

Once a Dystopian Horror,
Now a Real Life Terror



Teddy Gutierrez

Book Two

I Will Find You

Teddy Gutierrez

Also, by Teddy Gutierrez

The Orcas Series

Tobias

Family Ties*

The Dehumanisation Series

Just Another Number

I Will Find You

Other Works

Ace of Hearts

My Mate

The Little Ones

Trans Turmoil*

**Work in Progress – Coming Soon*

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I'd like to say a big thank
you to my fantastic partner,
Sky; your ongoing and
never-ending support is
more than I could've ever
wished for an I really
appreciate all you do for
me.

I love you, my dear.

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Introduction

It started in secret – the population of Saintre were told that Queer nuisances could be reported and dealt with. They didn't know how they were dealt with, or where they went when the raiders came and took them away.

Not until it was made public. But even then, the mass of the population didn't care. They were too busy decorating their new house after the Queer owners were removed...

Once again, the pink triangles were rolled out. Along with pink triangles, purple triangles, and blue and pink triangles... The horrors began again.

Chapter One

The sun peeks over the horizon as Avaline starts her day, waking up next to her fiancée – rolling over and snaking her arms around her partner's waist.

"Good morning," Avaline whispers, her cheek pressed against her girlfriend's upper arm as she intertwines her fingers at the bottom of her partner's stomach. "Are you okay?"

Emilia yawns, rolling over in Avaline's embrace – wrapping an arm around Avaline as she stares at the ceiling. "I'm fine," she says, stroking Avaline's hair. "You okay?"

Smiling, Avaline blinks – her eyes feeling heavy. "Perfect." She lets out a yawn

before pressing her lips together and closing her eyes – ready to go back to sleep. "I'm tired."

"You're always tired," Emilia chuckles, rolling onto her side – kissing Avaline's forehead. "I love you."

Avaline grins in her sleepy state – cuddling up to her fiancée. "I love you, too."

~

Walking to work - following her usual route through the town centre – a parade of people stop her. "Kill the snake, cut off its head! Stop the spread, kill them dead!" A group chants holding placards as they march back and forth. Another group of people marching opposite them – seemingly a rival.

"What's happening?" Emilia questions, trying to see the writing on the placards.

One of the rivals walks over. "Please tell me you're not with these boomers?" The man questions, crossing his arms.

Emilia shrugs. "I don't know what they're protesting..."

"LGBT Rights is what they're protesting." The man growls.

Emilia looks over to the protesters – their chant echoing in her head. *Kill the snake, cut off its head! Stop the spread, kill them dead!* A sickening feel takes over Emilia, her stomach churning. *It's election day, and they're protesting for a purge outside of city hall... Of course.* Emilia slowly makes her way past the protesting group and the rivals – walking between the two bodies.

"Stand with us, honey! You wouldn't want to lose your husband to the devil, would you?" A middle-aged woman questions – watching Emilia.

Emilia stops, looking up at the woman's Placard – *Raphael for senator, Purge the Sinners!*

"I'm marrying a girl," Emilia blurts, scurrying along.

"Whore!" The woman screams, trying to hit Emilia with the picket board.

A rival lunges, forcing Emilia to duck as she pulls her away – out of the woman's range. "Are you okay?" She asks, pulling Emilia behind the rival lines – making sure she's safe.

Emilia nods, pressing her lips together. "I'm fine... What's happening?"

"Seemingly the world's gone mad... Or at least the Senator's have..." The girl mutters. "My name's Noemi, by the way."

"Emilia." She takes Noemi's hand, shaking it before turning back to the front line

– the protests all looking at Emilia and Noemi now. "I don't understand any of this."

"Senator Raphael is up for re-election today. He's been winning in the polls for backing the purge of LGBT members," Noemi explains, crossing her arms as she watches the protest continue.

"I have to go..." Emilia mumbles, heading on her way – walking towards work. Not far left to go. She turns the corner of city hall, not wanting to enter work through the front door due to the protest outside.

Heading in, her team welcomes her. "Emilia, we were so worried," Vic says – rushing over. "Did you see the protests?"

She sighs, "Yeah, I didn't realise Raphael had such a strong following. Honestly thought he'd lose."

"Unfortunately, not," Jana says, gesturing to the TV in the office showing the current poll stats. "It seems to be happening everywhere – even the blue zones are losing to the reds."

"Shite," Emilia groans, covering her mouth with her hands. "This cannot be happening."

"It is..." Harper comments, sitting back in his chair. "My fucking parents voted for this shit..." He scoffs. "Why the hell does one of the smallest demographics just happen to be the biggest voting demographic?"

"Did you vote?" Emilia questions.

Harper nods. "Voted for Sauber." He gestures to his blue *I Voted* badge. "And you?"

"Sauber," Emilia sighs. "I forgot to put my badge on. I didn't think today would be that big of a deal."

"They're protesting for your death..."
Jana chuckles. "I feel like that makes today a pretty big day."

"Jana – stop it," Vic growls – sitting down at his desk opposite Harper.

"I'm just joking." She pauses. "Though, I'm still worried."

Emilia makes her way to her desk, taking her shoulder bag off and plonking it down on her chair. "I can't imagine that it's actually going to happen. It goes against so many laws and human rights."

Harper looks down at his necklace – fiddling with the St. David's star hanging from it. "So did the Holocaust..." Harper peers up at Emilia. "Just because they shouldn't, doesn't mean they won't."

~

*That's what I'm afraid of most –
knowing that after all the bloodshed that we've
had in the past hundred years – they're still
willing to kill more – no matter the laws
guarding us.*

Chapter Two

"It's official – Senator Raphael has been sworn in, and the cleanse plans have begun," the announcer on the TV beckons, the voice ringing in Emilia's ear.

"God, help us," Harper growls, slamming his fist down on his desk. "I'm out of here," he says, standing up and grabbing his coat.

Jana's mouth hangs open as she watches him walk to the exit – leaving the office for good. "You can't be serious."

Harper looks back at her, fury on his face. "Yeah, I'm fucking serious." He pauses. "You may not know this about me, but I'm Transgender and Bisexual – the government

know this because it was marked on the fucking census. I'm refusing to work for a place that wants me fucking dead."

"Wait, you're becoming a woman?"

Jana questions, a disgusted expression on her face.

Emilia rolls her eyes, collecting her equipment and following Harper. "He's a Trans Man, you silly twat," she groans. "I should've known that you're a Raphael supporter..." She mutters, gesturing to the Red *I voted* badge on Jana's desk.

"I don't want men in the women's bathroom, I don't want gays teaching my kids – what's so wrong with that?" Jana stutters.

"What? So you want me in a bathroom with you instead?" Harper asks, scoffing at her ignorance – the six-foot tall man towering over her – his long yet well-maintained beard

almost ten inches long as it hangs from his chin.

"Would you prefer someone unqualified rather than my fiancée, Avaline, teaching your children?" Emilia probes, crossing her arms over her chest. "Let me guess though, you drop your kids off with the Catholic Church every Sunday which seemingly has a higher rate of paedophiles than the Trans community..."

Jana stays silent, pressing her lips together as she looks down at her *I voted* badge.

"I'll walk you home," Harper says – addressing Emilia – knowing that she's dubious about walking home alone after this morning's ordeal and the announcement of the cleanse beginning.

Emilia nods, following Harper out – Vic following closely behind.

"Why are you following us?" Harper questions.

Vic catches up, walking alongside the pair. "Because now I know that two of my friends are in danger – I don't want either of you to be alone," he whispers, trying to keep his voice down to prevent people from hearing him.

Emilia nods. "You shouldn't be alone, either, Harper."

He shrugs, keeping his eyes forward – watching everyone who walks past. "Fine."

"You should both come to stay at mine... I do have the spare room now that my college friends have moved out," Vic suggests, pressing his lips together.

"If they go forward with this *purge*, you are aware you'll be prosecuted for *harbouring* us, right?" Harper chuckles,

shaking his head at the thought as they go past the front of the town hall.

"Only if they find you."

Emilia sighs, "they'd find us. It's not worth the risk. If they're going to come for us, it's not worth getting our allies jailed, too."

Vic bobs his head – thinking of the difficulties that would ensue if allies were taken in, too – leaving no one free to fight for their freedom. "Fine, but you need to hide."

Shaking her head, Emilia smiles. "No. They're going to find us, and I'm not going to go on the run to postpone that. I'd much rather stay at home and be comfy for the time I have left."

Pressing his lips together, Harper nods. "I can't disagree with that."

"Fuck," Vic exhales – sounding and feeling defeated. "Guys, I'm so sorry."

"It's not your fault – we're in Saintre... It was never going to go down well," Emilia says, patting Vic on the back. "We may just have to see if we can leave the country."

"Daque is willing to take Refugees. I saw the papers on Sauber's stack – he's been in negotiations with them for a while to make sure that people can run," Harper announces – keeping his voice low.

Emilia bites her bottom lip as she thinks about the possibilities of having to leave her home because of who she loves. "That's possibly one of the best outcomes to this."

Harper nods. "Agreed."

Arriving home, Harper and Vic waiting outside of her house – giving her time to get in and watching her as she does, then staying a couple minutes longer to make sure that everything was okay.

"Emmy, have you heard?" Avaline pauses. "Of course, you have, with where you work..." She cries. "Emmy, what are we going to do? They've already fired me."

"I walked out, so we're both jobless now," Emilia announces, sitting next to Avaline – wrapping her arm around Avaline's shoulder. "Ava, baby – everything is going to be okay."

"Emmy, they're going to kill us," she blurts, tears forming in her eyes – her bottom lips trembling.

"I know, but I promise we'll survive this." Emilia pauses. "Daque is taking in refugees – Senator Sauber set it up. I don't know when or if it will go public, but we can go to Daque."

"We have to leave our home because people are obsessed with who we go to bed

with..." She cries, her hands over her mouth.
"I don't understand."

"Neither do I," Emilia sighs, trying to hold back her tears as a hard-lump forms in her throat. "However, it's better for us to run and be together than it is for us to stay and die." Emilia looks at Avaline – tears slowly dropping. Avaline's face turning red as she sobs. "I want to die with you – but not like this – I plan on us being married. Then we'll grow old together. We'll probably both end up with arthritis, and we'll die in the same year thanks to a broken heart."

Avaline lunges, wrapping her arms around Emilia as she buries her face into Emilia's long brown hair.

"I plan on dying with you – but not like this."

~

Emilia was right, they didn't release Sauber's agreement with Daque. Weeks after the election, Daque finally announced they were willing to take refugees. They offered food and shelter for safety and employees in their country – knowing they had more job vacancies than they had people. A massive island with a small population.

Their only requirement was that refugees filled in an online form so that they'd be let in... But with every application submitted, refugees never arrived at the boarding station of Ine port.

Vic came up with an idea – he set up a VPN – suggesting that people were located at Senator Raphael's house – stopping the Purification Unit from being able to find them. Emilia had hundreds evacuated, staying behind to make sure she could get other out – including Harper.

Today is her day to leave, finally leaving with Avaline and handing over the evacuation to Vic and his wife, Mira.

Heading down to the port, the pair are escorted to the dock by Daque soldiers.

"Miss Emilia Sanchez?" A man says, standing behind Emilia and Avaline.

"Yes?" She asks, turning to face the man – seeing his badge – *Purge the Nation*. "Shit!" She roars, turning to Avaline and pushing her towards the boat.

The soldiers on the boat help Avaline on, offering a hand to Emilia. But before she's able to take their hand – allowing her to leave this hellhole the purification unit grab her, handcuffing her. The soldiers sum up whether Emilia is worth the risk or if it's time to go – they take the chance to leave – pushing the boat out and setting off.

"NO!" Avaline screams – wailing as she sobs. "We can't leave her!"

"I WILL FIND YOU!" Emilia yells, laid face down on the ground – being forced to stay there. "I WILL FIND YOU!"

Chapter Three

With Emilia's work history, she became a target for the purification unit – they knew she'd know all the background gossip for Sauber and the other candidates in her area.

Emilia's been tied to this crooked, old chair for the past seventeen days. They give her a few drops of water a day while starving her – allowing her to wither away but stay alive.

"Where are Sauber and Constantina?"
An officer yells before hitting Emilia again.

Another blow to the face, leaving her tasting a copper taste as blood fills her mouth. She spits out the blood – a spray of it landing

on the officer's shoe. "I don't know where they are, dickweed."

The officer growls, landing another hit on Emilia's face – fracturing her left cheekbone. "You stupid bitch." He walks away – approaching an officer, who is guarding the door. "Take her to get something to eat – she clearly doesn't understand how nice we've been to her." He exits the room – leaving Emilia with the guard.

The guard walks over, a sinister expression on his face as he leans down – his face inches away from Emilia's. "You're going to survive this."

"Why?" She sobs, a tooth in the back of her mouth coming loose as she speaks.

He sighs, a smile emerging on his face. "Because if you didn't live to feel the aftermath of all of this, what would be the point of doing it?"

~

The interrogation stopped, but the guards kept an eye on Emilia – knowing that she'd try to contact the outside world.

But, she didn't, and she doesn't plan on doing so.

"Hey," a woman shouts in the courtyard, not really directing her comment at anyone. As hoards of bodies cross each other's' paths, aimlessly wandering like Zombies, the woman pushes through the crowds – placing her hand on Emilia's shoulder.

Turning to look at the mysterious woman, Emilia peers down at her – a blank expression on her face, the light having left her eyes months ago.

"Emilia, it's me," the woman says, shaking Emilia by the shoulders to shock her awake. "We met at the rally."

Emilia blinks rapidly, as if her brain is powering up from a previously dazed state. "Noemi?"

"Yeah." Noemi smiles – her face lighting up as Emilia remembers her. "I've been looking for you since I got here."

A puzzled expression appears on Emilia's face as she frowns. "You've been looking for me?"

She nods. "Vic and Mira sent me," she whispers.

Emilia's hand flies up and covers Noemi's mouth. "Don't say their names. The guards have been watching me." Emilia slowly removes her hand from Noemi's face, crossing her arms as she watches the young girl.

"Is that why you're just lifeless?" Noemi questions.

Nodding, Emilia presses her lips together. "Have they done anything to you since you got here?"

"You mean other than shave my head, steal my belongings and burn down my house?" She jokes, the reality of this horror sinking in. "No, nothing really. I thought this was going to be like the Holocaust, but they're not forcing us to work... They beat us, but we can avoid it by not speaking to them."

Emilia bobs her head. "Okay, as long as they're not doing anything to the mass of us."

Noemi's eyebrows pull together. "What do you mean? What have they done to you?" She probes.

Taking a deep breath, Emilia pulls back her lips – as if trying to smile – showing that all but eight of her teeth have been removed – whether through beatings or just guards having fun pulling them out.

"Christ!" Noemi gasps, covering her mouth with her hands.

Emilia scoffs, a constant taste of copper in her mouth due to her gums constantly bleeding after the damage the guards have inflicted. "That's not even the worst of it." She pauses, looking around to make sure that no guards are looking directly at them. She unbuttons the top of her shirt, showing Noemi the bruising on her collarbone. "They've broken my collarbone, three ribs, and dislocated my shoulder. And that's just the beatings. Seemingly because the head honcho wants to make this my literal living hell, he's also allowing the guards to... *Defile me.*"

Clamping her lips together, Noemi tries to keep in the sick that making its way up. "I'm sorry," she whispers.

"Why did V and M send you? And what do you mean by that?" Emilia asks, skipping over it – not wanting to think about it any more than she must.

"They received a message from *Ava* stating that they'd caught you at the docks. They asked for one of us to willingly give ourselves up to try and get you out," Noemi explains, still trying to get the thoughts of Emilia's abuse out of her head.

"Why would you risk your life to find me?" Emilia frowns, a questioning and concerned expression on her face. "There was no need. There are hundreds – now including yourself – stuck in here. If I get out, nothing is going to change."

"Everything will change," Noemi mutters. "You don't understand how important you've become. The president of Daque wants you free. He's the one who ordered V to get someone in here to help you."

"I don't understand."

Noemi chuckles, "Sauber asked for you to be a part of the refugee program for when people get to Daque. He knows you're good with numbers and organising masses of people..."

"That's enough!" A guard bellows, pushing Emilia back – separating Noemi from her. "What's this?" He asks, gesturing to Noemi – stroking her face. "Got yourself a pet?"

"She's nobody. Just a stupid kid," Emilia mutters turning and walking away – going back to her zombie-like state.

The guard looks down at Noemi, an angered expression on his face. "You'll be mine someday, sweetheart," he says, laughing as he walks away – leaving Noemi stood in the middle of the courtyard – a sickening feeling in her stomach.

We need to get out of here.

Chapter Four

The guard that had seen Noemi and Emilia together clearly hadn't said anything it's been a year since they were caught together. They've been plotting – Noemi writing letters to *Miles* updating him on Emilia's status, but Emilia doesn't know who he is – for her own safety.

~

"I've been wondering." The officer pauses. "Did you know about the people we kidnapped in Auldives? After all, with your position you must've known about a lot of things that were going on – isn't that right?"

Emilia shakes her head. "I didn't know anything."

"Oh, is that right?" He questions.
"That's a shame – so you wouldn't know why this one was sent in to find you?" He probes – gesturing to the guard for someone to be brought in.

They march Noemi into the room.
"Don't say anything, Emilia!" She blurts.

"Leave her alone, she's not done anything to you. She certainly doesn't have any information," Emilia bellows.

The officer grins, a menacing expression on his face. "Put her in the tunnels, let's see if she can get out."

"Leave her alone!" Emilia roars.

The officer rolls his eyes. "Then tell me what I need to know!"

Emilia frowns as she hangs her head – looking down. "Fine," she mutters. "Just let her go."

The officer stands up straight, turning and getting a chair – sitting down in front of Emilia. "Take that one back to her block." He stops turning to look at Emilia. "So, you didn't know about Auldives?"

Emilia shakes her head. "I would've been the whistleblower if I had known. I was in the wrong district."

The officer sniggers before landing another right hook on Emilia's left cheek – the bone beginning to break once again.

"Did you know about Sauber's agreement with the Daque president?" He questions, leaning forwards.

Emilia peers up. "Yes – to an extent."

"How long before did you know?" He asks, a blank expression on his face.

"I found out on the day of the election," she admits – Harper's words ringing in her head.

He stands up, circling her like a shark. "And who told you?"

He's trying to find a mole... She takes a deep breath, knowing he's not going to like her response. "Harper McKenna."

The officer stops and lets out a groan. "Fuck." He pauses. "Who could he have found that information out from?"

"He was Sauber's secretary – no one else but him would've known," she advises, pressing her lips together.

The officer shakes his head, sitting back down in front of Emilia. "Do you want to know how to I got these badges?" He asks, gesturing to his rank. Emilia paying attention to his name: General Cristian Dante.

"By being an unreasonable prick?"
Emilia chuckles – she knew what was coming next anyway.

Cristian stands up, fake laughing at Emilia's comment going around the back of her – taking out his pistol and aiming at the back of her head. "Give me a reason not to blow your brains out."

"No reason necessary," she sobs. "Do it."

He sighs, lowering his gun. "I'm not going to *put you out of your misery*. I'm here to make you want death, not to give you what you want." He heads toward the exit, just one guard at the door. "Don't move her – just let her wallow for a bit."

"Yes, sir," the guard says as Cristian leaves. Once the door has shut, the guard smiles. "I heard you like taking it rough."

Emilia rolls her eyes as she stares at the floor.

Making his way over, the guard unbuckles his belt – pulling down the zipper. "C'mon, sweetie – you know you want it," he chuckles, reaching into his underwear and pulling out his semi-erect penis – the member slowly becoming harder as he waves it around in Emilia's face. "C'mon – what good is it being a Lesbian if you can't give head?"

With his spare hand, he puts his palm on her forehead – pushing her head back to make her look up at him and his junk. "Open wide," he sniggers, pushing himself into her mouth. She locks herself away in the back of her mind, knowing that she'd get killed if she tried to fight back. Better to survive and see Avaline again than become a part of the mass grave outside of camp.

His pleasure was short lived – as he pushes himself further in, closing in on his climax – he's struck on the back of the head.

He falls to the ground, limp and unconscious.

Emilia looks up, finding a guard stood with an assault rifle in his hands – the weapon used to knock out her current abuser. "Emilia, my name is Daniel – I'm here to get you out."

"And Noemi?" She asks, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Daniel sighs, "I'll need to come back for her – my plan right now only has room for one escapee."

She shakes her head. "Then I'm not going. I can't leave her here. She came here for me," she objects, sitting up straight.

"They're going to kill you," he blurts.

Emilia laughs sarcastically, "they're going to kill all of us. I won't leave her."

He nods, pressing his lips together. "Fine... I suppose I'll have to stick around too." He pauses, looking around the room. "Is there any CCTV in here?"

"No, they wouldn't want other countries knowing what goes on in here," she mutters. "You may want to sound the guard – just say I head-butted the guy. It'll cover you and put me in solitary."

"You're okay in solitary?" He questions.

"I don't get raped, assaulted, or beat half as much as I do anywhere else... There actually are cameras in there so that they can watch us and make sure we don't try to get out," she explains, pressing her lips together – her mouth feeling parched after a day without water then having salty semen in her mouth. She gags at the thought.

"I'll go get it reported then," he says, leaving the room and sounding the alarm.

Two guards, including Daniel, and Cristian rush in. Cristian huffs as he rolls his eyes in annoyance. "Fuck sake..." He pauses. "Take her to solitary – maybe that will stop her from mistreating her lovers."

Daniel approaches Emilia, untying her and roughly grabs her, making her stand up. "Let's go," he says – pushing her forward toward the door.

Here we go...

Chapter Five

A month in solitary confinement is enough to drive anyone mad. Having nothing but four white walls, a bucket, and a mattress on the floor – it would be understandable if Emilia went in there and lost her mind.

But, instead, she came out with a plan. "There's a guard called Daniel – he's going to break us out. Once we're out, we'll get to Daque and meet Miles. From there, we will Daque army set up a liberation team so that we can get people out of here," she whispers.

Noemi nods. "Miles has also advised that the Human Rights Campaign has become involved because of the situation in Auldives."

Emilia sighs, feeling relieved. "Good..." She mutters. "Apparently my sister is in there – it's why I haven't heard from her since before all this."

"How long ago did you hear from her?" Noemi questions.

Emilia shrugs. "I've not heard from Rosie in... Three years? Maybe four?"

Noemi smiles. "Let's hope she's going to get released like the rest of us."

Crossing her arms, Emilia nods. "I hope so."

"Was Rosie older or younger?" Noemi asks, walking alongside Emilia as they stroll through the courtyard under the watchful eye of the guards – Daniel being one of them.

"She's my twin sister – we made a joke that she wanted to be just like me, and eventually that became true." Emilia pauses,

the memories of her sister making her happy. "She's Trans, and she had a lot of work done because she looked so much like our Dad before it was ridiculous how masculine she looked. So she had her features modelled around mine."

Noemi stops. "Were you identical before the surgeries?"

Emilia laughs. "We looked so much alike, it was weird!" She pauses, her brows pulling together. "Even after the surgery, she still looked different to me. Before she looked more masculine than me, afterwards... She just looked like my sister. And she was perfect."

"Was?" Noemi mutters, looking up at Emilia.

Emilia smiles, pressing her lips together as she tries to keep her composure. "I'm not sure whether she's alive... I know

what happened in Auldives." She stops, both physically and mentally as she thinks about her dear sister. "I don't want her to be alive. I'd love to think that she'd be free and safe after all this, and she may still be with her girlfriend... But, I don't think she'd survive the aftermath. I wouldn't want her to have to survive the aftermath."

"Will you survive the aftermath?"

Noemi questions, crossing her arms over her chest – rubbing her biceps in an attempt to keep warm.

"No. My plan for the rest of my life is to get out of here, marry my fiancée and move on from this, try and forget it. I can't let myself remember it – if I do, it will scar me, and I will die to it," Emilia says, her nostrils flaring as she takes a deep breath – trying to keep her anger inside. "If I die because of the aftermath, they win. I won't let that happen."

Noemi bobs her head as they make it to the food tent – standing in line as it snows. "I know what you mean... I don't think I'll be able to remember everything and keep living. I'll need to have some of it suppressed."

Emilia frowns, her brows pulling together and leaving creases on her forehead. "They've stepped up your torment since they found out about us?"

Chuckling, Noemi now has a sombre expression on her face. "I'm Lesbian because I like ladies, not men... They don't seem to understand that."

Closing her eyes, Emilia feels Noemi's pain as memories of her abuse come rushing back. "Noemi." She pauses, opening her eyes again to stop the images from flashing before them. "I am so, so sorry."

"I signed up to be put into the pit of hell. I expected something like this to happen,

it's not your fault," she tells Emilia, taking her hand and kissing the back of it. "Now, tell me more about your sister."

~

Rolling over in bed, Emilia snakes her arms around Avaline's waist. "I love you," she whispers in Avaline's ear before leaving a trail of kisses down her neck – leading to the tip of her shoulder.

"I love you, too," Avaline says – her familiar voice crackling as she says it – her voice being substituted by Emilia's own.

"What's wrong with you?" Emilia asks, sitting up in her bed as she looks down at her fiancée.

Avaline rolls over, her face missing – a faceless person with only a mouth peering up at Emilia. "I think you're forgetting me, sweetheart..."

Emilia screams, her eyes flying open as she sits up rapidly – hitting her head on the bunk above her. "Fuck," she whispers to herself, rubbing her head as she swings around – sitting on the edge of her bed.

"Hey, are you okay?" Asks the man sleeping in the bunk above her.

"Yeah, sorry for waking you up," she tells him, still rubbing her head – the whack guaranteed to give her a full-length forehead bruise by the morning.

The man chuckles, peering down at her as he lays on his stomach in his top bunk. "I was already awake – don't worry." He pauses. "Anything I can help with?" He questions. "I have some painkillers, water, and a bit of food if you need it."

"Water would be great," she chuckles quietly. The man hands her a small bottle. She

opens it and chugs the entire thing. "Where did you get clean water and painkillers from?"

He sighs, "I work in the kitchen – we get to talk to some of the people on the outside. Our delivery boy smuggles us stuff in." He stops, reaching to the other side of his bed and passes down another bottle and a strip of painkillers. "Here, take these – you certainly need them more than me," he laughs.

"Is it really that bad?" Emilia jokes.

"You have a lump already," he tells her – smiling, showing off his missing teeth.

Emilia rolls her eyes. "You'd think after all that they've put me through, I wouldn't bruise so easily."

"That is a mood!" He rolls back over, lying on his back as he stares at the ceiling. "If you need anything else, let me know."

"Thanks." Emilia stops. "I'm called Emilia by the way."

"Nice to meet you, Emilia. I'm Four Nine Eight Seven Six Two Zero," he chuckles. "You can call me Zero, for short."

Climbing back into her bed, Emilia giggles, "Goodnight, Zero."

"Goodnight, Emilia."

~

Another day, another guard, another assault – it's becoming her norm.

"Five Two Seven Eight Six Three Four," a guard shouts – performing a roll call of Emilia's block. Stepping forward, Emilia holds her breath as the guard walks over, frisking her to ensure she has no contraband. The guard nods, allowing Emilia to step back. She begins to breathe again, her breath leaving a warm mist in the air.

"Five Four Nine Six Two One Zero," the guard announces. Noemi – further down the line of inmates – steps forward to be searched. Finally being allowed to step back, the guard continues the roll call – going to Zero and continuing to check the rest.

"Get Five Two Seven Eight Six Three Four," a guard says – one of the superiors to the role callers.

One guard, Daniel, approaches – taking Emilia's wrist and pulling her along – taking her to Block Omega – where they usually take her. "I'm sorry," he whispers – trying not to move his lips.

"It's fine," she mutters, pressing her lips together as he escorts her to the building.

When they finally make it to the chamber, where they often keep Emilia, Daniel pushes her – forcing her to fall onto the chair in the middle of the room. They'd agreed to do

this to make sure that it looked reasonable to the other guards.

Daniel leaves the room as Cristian enters. "I don't like leaving my VIP Lesbians with just any guards," he chuckles. "After all, you could bewitch a weak one and could get out of here." He pauses, looking down at her as he stands a foot in front – his arms crossed. "And I wouldn't want that, now, would I?"

Emilia looks up at him, not tied to her chair – just sat. "What do you want from me?"

Cristian sighs, a sombre expression on his face. He waves his hand at the guard, gesturing for them to leave the room. Once they're gone, he looks back at Emilia. "I need to know why you became a Lesbian."

Emilia lets out a small chuckle, unable to control the urge as she shakes her head – looking down at her hands as they rest on her

lap. "I didn't *become* nor did I *choose* to be lesbian," she tells him. "I just am."

An angered expression crosses his face, but when she would usually get hit for her remark, he steps back. "I thought women were made for men..." He mutters, staring down at the ground.

"No one was made for anyone," Emilia sighs. "We were just made."

Cristian's mouth opens and closes, looking like a goldfish as he tries to piece his words together in his head. "My sister has been arrested for being *Bisexual*."

Emilia's mouth hangs open, shock filling her – trying to imagine what would've happened if she was in his position; being a straight, cisgender person – persecuting people because of their gender and sexual identities, only to then find out that they have

to do the same to their sibling. "I'm sorry to hear that."

Cristian steps into the light, a frown on his face as he eyebrows narrow and crease his forehead. "Why?"

"Because now you either have to retract all the hate you've given and help us, or you have to kill your own sister," she announces. "Unfortunately, I think your sister is going to die by your hands before you help any of us..."

"You little," he screams, stepping forward – raising his hand to backhand Emilia but hesitates. "How can I undo what I've done? So many hurt..."

"And all of them like your sister..." She mutters. "In reality, there isn't a way of taking it back or undoing it – but you can still seek redemption."

He lowers his hand as he laughs maniacally, "I don't want your suggestions or your pity." He stops. "I don't need redemption! I am doing God's work!"

"If God really didn't want us to exist, then why did he make us?" She questions, sitting back in her chair – crossing her arms. "Or do you believe that the person who can't make mistakes, made almost eight hundred thousand mistakes in the past century alone?"

"No!" He screams, pulling his hand back and throwing a punch.

Emilia closes her eyes – feeling the impact but being knocked out by the blast.

He takes the idea that God made LGBT+ people in the same way that he made everyone else – if God even exists.

And he certainly couldn't accept the idea that God makes mistakes, suggesting he

believes that God put LGBT+ people on the planet for another reason...

Chapter Six

"They're stepping up the pain," Daniel mutters. "For everyone," he tells Emilia as he escorts her back to her block – it's been six months since Daniel arrived, he's infiltrated the camp's ranks.

"What kind of pain?" She asks, keeping her voice low and her head down.

"Holocaust Doctor style," he whispers.

She closes her eyes, trying to keep calm. "They're going to do experiments?"

"Organ harvesting, mainly..." He tells her. "There's a conflict happening outside of the camp, a war – soldiers need organ transplants."

"We're going to become an organ farm, ironic," she laughs quietly. She looks up at him, knowing that the guards are in their blocks and on patrol of the perimeters as night falls. "They don't want us to live, but they'll put a piece of us in themselves so they can live..."

Daniel nods. "I can't disagree there." Approaching the block, he stops her. "We need to leave."

"Not without Noemi..." She tells him. "I'm not leaving her here. She's twenty-one. If anyone is going to leave here, it's her."

Daniel presses his lips together, still trying to think of a plan – not having much luck considering he's unable to talk to the outside. "Fine, I'll think of something. But, the doctor will be here in a week. If I can't get both of you out in that time, you're going anyway."

"I'll see if I can come up with something better than your plans, then," she says, entering her block and heading toward her bed. A few feet away, she stops, realising something isn't right. Looking up at Zero's bunk – she sees two men, having sex... One wearing a guard's uniform. She coughs, making the pair aware of her existence.

The guard jumps down, his trousers around his ankles and his erection flopping around. "Want to join us, baby?"

"She's not bisexual like you," Zero says, rolling onto his side.

"I'm not like you," the guard growls at Zero.

"You just fucked a man," Emilia mutters. "You should be in here with the rest of us."

The guard lunges, pinning Emilia against a wall and pressing his body against hers. "No, I don't like men that way!"

"So, you won't date one, but you'll fuck one?" Emilia scoffs – being lifted a foot off the ground by her throat. "So what? You're Heteromantic Bisexual?" She stops. "Doesn't stop you from being queer," she growls.

The guard throws her to the ground, kneeling and beginning to take down her trousers.

Zero jumps down from his bunk, pulling on his clothes as he kicks the guard in the gut – laying him out on the cold, hard ground. "I let you fuck me because *I* was horny. I won't let you rape someone, let alone angry rape someone."

The guard climbs to his feet, buckling his trousers. "Fine, then I won't come to see you anymore," he huffs.

"I just found out that you wouldn't be in a romantic relationship with me, so yeah – I'm okay with that, Frank," he chuckles, watching as the guard leaves.

"Thanks, Zero," she says as he helps her up by giving her a hand.

He shrugs. "No great shakes, after all – there's at least another three million gay men in these camps, about ten thousand here... I'm sure I can get at least one to please me," he laughs, giving Emilia a wink before turning and climbing back onto his bunk.

Emilia shakes her head, getting onto her bed. *We could persuade Frank to help us escape... I just need to find out if he is Heteromantic Bisexual or if he is just Bisexual...*

~

"I have an idea," Emilia tells Daniel as he escorts her to Block Omega for her next round of torture.

Daniel looks around, making sure no one is in earshot. "Continue," he says.

"There is a guard called Frank – he's a form of Bisexual," she explains. "I found him having sex with a man in my block called Zero – it was all consensual. They've had a system set up for about a year so that they can have sex. He's been finding *fake* contraband in Zero's bunk, clearing the block out and *punishing* him." She pauses. "If we can make him understand that he is Bisexual, because he is in so much denial it's unreal, we'd be able to get what we need from him so that we can escape."

Daniel frowns. "What do you mean by *what we need from him?*"

"He's a higher rank than you – he can get access to the map of the tunnels that the guards used to use to smuggle people into this place before the purge was announced," Emilia tells him. "Cristian, the general, threatened to put Noemi in them – he suggested that she'd either get lost and die, or she'd actually find the way out of the camp."

"So, the tunnels are our way out," Daniel announces. "And we need Frank for the map."

Emilia nods, looking around to make sure that the coast was still clear. "We'll need Noemi to draw up another copy of it, we can get the paper and pens from Zero."

Daniel sighs, "and how are you planning on getting the map from Frank?"

Emilia shrugs, pressing her lips together. "Gentle persuasion?" She pauses. "I

think I could get Zero to help if I tell him we could get him out of here."

Daniel stops, halting Emilia as a pair of guards march past. They look to Daniel and nod. Daniel bobs his head in response before continuing to walk with Emilia's arm in his hand. "Do it. But make sure that no one knows about me. If they do, our cover will be blown. After all, someone has to stay here and filter the others out."

"You can't honestly be thinking of trying to get all ten thousand of us out...?" Emilia mutters, her eyebrows pulling together and creasing the bridge of her nose.

"I don't have a choice but to try," he says. "I can't leave them here with a clear conscience."

Emilia inhales deeply, a sombre expression on her face. "I'm so sorry."

Daniel chuckles as the pair approach the Omega block. "You have nothing to be sorry for." He pauses. "I'm sorry I couldn't help you more, Miss Lopez."

He'd helped her so much, but she knew what he was referring to in that moment. He couldn't stop the guards from doing what they wanted – he certainly couldn't stop the abuse, not without showing the Purge Unit who he is.

"Thank you, Daniel. For all your help. I hope we make it out here alive," she tells him, she looks back to the door of the Omega Block, the door sliding open – Daniel hands her to the guard, the door slamming shut as she vanishes from his sight.

Daniel sighs, "I hope so, too."

~

"Emilia, I'm getting a bit fed up of you, if I'm going, to be honest," Cristian says as a guard ties her to the chair.

"I'm sorry to hear that, General," Emilia jokes, looking up at him as she smirks.

Landing a critical backhand on her cheek, Cristian begins to pace – rubbing his hand. "Are you defiant for a reason?"

"I've been here almost two years..." She laughs. "You honestly think I won't be defiant about that?"

Cristian stops staring down at her. "What do you have to miss?"

Emilia giggles sarcastically, a pained expression on her face as her eyes well up. "What do I have to miss?" She scoffs. "My fucking fiancée!"

Cristian's face goes blank – his eyes, on the other hand, showing a sombre emotion.

"You have a fiancée?"

"Yes."

Cristian looks to the guards, nodding – the pair leave the room. "And she's not in here with you?"

Emilia shakes her head, her lips trembling as she begins to cry.

"Why not?" He probes.

"Because your fucking men caught me while I was trying to leave with her... We were going to Daque. But you caught me, and they left," she sobs. "I can't even remember her face..."

"That's unfortunate," Cristian mutters.

Emilia sighs, presses her lips together as she slumps into her seat. "You have no idea."

~

"I need you to get Frank in our block," Emilia tells Zero as the pair wait for roll call to proceed.

He bobs his head. "Consider it done."

~

"So, why am I here?" Frank questions, crossing his arms as he leans against the concrete wall of their cell.

Zero sighs, "I'll let you." He gestures to Frank as he looks at Emilia.

She nods. "We know you're bisexual, and there's nothing wrong with that."

Frank scoffs, "don't do this!"

"Keep your voice down, or you *will* become one of us because they'll figure it out," Emilia whispers as she sits down on her bunk. "Now, I want you to know

that we're not going to tell anyone – we just need your help."

"With what?" Frank asks, frowning – his eyebrows narrowing and creasing his forehead, showing his laughter lines.

"We need the map for the tunnels," she announces.

Frank looks down at the ground, his mouth slightly open as he thinks it through. "Who will be the first to leave?" He looks at Emilia, holding eye contact.

"Noemi Jones and Zero," Emilia tells him. "I will be going in the first month, but they will be the first to leave."

Frank nods his head, agreeing with the plan. "Great."

"No," Zero says, sorrow in his eyes as he looks between Frank and Emilia. "I'm not leaving either of you in here."

"I'll be fine," Frank assures him.

Zero frowns. "And what happens if they find out about you and the men you sleep with?"

"I don't."

"Don't what?"

"Sleep with other men," Frank groans. "It was just you... I advanced on Emilia the other night to try and normalise it. I don't want people thinking I'm gay – I'd get locked in here..."

"I'm not leaving either of you here,"
Zero mutters.

Emilia giggles, a sombre tone to her voice. "If I don't stay, they'll know something is happening. If Frank leaves, they'll try to hunt him down." She pauses. "We have no choice."

"Unless we all leave at the same time..."
Frank mumbles, deep in thought.

"How could we do that?" Emilia questions. "There's ten thousand of us in this camp."

"We could make flyers, but we'd need a lot of people to write them out for each block..." Zero stops, blinking rapidly as he does some mental math. "We'd need at least a thousand flyers. I can get the paper in without much of a problem – two big shipments are coming in – but we need a way to print them."

"We have a hand crank ink printer in storage, I can smuggle it out to you," Frank says, taking his notepad out of his pocket and scribbling down a reminder. "Make it for Friday, it gives us four days to make everyone aware of the plan. They need to know that we can't start leaving the blocks until around 11:30 PM. Any earlier and they'll notice."

"And how are they going to get to the tunnels?" Emilia probes, trying to think how

they'd all be able to get to the middle of the courtyard and down without being spotted by the patrols.

"Through the block tunnels," he says.

Zero steps forward. "What?" His mouth hangs open. "You're telling me that the exit has been within our blocks this entire time..?"

Frank nods. "It's that tiny door, there," he says, pointing to the small hatch in the bottom of the wall – at the end of their beds. He walks over taking his keys out of his pocket and unlocks it – opening the door. "See?"

Tears in his eyes, Zero covers his mouth in an attempt to muffle his scream. "The fucking exit was a foot away from me this entire fucking time," he cries.

"Zero, you never told me... How long have you been here?" Emilia asks.

"Two years... I was reported by my Pastor," he sobs. "I was the first group to be brought into this place after the election..."

Frank looks down at the ground in shame, not wanting to look at his lover. "I'm so sorry."

Zero shakes his head, wiping away his tears. "Just get me the damn map. I need to get these people out of here if it's the last fucking thing I'll do."

~

Noemi and Zero took care of the printing – getting the flyers made after being given the map by Frank.

"How's the plan going?" Daniel questions as he escorts Emilia back to the Omega block for her next round with Cristian.

She shrugs. "Fine." She looks around – making sure no guards are watching. "There's a letter in my pocket – I need you to post it."

Daniel reaches into her pocket, pulling out the letter – A. Lopez. "You're writing to Avaline?" He questions.

"I wrote it as if we're married to avoid attention. But yes..." She tells him.

"You could just keep this and give it to her on Sunday," he says, having a small chuckle as he speaks.

Emilia shakes her head, an elegant smile on her face as they turn a corner – the sun shining on her pale skin, the warmth welcoming her. "I don't think I'm getting out of here."

Daniel stops, holding Emilia still. "You *are* getting out of here, Miss Lopez."

She lets out a lengthy exhale, as if a sigh of relief. "No. I'll end up staying behind on Friday."

"Why do you say that?"

Emilia peers up at him, a warm expression on her face. "If I don't die today, I'll be dead before Friday at least." She smiles, sorrow on her face. "The nightmare will be over for us - for some of us, at least. That's fine with me."

Chapter Seven

"Miss Emilia Lopez," Cristian chuckles as Daniel straps her to the chair. "It's lovely to see you again."

"Likewise," she says, sarcastically.

Cristian nods to the door, gesturing for Daniel to leave. Once the room is empty, Cristian approaches Emilia – leaning down so that his face was level with hers. "My sister arrived yesterday," he mutters, pausing. "And she says that a man called Miles is planning a rebellion. Do you know anything about that?"

Emilia smirks as she relaxes in the chair, slumping as she leans back. "You tortured your own sister? What a horrible thing to do."

He rolls his eyes, standing up and begins to circle Emilia. "You should at least know who this *Miles* guy is..."

Emilia shrugs, pressing her lips together. "I know he's called Miles – nothing else."

Cristian puts his hand on the top of Emilia's shaven head before rapidly pulling her head back – hitting the back of it on the backrest of the chair. "What's his number?"

"I don't know," she groans. "He's never shown it to me."

"So, he's not in your role call block..." Cristian mutters. "It's a shame we don't keep inventory on all of you."

"Gave us numbers, took our details, but didn't take our names... That's sloppy work. How is that going to look to the President?" She laughs as Cristian begins to

circle again. "You couldn't even keep your own men under control – let alone the inmates."

Cristian stops in place. "What do you mean, I can't keep my men under control?"

Emilia smiles. "I know that you weren't supposed to kill us... And I know so, so many that you've let die. All because your men are filthy beings."

Cristian chuckles nervously. "You know nothing," he scoffs. "You know less than I do, and that's why we'll get away with it."

Emilia raises an eyebrow. "Do you have records of who you've killed?"

"Of course, not. What do I look like? A fool?" He scoffs.

"A fool that has records of every inmate ever admitted into this place, but doesn't have discharge, missing, or death reports for hundreds of inmates..." She pauses. "But of

course, you could just fake the death reports later – right?"

Cristian's face turns red as he makes his way to the door. "I'll just put non-incriminating deaths on the reports..." He stutters.

"Like: died of old age at twenty-four?" She asks. "Yeah, why not?"

"You pathetic bitch," he roars – rushing over and punching Emilia repeatedly in the face and stomach – the ropes becoming loose. "I'll fucking kill you!"

Taking the beating, Emilia finally gets free – being able to push him away – landing him on his arse. She quickly unties her feet, getting up. "Want a piece of me, you cunt?" She screams.

He gets back on his feet, tackling Emilia to the ground – straddling her as he continues to punch. "You bitch!"

Emilia grabs Cristian's crotch, twisting painfully to make him stop. Cristian gets off of her, lying on his back – clutching his groin as he cries. She kneels next to him, a look of disgust on her face. "You'll burn in hell for this."

~

Three months of solitary confinement. Emilia was right, she isn't leaving on Friday.

"There must be a way for us to get her out," Noemi sobs, sitting on Emilia's bunk as she speaks with Zero and Frank.

Frank shakes his head. "Not without drawing a lot of suspicions. So, unless we know someone who can get General Dante to give the order..."

Noemi looks down at the concrete floor as she lets out a long exhale. "Does it have to be Cristian?" She questions.

"If it were anyone else, it would lead them to think something was going on. Dante is the only person who is allowed to override a punishment of that length," he tells her. "Wait – how did you know his name is Cristian?"

She takes a deep breath. "I'm his... plaything."

"Christ," Zero groans, laying back in his bed and closing his eyes. "Noemi, you can't ask him for something like that – he'll figure it out."

"He offered to do something for my birthday... I could ask him to let her out for my birthday," she tells him.

"You can't do it," Zero says, climbing down from his bunk. "Noemi, please – if you do this one, or both, of you *will* end up dead."

Noemi looks down at her hands as they rest on her lap. "She's my mission."

"Fuck the mission," Daniel says as he walks over to them. "You don't need to do anything. Emilia put herself there."

"What?" Noemi blurts, a confused expression on her face as she looks up at Daniel.

"She was talking about not making it out of here – well, now she had her wish. We will try to get her out, but we're not going to get her out before the evacuation, and I'm not losing *you* because of *her choice*," he growls.

"You can't blame Emilia for this," Noemi roars as she stands up.

"Shhh," Frank whispers, a finger over his lips as he tries to quieten the pair down.

"You can't blame her. She *did* not choose this," Noemi snarls, trying to keep her voice as low as possible in an attempt not to scream.

"No, she didn't choose *this*. But she got herself locked in Solitary for three months – that, she choose. I don't know why, I don't know her plan yet, but I know that much," Daniel barks.

Noemi's eyes start to water as she presses her lips together. "Why would she do this? She's supposed to see Avaline on Sunday."

Daniel frowns. "I don't think she wants to live. She seems okay with the concept of her dying here." He pauses, crossing his arms as he looks down at the small girl. "She can't remember Avaline; I doubt she'll recognise her

when she finally gets out of here. So, I think she's just trying her best for everyone else now."

Zero chuckles, tears streaming down his face. "That's a very *Emilia* thing to do."

~

"It's time," Noemi says, waking Zero up as Frank and Daniel heads into the building.

"We have to go."

Zero nods, getting down from his bunk. "Have you unlocked all the doors?" He asks Frank.

"Yeah, we unlocked them yesterday during the roll calls," Frank advises, opening the entrance to the tunnels for them. "Let's get going."

~

After thirty minutes of wandering – the tunnels packed, people shuffling forward as

they stand and walk shoulder-to-shoulder – they finally make it. Over a mile outside of the perimeter. Everyone slowly begins to climb out – most of them not having the effort to shove, some needing to be carried out.

As Daniel gets out, he heads over to the extraction team that was sent with hundreds of trucks to get them all to the boats at Ine Port. "Daniel Erikson – Daque operative, sent by Miles Cross – President of Daque," he announces himself.

"Where is Miss Lopez?" A man asks, stepping forward as he looks and finds Noemi and Zero with Frank.

Daniel shakes his head. "She didn't make it, we were unable to extract her."

"Christ," the man growls. "We sent you in for *one* person!"

Daniel takes a deep breath. "She choose to stay behind."

"For what goddamn reason?" The man roars, the six-foot-tall man towering over Daniel. "Why would she stay?"

"Because she's going to get the records of the people that General Cristian Dante and his men have killed," Frank announces, holding Zero's hand. "And I'm going to help her."

"What?" Zero questions.

Frank smiles, reaching up and kissing Zero's forehead. "I'll see you soon," he says – beginning to walk back to the base above ground.

"No," Zero mutters – going after him but being stopped by Daniel and Noemi.

"He has to do this," Daniel mutters. "I'm sorry."

~

The evacuation went as planned – the escapees were smuggled onto a fleet of cargo boats and shipped to Daque in less than a day.

Noemi smiles as she gets off her boat, being greeted by warm air, sunlight, and new people – caring ones. A fresh start.

"Hello?" A woman says, tapping Noemi on the shoulder. "Do you know Emilia Lopez?" The woman asks – her sun-kissed blonde hair draping over her shoulders.

"Yeah, I do..." Noemi mutters, a look of shock on her face. "Avaline?"

"You know who I am?" She cries, smiling. "Where is Emilia?"

Noemi mouths the words, but no sounds come out. Trying again, she blurts, "she didn't make it over; I'm so sorry."

Avaline's tears begin to run quicker, her smile fading. "My love is gone..." A hard lump forms in Avaline's throat as she begins to walk away – not wanting to know anything else.

"Daniel!" Noemi shouts, waving her arms around.

Seeing her through the crowd, he makes his way over. "There you are. What is it?"

"That's Avaline," she says, pointing at the blonde haired woman.

Daniel nods, slowly making his way over – taking the letter out of his pocket. "Mrs Lopez?"

"Not quite," Avaline sobs, turning around and looks up at the man.

"Emilia thinks otherwise," he says, handing her the letter.

She blinks rapidly, getting the tears out of her eyes as she opens the letter.

"Emmy..."

Ava, my darling,

If you're reading this, I'm not with you – just yet. I have a plan, and I know it's selfish of me to decide on doing this without consulting you, but I can't leave this place yet.

In the words of our dearest Marsha P Johnson, No Pride for Some without Liberation for All... Well, this is me – trying to liberate. This damn country is going to be punished for what it's done, and I'm going to make sure that the people in the mass graves get their justice just like us.

I don't know if I'm going to survive this, maybe I won't. But if I don't, I want you to move on. Find someone new as quickly as possible and live your life.

*I'd rather fight and die here than let
these Nazi scum win.*

I love you, my dear.

Emilia

Avaline takes a deep breath, pressing her lips together. "Thank you for bringing me this."

"I'd do anything for your wife, she's an amazing person – I hope she comes home to you soon," Daniel tells her, turning and heading away.

"Wait," she says, catching up. "Do you know where Harper McKenna is?"

Daniel frowns. "Was he in the camp?"

Avaline shakes her head. "No, he was the one that came to collect everyone."

Daniel's mouth hangs open – *the big muscle man with the huge beard...* "Lumberjack guy?"

Avaline chuckles, "That's the one. Massive beard."

"He stayed behind with Zero's boyfriend. They're trying to save Emilia," he tells her.

"Save her? But the letter says she's trying to do something," Avaline mutters, a confused expression on her face.

Daniel nods. "She's trying to find the records of the people that were in there, but to do that she got herself put in solitary confinement. She got a three-month sentence..." He explains. "Honestly, if the guards found everyone missing before she got out... I can't say whether or not she'd be alive for long after that."

"How long would it take them to notice?" She probes.

Daniel looks down the pier at the thousands of people leaving boats. "It wouldn't've taken them long. Morning roll call would've been a ghost town. That would've been around fourteen hours ago now."

"So, either she's dead, or she's on her way home now," she mutters, her bottom lip trembling as she sees people reunite with their loved ones. "She better be on her way home then..."

Chapter Eight

1 AM Saturday

Lying on the concrete flooring, Emilia stares at the ceiling. Hearing nothing, just silence, in the camp for the first time since arriving. *Surely the guards will hear that?* She sits up, heading movement inside the solitary confinement block.

She looks through the bars, like the other inmates, finding Frank opening doors – letting people escape, giving them tunnel maps so that they can get out. "Emilia?" He asks, trying to find her as he opens doors.

"Over here," she says.

He finishes unlocking the door he was working on before heading over to her,

opening her prison door. "Hey." He smiles, letting her out. "You need to go, the guards aren't going to be out for long."

Emilia frowns. "What do you mean?"

He pulls out a small, empty flask from his pocket. "I mean, they're not going to be out for long. They've had this in their system for two hours now. They're going to wake up after at least one more hour. We need to get out before then."

She nods, not knowing or wanting to know what was in the flask. "I'll get to the admin department and get as much of the records as possible."

"They're all on one computer – they're also on paper, but that's not going to help us much. Grab the computer," he tells her.

Emilia frowns as she follows him, continuing to unlock doors. "How the hell am I going to carry a computer?"

As he holds open a door for an elderly lady to leave the room, Frank looks down at Emilia and frowns. "Really? Do you not know what a laptop is?"

"Oh..."

"Yeah," he mutters. He closes the door and heads to the next one. "Anyhow, the laptop is locked away in General Dante's room. You'll need to get in there and smuggle it out. Unfortunately, I think he's still in there..."

"How will I get passed him?" Emilia asks.

"Quietly, he's unconscious from what I know. But he's going to be easily awoken if he's the only one in the room," Frank tells her,

opening another door. "Now, go. McKenna is waiting outside for you." He hands her a small walkie-talkie, allowing them to communicate without shouting across the camp.

"McKenna?" She mumbles to herself, turning and leaving the block she finds Harper stood outside. "McKenna."

He smiles as he turns to look at her. "Hey, Lopez. How are you doing?"

She shrugs. "Could be better."

Harper chuckles, "c'mon, Frank tells me you need my help picking a lock." He begins to walk toward Cristian's block.

"A lock? He didn't tell me about a lock..." She mutters.

Harper raises an eyebrow. "He didn't tell you it was locked away?"

"He meant that literally?" She gasps.

"Nice, Emilia. Very nice."

~

Entering Cristian's room, the pair find him asleep in his armchair – beer glass in hand, with the laptop on his lap.

"Fuck," Harper whispers. "I would've preferred to break open the safe..."

"Me, too," Emilia says softly. She slowly makes her way over to Cristian, pulling a thin, tall book out of the bookcase as she goes – ready to replace the laptop with it.

As she goes to pick up the laptop, Cristian wakes up – drowsy, he doesn't understand what's happening. Emilia steps back, hoping for him to fall back asleep but without such luck, Cristian regains consciousness. "You little," he says, dropping the laptop as he lunges forward – straddling her on the ground.

"Harper, the laptop!" Emilia shouts.

Harper hesitates, wanting to intervene but knowing that anything louder would wake up the rest of the guards – he runs over, snags the laptop and heads out.

Cristian's hands tighten around Emilia's throat, strangling her. "You want to know why I never fucked you like the other guards did?" He asks. "Because I prefer my bitches cold and hard – less of a struggle."

Clawing at his hands, she tries to fight him off.

As he goes to snap her neck, a smash of glass followed by his beer glass breaking and a glass shard being driven through his throat.

Cristian goes limp.

Emilia pushes him off, looking up at her saviour. "Who are you?"

"Ivy Dante," she says, offering a bloody hand to Emilia. "Nice to meet you."

Emilia takes her hand, getting up from the floor. "Thank you..." She pauses. "He was your brother?"

Ivy shrugs. "If he really cared about me, and if I were his sister, he wouldn't've put me in solitary confinement so I could be raped by his friends."

Emilia covers her mouth, the horror sinking in – she'd heard the cries for help, the struggles. There were several men in there at any one time. "I'm sorry. If I could've helped..."

"Don't," Ivy sighs. "Let's get out of here."

The pair run out, sprinting to the front gate – knowing that the rest of the trucks and Harper will be there. "Emilia, you need to

hurry – the patrol is almost back around," Harper tells her over the talkie.

She takes it off her waistband, pressing the button. "We're almost to you."

They keep running, seeing the guards on patrol. They spot them. "Oi!" They scream.

"Run!" Ivy shouts, taking Emilia's hand and dragging her to the front gate. Although Ivy's been through hell, she's been here less time than Emilia – she still has the energy to fight.

"I can't," Emilia says, feeling winded.

"Fuck it," Ivy groans, picking Emilia up and putting her over her shoulder and beginning to run again – at the gate, shots are fired. Ivy falls to the ground in pain. "Is she okay?" She asks, panting.

Harper doesn't say, pulling Emilia along and throwing her into the back of his truck, getting Ivy inside and driving away – leaving the Ecos camp like a ghost town.

~

Sunday morning came around quickly. Ivy was lucky – a bullet went through her lower leg. Emilia, on the other hand, wasn't as fortunate.

"We need an ambulance," Harper shouts, carrying a stretch with Frank – Emilia laid out – unconscious on it.

"What happened?" The guard says, looking over Emilia as they come off the boat.

"She got shot by the guards, a bullet grazed her head, but she won't wake up. I think she may have a bleed," Harper tells the guard.

The guard pulls a talkie out of his pocket. "We need an ambulance at the docks *now*. We have a woman unconscious."

~

Arriving at the hospital, Emilia is taken into the intensive care unit while Harper calls Avaline.

"What happened to her?" Avaline asks, arriving on the ward.

Harper shrugs. "She got shot, but the doctors are sure she's going to be okay," he tells her. "She's in a coma."

"She's *going to be okay* but is *in a coma*? How the fuck does that work?" Avaline frets, worry written on her face.

A doctor approaches, smiling as her hand on Avaline's shoulder. "She's in a coma, but she's healing well. She may have some brain damage, but it's possible that the brain

is just protecting itself. The damage wasn't *that* large."

"So, she's going to be okay?" She questions.

The doctor nods. "I think so."

~

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months...

Six months after being freed from Ecos, she's only just been released from her own mind.

Gasping as she clutches her facing – finding an oxygen mask on her face. "Help," she pants.

"Doctor!" Avaline shouts.

A nurse and doctor rush in, looking over Emilia's vitals. "Miss Lopez, how are you

feeling?" The doctor questions, shining a light into Emilia's eyes to check her pupils.

"Thirsty," she wheezes, her throat sounding as dry as it feels for her.

The doctor nods, pouring some water into a glass before removing the oxygen mask from Emilia's face and helping her drink it using a straw. "Take it steady," she tells her – seeing Emilia gulping quickly.

Emilia stops, taking a deep breath. "Where am I?"

"You're at Berleny Hospital," Avaline tells her, holding Emilia's hand. "Sweetheart, you're with me."

Emilia looks over, Avaline's face being familiar but different... She'd forgotten her. "Ava?"

"Yeah," she sobs, smiling. "You've been asleep a while, honey."

Emilia frowns. "How long?"

"Six months," Harper announces as he walks into the room. "Hi, Lopez."

"McKenna," Emilia chuckles, smiling as she looks up at him. "Is Ivy okay?" I can't remember anything after hearing the gunfire."

Harper shrugs. "She's fine, married now – and she has an awesome scar on the back of her leg..."

"She got married in six months?" Emilia questions. "Who did she meet and love that quickly?"

Harper holds up his left hand, a silver ring on his fourth finger. "Seemingly, me," he laughs.

Emilia smiles. "Nice."

"You gave us a fright," Avaline says, keeping her eyes on Emilia – not wanting to look away.

"I'm sorry," Emilia mutters.

Avaline nods, getting up and giving Emilia a kiss on her forehead. "It's okay, sweetheart. You're with us now, that's all that matters."

The doctor checked her over, making sure she has no paralysis. Although, she's fragile, she's able to walk using a walking frame.

"You're almost there," Avaline says, cheering Emilia on as she tries to make it down the garden path to the small pond area in the bottom of their new garden. "There we are!" She sits on the bench next to the small pond.

Emilia takes a deep breath as she sits down, taking in the floral aroma. "I can *smell* the pollen... I've missed smells."

"Where was the Ecos camp?" She asks.

Emilia exhales slowly. "It was in the desert area. There was hardly anything around there."

"I'm sorry," Avaline mutters.

Emilia takes Avaline's hand, squeezing it as she smiles. "Sweetheart, it's okay."

"Are you going to be ready to make the announcement?" Avaline questions, looking at the pond – a couple of ducks swimming around in the small body of water.

Emilia nods, leaning over and leaving a peck on Avaline's cheek. "I'm sure I'll be ready."

~

Three months out of the coma and Emilia is now only walking with a stick. "I'd like to welcome onto the stage, Miss Emilia Lopez," President Miles Cross announces, welcoming her onto the stage.

Emilia shakes his hand, smiling at him as she makes her way to the podium. "Hello," she stutters. "My name is Emilia Lopez, most people know me as Emmy... Some of you may have also known me as Five Two Seven Eight Four," she pauses, rolling up her sleeve on her left arm to reveal the tattoo the Saintre government had written – with a pink triangle tattooed next to it and a red cross. "I have a pink triangle and red cross on my skin – they marked me as being Homosexual and a primary target, because I'd previously worked for Senator Benjamin Sauber.

I was taken into the camp in Ecos over two years ago. They tried to ruin my life, and yes – I suppose they have... But my life hasn't ended, I was lucky. They killed thousands for their pleasures, their desires, and for their sick. But now, we're free. This is the second holocaust in a developed country in a century.

We need to prevent this from happening again."

The crowd cheers as Emilia takes a few deep breaths.

"I was in that hell hole for almost two years, and even after I left, they were still winning. But now, they're down on their knees begging for forgiveness – and we can't let them get away with it.

The war is over, and we will be prosecuting the war criminals." She pauses again, closing her eyes – images flashing through her head. "They won't win. We will. We have to live with this pain for the rest of our lives, but living against their desires makes us a hell of a lot stronger than they were or will be."

The crowd roars, people clapping as they watch Emilia step back – tears running down her face.

~

Channel One news invited Emilia and Gabriel, Zero, in for an interview.

"What was the hardest thing that you had to do while in there?" The interviewer asks, directing her question at Emilia.

Emilia looks down at her hands as they rest on her lap. "I think the hardest thing that I dealt with was the memory loss. After being struck on so many occasions, I could no longer think or dream of my fiancée. I'd forgotten her face... She was the only thing that kept me going for the first year of being in there and they took that away from me."

"And you, Mr Morris?"

Gabriel shrugs. "I was raped by a senior officer in the guard of Ecos. They didn't view it as homosexual intercourse because I wasn't willing... I have nightmares of some of the things they did to me, all the time. And I regret not fighting back. However, I know that if I'd fought back, I wouldn't've met my partner, Frank, or Emilia, and I wouldn't be sat here today."

"So, it was more common for the men to be raped in Ecos than the women?"

Emilia blurts out into laughter sarcastically. "No, it was pretty even. Most of the time they didn't actually care who they were fucking as long as they got off."

"So, you were raped, also?" The interviewer asks.

A flashback stops Emilia from responding – remembering the day Daniel had arrived in the camp, the dryness in her mouth

and the taste of salt. The pain in her jaw and throat due to careless thrusting.

"Emmy?" Gabriel says, wrapping his arm around her shoulder as he sees her cry.

"I can't do this right now," she mutters, getting up and slowly walking away from the set – finding the exit and leaving the studio.

"Emmy, wait." Gabriel sprints after her. "Emmy, I'm sorry. I shouldn't've answered the question like that."

"No," Emilia stutters. "They needed to know."

"What happened back there?" He questions.

Emilia looks down at the ground. "I remembered when Daniel came into the camp to get me... I was in the Omega block *again*, and a guard was..."

"You don't have to say it," he tells her.

Looking up at him, her eyes watering. "I can't tell Ava anything that happened to me." She pauses. "I have no one to talk to, and it means that these memories stay with me, they're just *there*. And I can't do anything about it."

Gabriel steps forward, wrapping his arms around her and embracing her. "Sweetie, you're so fucking strong. I may have been in there two months longer, but you went through so much more..." He pulls away slightly, his eyes watering as he looks down at her. "You're going to be okay, you have me, and Frank, Harper and Ivy... And Noemi. We're going to be okay."

Emilia sniffles, using her sleeve to wipe her tears away. "How do you not hate Frank? I know he helped us, but he also kept us

there... For so long. He could've helped you escape..."

Gabriel pulls away, crossing his arms. "I deal with it by understanding the situation. He's a gay man, who wasn't out to anyone and was married with a child. He didn't want to get caught, if it weren't for me being out openly already, I would've done similar things to avoid it. But he was a homophobe, because he was upset and hated himself. He was closeted. And yes, he kept us there – but he never made a decision that lead to people dying or being hurt. He did more to protect us than anyone really knows."

"He was the one that stopped the rape, wasn't he?" Emilia mutters.

Gabriel smiles, nodding. "He was, indeed. He walked in on me, I was crying out for help, but nobody did anything... In a

block *full* of people like myself. They were too scared.

But, Frank was his Senior – technically. He killed the guard and burnt his corpse in the crematorium."

"I suppose he always was a good one... Even if he was a pratt when we first met," Emilia laughs.

"I'm just sorry you didn't have anyone to do that for you... After Frank stepped in, nothing really happened to me after that. You, on the other hand, it just got worse when Daniel arrived," Gabriel says. "And Ivy... Christ... Cristian seemingly enjoyed torturing his own sister."

"The guards got a free pass with her... So sickening," Emilia sobs, wiping her face again. "She has Harper now, and she certainly didn't need saving, she dealt with that all on her own."

"Ivy's a fucking badass."

Emilia nods, a sombre smile on her face. "Too right."

Epilogue

Leading the ceremony, President Cross smiles. "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today, in the presence of family and friends, to celebrate the joining of this wonderful couple.

There are no obligations on this earth sweeter or tender than those you are about to assume, and no vows more solemn than those you are about to make.

Each person has a soul mate, some of us haven't met them. But, by chance, Emilia Lopez and Avaline Paterson met. And it was the best chance meeting that the universe has ever seen. I will now pass you over to Miss Lopez," President Cross announces, gesturing to Emilia.

"Avaline – my Ava – I love you, so much. The day we met, you came into City Hall to register as a teacher. I commented on your Hell Kitty blouse – I told you that you didn't look like a teacher because you had cat skulls on your top.

You told me that nobody looks like anything because anyone can be anything." Emilia pauses, smiling as she focuses on Avaline. "You were right. You didn't look gay, either."

The crowd begins to laugh as Avaline giggles, pressing her lips together as she tries to hold in her laughter.

"When we moved in together you made me decorate the house with rainbows to let our friends know that we weren't just friends moving in together. And it confused a lot of people," Emilia chuckles. "But after all that, after almost three years of us being apart, life

with you was the easiest thing to come back to. We've been uprooted, we've been hurt, and we've almost died... But coming back to you was the easiest thing I've ever done in my life. And I can't wait to wake up in bed next to you, tomorrow morning, knowing that you're Mrs Avaline Lopez."

"Now, Avaline," President Cross says.

"The worst day of my life was the day I was rescued – you were taken away, and I was alone. But you came back to me, and I'm so happy to have you back."

"Miss Emilia Lopez, do you take Miss Avaline Paterson to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

"I do."

"And do you, Miss Avaline Paterson, take Miss Emilia Lopez to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

"I do."

President Cross smiles, a toothy grin on his face. "Well, it is my pleasure to announce that you are now married! Now, kiss the bride."

In unison, Avaline and Emilia laugh, "which one?"

The pair join together, their arms wrapped around each other's waists as they share a passionate kiss in front of their friends and family.

~

Lying in the sun, Avaline smiles – her eyes shut as she feels the sun's warmth on her skin, smelling the sweet scent of grass and cherry blossom. "Sweetheart, are you going to join me?"

Emilia smirks as she looks down at Avaline, cooking some chicken on the

barbeque while Harper, Ivy, Gabriel, Frank, and Noemi sit down, getting ready for food.

"I have some people coming to see you," Harper announces as he sits at the table.

"Oh, yeah?" Emilia questions.

The doorbell rings, Harper stands up. "That will be them now," he says, getting up and heading into the house. Coming back to the garden, Harper steps out of the house. "Here they are," he announces, gesturing to the people behind him.

Emilia stops what she's doing – allowing Noemi to take over. "Vic?" She stutters.

Rushing over, Vic and Mira hug Emilia. "We've missed you so much," Vic chuckles. "We're sorry we missed your wedding, we were trying to find someone for you."

Vic steps back, making way for someone else. "Emilia," a woman says, stepping out of the house.

Emilia's mouth hangs open, her eyebrows pulling together as she looks at the woman – long brown hair, tanned skin – hazel brown eyes. "Agatha?"

Avaline sits up, using her hand to shield her eyes from the sun. "Where's Rosie?"

Taking a deep breath, Agatha presses her lips together. "I'm so sorry..." She cries.

Emilia exhales, tears rolling down her face. "How?" She sits down at the table along with Harper, Vic, Mira, and Agatha.

Sitting next to Emilia, Agatha puts her hand on Emilia's shoulder in an attempt to comfort her. "We were reported by a guy who lived on our street – the guy had tried to rape me a few months before. The purge unit came

into our house at night, dragged us into the street. One of them branded me, then another tried to brand Rosie..." She stops, looking down at her lap. "Rosie fought back, tried to run. They shot her down."

Emilia lets out a deep breath, as if a sigh of relief. "Good."

"What?" Avaline questions, frowning as she gets up and walks over to the table. "How is your sister being dead *good*?"

The survivors of the purge look between each other – horror in their eyes with calm expressions on their faces. Emilia looks up at Avaline, smiling at her wife. "She's dead, but she didn't have to live to see the horrors that we did."