something utterly unfamiliar to me, something daring and shameless. I was the fire, and Casteel was the air that fed it. Casteel's hips sank into mine, and my body answered without conscious thought, churning against him as he fed and fed. The tension coiled tighter. In the back of my mind, I didn't know if it was the bite or the feel of him between my thighs that was quickly driving me precariously close to the edge. ...I could see that the robe had slipped even farther, revealing the upper swell of my breast. The tips of my breasts tented the thin material of the soft robe. And lower, one entire leg was visible, all the way to the crease of my thigh and hip.</p>
375	<p>"You're so brave," he murmured, tugging me into the cradle of his hips. The robe had slipped, and there was nothing but his breeches between the curve of my rear and the hard length of him now. I bit down on my lip as he skimmed his hand down my thigh, lifting my leg up, just enough for one of his to slide between mine. He drew his hand up my side, over my arm, and then moved back down. "And strong." The robe slipped more, seeming to follow his hand. I looked to see that the material had parted even more, exposing one breast. Warmth suffused my cheeks when I saw the evidence of my desire in the turgid peak. His hand closed over my breast, drawing a gasp from me as his thumb swirled over the nub. My back arched into the touch, into him. "So generous," he rasped, sliding his hand down lower, below my navel and over my bare hip then lower still. His fingers met the wetness gathering there, and then he cupped me. His touch was like a brand as he idly drew one finger over the very center of me in light, playful strokes that caused my entire body to twitch. He continued with those featherlight touches until I thought I would stretch beyond my skin, that I surely would ignite, and then he sank a finger inside me. My head kicked back against his chest as a breathy sound escaped me. "So fucking</p>

Page	Content
	<p>beautiful," he gritted out, withdrawing his finger until he was almost free of my body and then inching it back in.</p> <p>He angled his hand so his thumb danced over the sensitive bundle of nerves as he continued to stroke with that long, talented finger of his, pumping it slowly in and out, taking more and more of my breath with each thrust of his digit. He worked his other arm around me, folding it across my chest. He palmed the too-tight breast as he worked in a second finger, stretching me, feeding the fire even more. I cried out, pressing against his hand, against him. His breath came in rough bursts as I turned my head to see him watching his hands, watching me lift and grind against it. I slipped into the balmy sensation, falling maddeningly into it. Reality fell away. I hadn't been the captive. He hadn't been the captor. We weren't partners in an agreement, each using the other. It was just us, his skilled fingers and hands, the warmth of his arms, the glorious tightening within me, and when he trembled, cursing as I rode his hand, rode the hard length that pressed against me from behind. It was all those things, and the sudden thrill of power and control.</p> <p>He started to angle his body so there was space between us, but I'd given in to the fire. I reached back, curled my fingers around his hip, and dug in my nails in a silent demand.</p> <p>Casteel obeyed.</p> <p>He submitted with another curse and a brief, hot pass of his lips across the curve of mine as his fingers plunged harder, deeper. I rocked against him, and there was no rhythm as we both moved and strained. The curl low in my stomach spun and spun—</p> <p>"Poppy, I—" He broke off as I placed my other hand over his, holding him to me as I worked him.</p> <p>And it happened—the tightening and curling, all of it unraveled, stroking out through every limb. I moaned as release powered through me, as I shuddered around his fingers, and he shuddered against me, still moving those damn digits of his and eliciting every whipping wave of sensation he could until my hands fell away from him, and I went limp. Until his breathing steadied against my cheek. Then, slowly, he eased out of me.</p> <p>His hand didn't move far though, instead gliding up and stopping just below my navel. He tugged the halves of my robe closed with his other hand, holding it in place just below my breasts. There was something about the act that seemed... gentle.</p> <p>Slowly, I became aware of a dampness against my lower back and the upper swells of my behind. I tipped my head back and to the side.</p> <p>His head rested on the pillow behind mine, his features relaxed in a way that I'd only seen when he slept. Those eyes of his were heavy and hooded as his gaze met mine.</p> <p>And then the strangest thing occurred. Pink crept into his cheeks as he shifted his hips away from me. "Sorry," he said thickly, a boyish grin appearing on his lips. "That wasn't supposed to happen."</p> <p>I looked down. There was a spot along the front of his pants that was a darker black. Damp. My cheeks colored as my gaze flew to his.</p> <p>"That hasn't happened since..." The grin turned sheepish, and between that and</p>

Page	Content
	<p>the faint blush staining his cheeks, it was like seeing someone totally different. "Well, that's never happened before."</p> <p>"Really?" I asked, surprised by the throatiness of my voice.</p> <p>"Really." His gaze searched mine. "I didn't want—I mean, of course, I wanted that. I wanted more. I always want more when it comes to you." The hue of his eyes brightened once more, and my toes curled.</p> <p>"But I wanted it to be about you."</p>
384	<p>And Casteel- he moved so unbelievably fast. His head dipped, and his mouth was on mine before the laugh even faded. The shock of his lips against mine sent a jolt through me. The kiss was...it was as intoxicating as his bite, as everything about him was. And when his fingers sifted through my hair, guiding my head back, there were no protests to be found. The kiss deepened, and the touch of his fangs, his tongue on mine, sent a hot, tight shudder through me.</p>
430	<p>A different kind of nervousness than before rose within me and then abated as he tossed the cloth aside. He was undressing, and I should look away. I should feel embarrassed by his soon-to-be blatant nudity. But I didn't avert my gaze as his hands dropped to the line of buttons on his breeches. Heat crept into my cheeks as he slid them down his hips. The way his body was angled gave only a tantalizing glimpse of sleek muscles. His pants landed with his tunic, and then he looked to where I waited.</p> <p>Our gazes met and held, and I didn't know what got into me, if it was the warm, bubbling water, the serene beauty of the lake and the dreamlike surrealism of being in Atlantia, or maybe it was the hunger he'd spoken of earlier. Whatever it was, I lowered my eyes and let myself look. My gaze drifted over his chest again, then down the coiled muscles of his stomach and over pale nicks and grooves. I got a little hung up on the indentations on either side of his hips and then my breath quickened.</p> <p>He wanted me, shamelessly so. I didn't understand how or why. He cared for me, but I was only partly beautiful. I was no seductress, and ill-experienced to boot, and he had only been drawn to me in the beginning because he needed me to free his brother. But he desired me. Even I knew that.</p>
431	<p>What did I want? Him. I wanted his hands on me, washing away all the reasons why I shouldn't. I wanted to feel his skin against mine, crowding out the world around us. I wanted the touch of his lips, chasing away any logical protests before they could form. I wanted his mouth on mine, kissing away the lies his lips once spoke. I wanted his hands on me, soothing away the sting of guilt and the feeling that I was betraying myself. I wanted to feel him inside me so I couldn't feel anything but him. I wanted to be so completely devoured by him that there was no room for the fear that he would become a scar upon my sure-to-be-broken heart.</p>
432	<p>Those lips grazed the curved of my jaw, and the edges of his damp hair touched my cheek, causing me to gasp.</p> <p>...A shaky breath left me as he shifted closer, his chest brushing mine with each breath he took. The contact sent a wave of shivers through me, tightening the tips of my breasts to almost painful points.</p> <p>...The hand left my waist, trailing down my hip, stirring the water. Bubbles danced</p>

Page	Content
	<p>over my legs, between them. A wicked feeling curled low in my core. "Did you know that the bite, until it's fully healed, becomes an erogenous zone? A point of pleasure? It can give you the same feelings as the bite. Almost. Did you know?" I thought I did. "No." "Want me to show you?" he offered. "I know you're a curious sort." "Yes," I whispered, dizzy with anticipation. "Remember, Princess. This is just to assuage your curiosity. Nothing more." "I know." My fingers curled against the rock. "Good." Then his mouth closed over the bite. He sucked on the skin, drawing it between his teeth. My back arched, dragging the hard peaks of my breasts against his chest. I shuddered, becoming liquid. Good gods. "Did I ever tell you what you taste like?" His tongue lapped over the sensitive mark. "Honeydew?" I whispered, eyes drifting shut as I turned my head toward his, seeking what I knew I shouldn't want. "You dirty girl. I'm not talking about that." He nipped at my jaw, drawing another gasp from me. "I'm talking about your blood, but now you've dragged my mind into unseemly places." "Your mind always resides in unseemly places." He laughed deeply. "I can't deny that." His nose brushed mine as his mouth drew closer to my lips. ...I bit down on my lip as his hand slipped down my thigh. "I'm not being distracting." "Oh, yes. You're always so damn distracting," he chided gently. ..."If you want," he said, his chest rising and falling against mine, sending darts of forbidden pleasure through me. "We can pretend again." His hand slid along my thigh, higher and higher— The tips of his fingers reached evidence of what I knew he'd already sensed. My hips jerked at the illicit thrill as a breathy moan parted my lips. He dragged his mouth over mine. It wasn't a kiss, just a passing glance of his mouth against mine. "You can pretend." Cool air seeped in as he lifted his head. "You can pretend that this isn't because you don't have a of need me." ...The curve of his lips was cruelly sensual. "You can pretend that this—" He eased a finger inside me, just the tip, but I rose up on my toes. His eyes turned luminous as his gaze drifted over my face and then lower to where my breasts had risen up above the churning water. He lifted his gaze to mine as he pressed his finger in further, and I could feel my inner muscles clenching around him. "That this has nothing to do with you wanting me." "I don't," I told him, even as I lifted my hips off the rock, pressing against his hand, against him. Casteel hissed as my stomach brushed the hot, hard length of him. He pushed me back to the rock, trapping his hand between us as his chest flattened against mine. The skin-to-skin contact, the way he slowly pumped his finger, shorted out my senses. "You can pretend that it's just the sensitive bite on your neck causing you to squirm against my hand."</p>

Page	Content
	<p>I was squirming as best I could.</p> <p>"You can pretend that's the reason you wish it was my cock you were grabbing onto so tightly." His head dipped to mine once more. "We can both pretend, and we both can.. ."</p> <p>"Can what?" I breathed. "Just be Hawke and Poppy?"</p> <p>...I wanted what he could give me. Pleasure. Momentary escape. Experience. A sense of freedom. Because that's what release felt like.</p> <p>...It was messy and complicated, and maybe I'd regret this later as I gave him more and more pieces of me, but I wanted him.</p>
437	<p>Closing the distance between our mouths, I kissed him. I knew the moment my lips touched Casteel's, the very second his lips parted, that this was real.</p> <p>I lifted my hands from the rock, looping them around his neck as I took what I wanted, tasting him on the tip of my tongue, reveling in the decadent thrill of his sharp teeth. I didn't know what I was doing, only that instinct guided me. I moved my lips against his, nipping and exploring and learning.</p> <p>And Casteel didn't seem at all bothered by the artless inexperience. If anything, it seemed to inflame him. He gave me what I wanted. Kissing me with a wild sort of abandon that bordered on crazed.</p> <p>When he ended the kiss, he was breathing just as heavily as I was. "We're not pretending, Poppy? No more? You want me. Knowing everything, you want me."</p> <p>"What do you think?" I moved against his hand in demand.</p> <p>His other hand dropped to my hip, stilling my movements. "I need to hear you say it, Princess." Of course, he did.</p> <p>"Yes," I nearly cursed. "I want you." "Good." He slipped his hand from between my legs. "Because this is real."</p> <p>Before I could feel the loss of his wicked hand, he gripped my thighs and lifted me. I gasped, hands slipping over his shoulders as more than half of my body left the water.</p> <p>"Hook your legs around my waist," he commanded softly. "Do it."</p> <p>I did as he requested without complaint. It was rare. I hoped he recognized that. He moved his hands back to my hips as he looked down to where my breasts were pillowed against his chest. "I would love to take my time because there are so many different ways I'd love to be real with you. Lay you out on the rocks and lick every inch of your body. Make you come that way. And then I'd want you on your knees and your mouth around my cock."</p> <p>..."I don't think you could do it wrong," he told me, eyes flaring intently. "But I'd show you. I'd show you how to use your mouth and tongue. If we had time, we would play." His hands tightened at my waist. "But we don't have time, Princess."</p> <p>"No." My heart pounded. "We don't."</p> <p>His gaze held mine. "I'm glad we're on the same page." The muscles under my hands bunched as he said, "Princess?" "Your Highness?"</p> <p>Those eyes of his turned to molten amber. "I'm going to need you to hold onto me and not let go, because I'm about to fuck you like I promised."</p> <p>I gasped at his lewd—deliciously so— words. "Yes. Please."</p> <p>Casteel didn't respond with words. He did so with action, guiding me down until I felt him nudging my entrance. I bit down on my lip.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>"Lower your legs," he demanded. "Just a little—there. That's perfect." His lips returned to mine. "You're perfect."</p> <p>"I—" My words ended in a cry that he captured with a kiss. He filled me, stretching me until I wasn't sure if this position would work. Or if I would work. We'd only done this twice. I'd only done this twice. But I held on, my fingers digging into his skin as he kept sinking into me, deeper and deeper until there was no space between us, and Casteel shook.</p> <p>He dragged one hand down my back, folding his arm around me. And then he... he held me there, against his chest, buried deep inside. "You okay?" he rasped, lips brushing mine. "Poppy?"</p> <p>I nodded, easing my grip on his shoulders.</p> <p>"You sure?"</p> <p>"Yes," I whispered, my eyes closed. It didn't hurt. It didn't feel exactly comfortable, but I knew there was more. I shifted, wiggling my hips.</p> <p>He groaned my name. "Poppy..."</p> <p>I ignored the way my heart clenched in response to his voice. I didn't want that. I wanted the hardness between my legs and inside me, needed what it made me feel. I didn't want my heart getting involved.</p> <p>I squirmed, gasping as pleasure sparked.</p> <p>"Gods, Poppy. I'm trying—" A sound rumbled from him, vibrating through me.</p> <p>"I'm trying to make sure you're ready."</p> <p>"I'm ready," I told him. I've been ready. He cursed, but then he moved, thrusting his hips up as the hand on mine pulled down. My eyes went wide at the raw sensation of him moving inside me, slow and deep. I sighed, muscles I didn't realize were even tense relaxing.</p> <p>"That's it." His words were barely a whisper. "Gods, you feel. . ." The hand guiding me spasmed and then loosened as I lifted myself on his length. "You feel like all I could ever want."</p> <p>I'd never wanted to believe something more in my life, and that realization threatened everything.</p> <p>"We're being real," I reminded him, seeking out his mouth. "Don't lie to me now." He went rigid against me for a handful of seconds, and then he bit out a harsh laugh. "You're right." His hand fisted in my hair, pulling my head back. "We don't need to lie now."</p> <p>His mouth covered mine, and one of his fangs scraped my lip, dragging a husky moan from me. A staggered heartbeat later, we were back at that rock, one of his arms around me and the other hand in my hair, the only things between the hard surface and my skin as he rolled into me, pinning my hips.</p> <p>And then he did what he promised.</p> <p>Casteel fucked.</p> <p>His hips slammed into mine, and the way I was held there, all I could do was whatever he demanded. I held on as the frothy water foamed and bubbled violently around us. Each thrust of his hips felt as greedy as the strokes of my tongue against his. Every plunge of his hips felt more like an act of possession than the one before. My head fell back but never reached the rock because of his hand, and the world was a kaleidoscope of broken sunlight, slate-colored walls, and vibrant petals. I tightened—everything in me tightened as his head dropped</p>

Page	Content
	<p>to my shoulder, his body grinding into mine. I curled myself around him, pressing my face into his neck, tasting the sweet water and the salt of his skin. My pulse thundered through me, his just as strong against my cheek. Our bodies moved in a frenzy, and it felt like he was everywhere at once, stealing my breath. There was no hesitation. No slowing down or coming up for air. We were both swept away in the madness, lost in the tension coiling tighter and tighter. I thought it would shatter me, shatter us both, but he gave me what I wanted so badly.</p> <p>The feel of his skin against mine crowded out the world until there was only us. The touch of his lips against my neck, my cheek, had already chased away any protests. His mouth found mine once more as his hands held me so tightly to him, so carefully, preventing the sting of guilt from even forming. He moved so deeply inside me that I couldn't feel anything but him, and when release found me, it also found him, devouring us both, leaving no room to fear what awaited and making what seemed impossible, possible.</p>
442	<p>I dragged my teeth over my lower lip. It felt swollen from his kisses. I lifted my fingers to my mouth, shivering as I thought of how he'd claimed it just as thoroughly as he'd done with the rest of my body.</p> <p>...The edges of his fangs dragged over his lower lips as the water fizzed around my inner thighs and then lower. Pretending or not, he enjoyed what he saw as I climbed the earthen steps.</p>
443	<p>He dragged the cloth over my stomach and then up, catching the water between my breasts. His hands lingered there before he turned me to him.</p> <p>He knelt before me, sending my stomach tumbling as he drew the towel up my left leg, then my right, and finally between them. I sucked in a sharp breath, swaying slightly.</p> <p>"Just being thorough," he reminded me, his eyes hooded. "I wouldn't want you unnecessarily wet, Princess."</p> <p>I had a feeling he meant something else.</p> <p>The towel smoothed over my backside. "I think you're all dry now." His gaze slowly made its way to mine. "Mostly." Yes.</p> <p>Mostly.</p> <p>Grinning, he leaned his head down and kissed the faded, jagged scar on my inner thigh.</p>
468	<p>I splashed away the tears staining my face and then undressed, pulling on the nightgown that could barely be called clothing. The cool material skimmed my breasts and hips, ending just below my rear.</p>
473	<p>Irritation pricked at my skin even as his breath danced over my lips and his fingers skimmed the outer swell of my breast.</p> <p>"Well, good for you, but I don't need you to be here."</p> <p>..."But..." Casteel's lips glanced off mine, causing my breath to hitch as his hand slipped under the blanket and over my hip. His fingers reached bare skin, and a rush of damp heat pooled. "But you want me."</p> <p>...And when he spoke, his lips played over mine. "I can see your arousal, Princess."</p> <p>..."Just because my body wants you, doesn't mean any other part of me does."</p> <p>"Then maybe we should pretend more?" he offered, his fingers drifting closer to</p>

Page	Content
	<p>where I ached. If he reached that area, I knew I would be lost. It wasn't that he had that kind of power. It was that my desire for him did.</p>
474	<p>Casteel went still, his hands halting its movements on my inner thigh, and then he lifted his head.</p>
476	<p>"While you and I did what, Poppy? Kissed. Gave each other pleasure? Had sex? Fucked? Made love?" I sucked in a shrill breath. "Made love?" I whispered. "I know that's not what we were doing," he said, his eyes flashing a frigid gold. "You wouldn't think for one second that I was engaged to someone else if that was what we were doing."</p>
505	<p>He swallowed as his gaze lifted to the bed's canopy. "When I touched you in the Blood Forest, I knew I shouldn't have, but I...I wanted to be your first. I needed to be your first everything. Kiss. Touch. Pleasure."</p>
533	<p>"It's not about that," he cut in. "It's about us. Just you and me, and the tradition of sharing ourselves with one another." "Oh," I whispered, and now my mind was happily playing around in a very inappropriate place. "Like...sex?" He stared at me. "I really enjoy the way your mind works, but that's not exactly what I was talking about."</p>
534	<p>Casteel kissed me and it felt like the first time our lips had ever touched. In a way, it was a first kiss, and Casteel and I had more than one first. With each truth, each change, it was like starting all over again but with all the experience and memories. And kissing Casteel was like daring to kiss the sun. I placed my hands against his chest, feeling the warmth of his skin through his shirt and this—all of this—was another first, because I kissed without once worrying if I should, without wondering if I would regret it. I kissed with abandon, and there was a freedom in that I had never known before. He pulled me against him, one arm around my waist as his mouth trailed over the curve of my jaw and then down my throat. I tensed with wicked anticipation. "There are other places, you know? Where I can drink from you." "Like where?" "Places that are far more sensitive than the neck." He dragged his hand down my shoulder, cupping my breast through the slip. His thumb found the aching peak. "Like here for example. Would you like that? Don't answer yet. There are other places even more sensitive. More interesting." He moved again, over the curve of my hip and lower still. He gathered up the silk. "Lift your arms." I stretched my arms above my head, shivering as his clothing brushed my newly bared skin. The slip landed on the floor, and then his hand was at my hip again. My thigh. I closed my eyes as I felt his lips at my neck. His fingers trailed along my thigh, the ring around his finger cool against my skin. "There's a vein there, right along your leg, with all these little veins branching off. I'm thinking you'd really like that." I shuddered. "Will you do that now?" "I would, except I'm feeling incredibly archaic right now, and I want the world to</p>

Page	Content
	<p>see my fresh mark on your throat," he said. "And if the whole world saw that mark between your pretty thighs, I'd have to then kill the whole world."</p> <p>"That's excessive."</p> <p>"I feel excessive, Princess. There's another place, one that won't supply that much blood, but I think it will be your favorite." His hand cupped me then, between the legs, and his thumb pressed against the bundle of nerves, driving me to the tips of my toes. "Right there. I could taste you and feed from you at the same time." A sharp curl of pleasure twisted through me. "Sounds indecent."</p> <p>"Extremely indecent," he agreed. "You don't have to choose. Later, because there will be a later," he promised, and my chest squeezed, "we'll try every single one of those places, and you can tell me which is your favorite. What do you think about that?"</p> <p>"I think. . ." A breathy moan escaped as his finger slid inside me. "I'm going to enjoy being very indecent."</p> <p>"I can tell." He chuckled against my skin as he moved me backward, his finger moving slowly, shallowly. He guided me onto my back and then withdrew from me.</p> <p>"Both of us will."</p> <p>As he moved from the bed, he slowed to kiss the scars along my stomach and then those on my legs. Then he stepped back, standing above me. I was completely on display, wearing nothing but the necklace and the dagger. Shyness crept into me, but I didn't move to hide anything from him. I let him look his fill.</p> <p>"Beautiful. I want you to know that. You're beautiful. Every inch of you." Like before, I couldn't help but feel that way when he looked at me like that. His hands dropped to the flap of buttons on his pants. "Watch me." I watched him undress as I'd done in the cavern. If he thought every inch of me was beautiful, then he hadn't looked in a mirror. All that sun-kissed skin and lean muscle. His scars weren't flaws. Not even the brand. They were a map of his strength, of what he'd overcome and a reminder that he'd found pieces of himself.</p> <p>It struck me then how he could find my skin so flawless. He saw what I saw when I looked at him.</p> <p>And he had since he first saw me without the veil.</p> <p>Emotion clogged my throat, and I was half-afraid I'd start crying, but then he moved to me. The hard length of his body came over mine. My senses were nearly overwhelmed by the coarse hair of his legs against my skin, the weight and warmth of his body as he settled between my thighs, the feel of his chest brushing mine, and the hardness pressing at the softest part of me.</p> <p>He curled his hand in my hair, tipping my head back. "You have no idea how long I've waited to do this. To be inside you as I take a part of you inside me. To feel you come around my cock while I taste your blood on my tongue. It feels like forever."</p> <p>A shudder wracked my body as I drew my legs up over his. He gasped as the motion brought him closer. I wrapped my legs around his hips and lifted mine. We both made a sound then as he entered me just enough to send a wave of shivers up my spine. Casteel's head dropped to my throat as his fingers tightened in my hair. "Then why wait any longer?" I asked. He didn't.</p> <p>His fangs pierced my skin at the same moment he thrust forward. I cried out,</p>

Page	Content
	<p>caught between acute pain and keen pleasure. I couldn't breathe or move, even as his mouth closed over the punctures, and he drew deeply, his hips rolling against mine.</p> <p>And then there was no more pain. Just pounding, relentless pleasure that erupted from deep inside me, and he got what he'd wanted at the start. Release powered through me as I gripped his shoulders, breathed his name as he drank from me and moved inside me, and then— His hand was at my thigh. He lifted his mouth from my neck, his lips glossy and red. He held the dagger, and in a daze, I watched him drag the blade over his chest.</p> <p>Just an inch or two. Blood welled.</p> <p>"Drink," he gasped, lifting my head to his pectoral.</p> <p>"Drink from me, Poppy."</p> <p>It had to be his bite and the feeling of him inside me, of my body tightening around him. There was no hesitation. I kissed the cut, and my mouth tingled as blood touched my lips, my tongue. Warm and thick, it coated my mouth. I swallowed the decadent, lush taste of him.</p> <p>"Gods." Casteel shuddered as he held me there, folding his other arm under my shoulder.</p> <p>There was a burst of vivid colors— blues and purples. Lilacs. Was that the sweet taste of his blood? Was it more? There was a sound in my ears suddenly, a trickle of water—</p> <p>Casteel started to move again. His blood...it was pure sin and addictive as I imagined the flower my nickname was derived from was. I could drown in it, in the sensations he elicited from me. When he pulled my head back, I started to protest, but then his mouth was on mine, and we were both lost.</p> <p>There was no sense of rhythm or pace. We were frenzied. The effects of his blood and bite and my blood became madness. Tension built again, coiling deeply, stroking tighter with every deep, plunging thrust of our hips. The pressure spun until it whipped out, rocking me to my core again, and he was right there with me, toppling over the edge and falling and falling.</p> <p>And he didn't stop.</p> <p>He kept moving over me, in me, his mouth gliding over mine. He took me, and I seized him. We were a tangle of legs and arms, of flesh and fire, and the build was slower. Everything was slower as we took our time, acting as if we had all the time in the world, even though we didn't. And when we were finally spent, we didn't let go of each other.</p>
567	<p>"That's because I don't want to be awed by something so incredibly reckless." His chin dipped, and his voice deepened.</p> <p>"And that's because I need you."</p> <p>A sudden hot flush chased away the coldness stirring inside me.</p> <p>"I need to feel your lips on mine." He planted his hands on the carriage wall, caging me in. "I need to feel your breath in my lungs. I need to feel your life inside me. I just need you. It's an ache. This need. Can I have you? All of you?"</p> <p>I didn't know who moved first. If it was him or me or both of us. It didn't matter. We came together, the kiss just as wild as the one under the catapult, and it said everything that words couldn't communicate at the moment. We kissed as if we</p>

Page	Content
	<p>hadn't expected to have the luxury to do it again. And for far too many minutes, I knew we both believed that.</p> <p>We'd been on the cusp of either being separated or killed, and that kiss... and what came next in that shadowy carriage was proof of how rattled we both were by the knowledge that we could've lost each other just as we'd truly found one another.</p> <p>And it was more than that which allowed me not to care where we were, what I'd done in here and what was happening outside these thin walls, when he slipped the dagger from my hand, sheathing it on my thigh. Or when he turned and lifted me, placing me on my knees on the cushioned bench as he tugged the leggings and undergarments to my knees. What allowed me not to care was what the Duchess had said before I killed her, the utter coldness and emptiness I'd felt as I watched her die, and the haunting intuition that there had been some truth to her words.</p> <p>Casteel placed my hands on the wall as he scraped the sharp edge of a fang along the side of my throat, sending a bolt of wanton heat and dampness through me.</p> <p>"This is so inappropriate," I panted. "I don't give a fuck." He nipped at my skin again, and my entire body arched. "Brace yourself." I did, but nothing could've prepared me for what happened. He struck as fast as a viper, sinking his fangs deep into my throat at the same moment he thrust into me. The twisting shock of pain and pleasure stole my breath and fixed my wide eyes on the ceiling—on the circle with an arrow piercing the center embossed in black and crimson. Infinity. Power.</p> <p>The Ascended Royal Crest.</p> <p>And then...then I became that fire again, the flame.</p> <p>There was nothing but an excess of pleasure and ecstasy, intensified by the deep, rumbling sounds he made, the hand that slipped between my thighs, and those wickedly skilled fingers.</p> <p>A new madness engulfed us, one not too different from what I'd felt when I stepped out into the courtyard. And maybe all the death we saw and inflicted also drove us to this moment, to the hungry way his mouth moved at my neck and the nearly greedy way my hips pushed back against his. The feel of each other was a reminder that we were alive. That we'd survived. That there would be time for all those things I'd thought of as we were pinned to the ground under the catapult. That even as uncertain as our future was, there was one. And when the storm inside of us crested and took us both over the edge, I knew it was also the intensity of what we felt for one another, what we had both been fighting, that drove us.</p> <p>That drove Casteel to abandon his people to save me.</p> <p>That drove me to hold a dagger to my own throat, ready to slice deep to save him. The intensity of the emotion, how all consuming it suddenly felt, didn't make sense. My head fell back against his chest, and he kissed the corner of my mouth, the longer scar, and then the shorter one, I didn't care.</p> <p>"You already have me," I whispered.</p>
582	<p>Casteel shifted behind me, pressing his lips to the space behind my ear as he whispered, "Think of all the things I could do to you." The hand at my hip glided over my thigh, and then up it, moving with predatory grace toward my very</p>

Page	Content
	<p>center. "That no one would ever be able to see. Not even you." My breath snagged for a wholly different reason as his fingers danced over me. I tensed as muscles low in my stomach clenched in response and my head snapped to the side. I opened my mouth, but whatever I was about to say was forgotten when Casteel caught my lower lip between his teeth. He slowly let go of my lip, but his mouth was still there, warm and solid against mine. "I have so many ideas." My heart stuttered as a wave of shivers exploded over me. I could imagine what some of his ideas involved, and for a brief moment, I wasn't thinking about anything. A breathy sound left me, lost to the mist— "You can open your eyes now," he murmured against my lips.</p>
593	<p>What also didn't feel entirely innocent was where my hand rested. It was shamefully low on Casteel's stomach. I knew this because I could feel the imprint of the buttons against my palm. If I moved my fingers more than an inch lower, I doubted he would remain asleep. The knowledge of that filled my head with all kinds of things I really shouldn't be thinking about at the moment, like what we'd done in the carriage...in the bedchamber, the cavern.</p>
601	<p>"But you're still going to hear me whisper things." Casteel's lips brushed the healing bite mark. "Just extremely dirty things."</p>

Profanity	Count
Bitch	6
Cock	4
Fuck	21
Piss	4
Shit	5