Bestie

by Brent Clark Palmer

Vulpes Parvaes, Book 1; The Chariot, Book 18

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1: The Comforting Shoulder

Frankie sat on the edge of her king-sized bed in the downtown Denver condo, the city lights glittering far below the floor-to-ceiling windows like distant stars she couldn't reach. Her auburn hair hung loose and tangled around her shoulders, still damp from the shower she'd taken hours ago but hadn't really felt. The oversized t-shirt she wore — one of the last things she had of her ex — clung to her modest curves in all the wrong places, making her feel small and exposed instead of sexy. Her minxy hips and the soft swell of her breasts felt like someone else's body tonight. Everything felt like someone else's.

She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand for the hundredth time. The breakup had been clean on paper, ugly in practice. Two years gone in one ugly fight and a slammed door. Now the silence in the condo was so loud it hurt.

A soft knock at the front door made her flinch.

Frankie hesitated, then padded barefoot across the cool hardwood floors, the city skyline stretching out behind her like a painting she no longer had the energy to admire. She peered through the peephole.

Irena.

Petite, compact, with that powerful little body of hers wrapped in black leggings and an oversized cream sweater that still somehow showed off the generous curve of her hips and the full swell of her breasts. Her blonde hair was pulled into a messy ponytail, a few strands framing her face. She held a brown paper bag in one hand and a bottle of wine in the other, smiling softly through the fisheye lens.

Frankie opened the door.

"Hey," Irena said, voice low and warm, like honey poured over gravel. "I figured you might not have eaten. Thai okay?"

Frankie's throat tightened. "You didn't have to…"

"I know I didn't." Irena stepped inside without waiting for permission, her presence filling the entryway like it belonged there. She smelled like clean skin and something faintly citrusy. "But I wanted to. You shouldn't be alone right now, Frankie."

The condo door clicked shut behind her. Frankie followed her into the open living space, arms wrapped around herself. Irena set the food on the marble kitchen island and turned, studying her with those clear, steady eyes.

“You look wrecked, sweet girl,” Irena murmured. She closed the distance between them and pulled Frankie into a hug without asking.

Frankie stiffened for half a second, then melted. Irena’s body was smaller than hers but somehow stronger — compact muscle wrapped in soft curves. Her arms wrapped tight around Frankie’s back, one hand sliding up to cradle the nape of her neck. Frankie’s face pressed into the warm curve of Irena’s shoulder. She smelled like vanilla and something warmer underneath, something that made Frankie’s chest loosen for the first time all day. “I’ve got you,” Irena whispered against her hair. “You don’t have to hold it together with me. Let it out.”

Frankie’s breath hitched. A sob tore loose before she could stop it. Irena didn’t pull away. She just held her tighter, one hand rubbing slow, firm circles between Frankie’s shoulder blades, the other stroking her auburn hair in long, soothing strokes.

“That’s it,” Irena murmured. “Breathe with me. In… and out. Good girl.”

The words slipped under Frankie’s skin like warm water. She didn’t even register the “good girl” at first — just the way Irena’s voice vibrated through her chest where their bodies pressed together. Frankie’s nipples tightened against the thin fabric of her t-shirt, an involuntary reaction she blamed on the chill of the condo. But the heat pooling low in her belly had nothing to do with temperature.

They stood like that for a long time. Irena’s heartbeat steady against Frankie’s ear. Frankie’s own heart racing, then slowly, slowly matching the rhythm of the smaller woman holding her. Eventually Irena pulled back just enough to cup Frankie’s face in both hands. Her thumbs brushed away fresh tears. “There you are,” she said softly. “Still the most beautiful mess I’ve ever seen.”

Frankie let out a wet laugh. “Shut up.”

“Never.” Irena’s smile was small and real. “Come on. Sit. Eat something before you pass out on me.”

They ended up on the oversized sectional, takeout containers open between them, legs tucked under them like teenagers at a sleepover. Irena poured them both generous glasses of red wine and handed one to Frankie.

“Tell me what you need,” Irena said, voice gentle but direct. “You want to talk about him? Want to rage? Want to sit in silence and let me just be here? Whatever you need, I’m staying as long as you want me.”

Frankie took a long sip of wine, the warmth sliding down her throat and blooming in her chest. “I don’t even know what I need anymore. I feel… empty. Like someone scooped everything out and left the shell.”

Irena’s eyes softened. She reached over and rested her hand on Frankie’s bare knee, thumb stroking the soft skin there in slow, absent circles. “That’s grief,

baby. It hollows you out first. Then it starts filling you back up with new things. Better things, if you let it." Frankie looked at her. Really looked. Irena's petite frame seemed to take up more space than it should — that commanding fitness-trainer energy wrapped in genuine warmth. Her lips were full, slightly glossy from the wine. Her eyes held Frankie's without flinching. "You're really good at this," Frankie said quietly. "Being here. Making it feel… less awful." Irena's smile turned a little shy, a little proud. "I care about you, Frankie. More than just coworker stuff. You're special to me. I've known that for a while."

The words landed somewhere deep. Frankie felt her cheeks flush. She looked down at her wine glass, suddenly aware of how close they were sitting — Irena's thigh pressed against hers, the heat of her body seeping through the leggings.

"I don't want to be a burden," Frankie whispered.

"You could never be a burden." Irena's hand slid higher on Frankie's thigh, just an inch, but the touch felt electric. "Let me take care of you tonight. That's what friends do, right? Real ones."

Frankie nodded. Her skin tingled where Irena touched her. She told herself it was just comfort. Just the wine. Just the rawness of the day making everything feel more intense. They talked for hours.

Irena asked gentle questions and actually listened to the answers. She made Frankie laugh — really laugh — when she did an impression of their boss at work trying to use TikTok slang. She shared her own stupid breakup story from years ago, complete with dramatic hand gestures that made her breasts shift under the sweater in a way Frankie couldn't help noticing. Every time Irena leaned forward to refill their glasses, Frankie caught the faint scent of her skin and the soft press of those fuller curves.

At some point Irena kicked off her shoes and tucked her feet under her, turning fully toward Frankie on the couch. The city lights painted gold across her face.

"You know what I think?" Irena said, voice dropping lower. "I think this is going to be the making of you, Frankie Stevens. Not the breaking. You're too strong for that. Too beautiful. Too much woman to let some asshole take you down."

Frankie's breath caught. No one had called her beautiful in months. Not like that. Not with that kind of heat behind it.

Irena reached out and tucked a strand of auburn hair behind Frankie's ear, fingers lingering against her cheek. "And I'm going to be right here while it happens. Every step. You don't have to do any of it alone."

Frankie leaned into the touch without thinking. Her lips parted. For one suspended second she thought Irena might kiss her. The thought sent a sharp pulse of heat between her legs, shocking in its suddenness.

But Irena just smiled — soft, knowing, patient — and let her hand fall to rest on Frankie's shoulder instead.

"It's late," she said. "You should try to sleep. I can stay on the couch if you want. Or… I can sleep in the guest room. Whatever makes you feel safest."

Frankie looked at her — this small, powerful, impossibly warm woman who had shown up with food and stayed for hours just because Frankie was hurting — and felt something shift inside her chest. Something that felt dangerously close to hope.

"Stay," she whispered. "Please. The bed's big enough. I just… I don't want to be alone tonight."

Irena's eyes darkened for the briefest moment, then softened again. "Okay, sweet girl. I'll stay."

She stood and held out her hand. Frankie took it without hesitation. Irena's palm was warm and dry, her grip firm.

They walked together down the hallway toward the master bedroom, city lights painting long shadows across the walls. Frankie's heart beat faster with every step, but not from fear. From something else. Something new and terrifying and strangely comforting all at once. Irena squeezed her hand once, gently.

"I've got you," she said again, voice low and sure in the dark. "I'm not going anywhere." Frankie believed her.

And for the first time in weeks, the hollow place inside her chest didn't feel quite so empty.

Chapter 2

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Chapter 2: The New Guy

The rooftop bar hummed with the low thrum of after-work laughter and the distant rush of Denver traffic twenty stories below. String lights crisscrossed overhead, casting a warm golden glow across the long wooden tables. Frankie stood near the railing, the evening breeze tugging at her auburn hair and making the thin fabric of her blouse cling to the soft curve of her breasts and the dip of her waist. She felt exposed in the best and worst way — still tender from everything that had happened, yet strangely alive under the city sky.

Ryan's hand rested lightly at the small of her back as they waited for a table. He was solid, safe, the kind of guy who opened doors and remembered her coffee order. They'd only been seeing each other for three weeks, but after the breakup it felt good to have someone steady. "There she is," Ryan said, nodding toward the entrance.

Irena stepped out onto the rooftop like she owned the night. Petite and compact, her blonde hair loose around her shoulders, catching the light. She wore a fitted black top that hugged the generous swell of her breasts and tucked into high-waisted jeans that showed off the powerful curve of her hips and the strength in her thighs. That fitness-trainer energy radiated from her — confident, magnetic, impossible to ignore.

Her eyes found Frankie immediately and lit up.

"Frankie!" Irena crossed the space in a few quick steps and pulled her into a hug that felt like coming home. Her body was warm and solid, curves pressing softly against Frankie's as she held on a beat longer than necessary. "God, you look beautiful. That color on you is criminal."

Frankie's cheeks flushed. She caught the faint citrus-and-vanilla scent of Irena's skin and felt a small, involuntary flutter low in her belly.

"Thanks," she murmured. "This is Ryan. Ryan, this is Irena — my coworker who's basically been keeping me alive the last few weeks."

Ryan extended his hand with an easy smile. "Heard a lot about you. All good things." Irena took his hand, but instead of a quick shake she covered it with her other one, warm and genuine. "All true, I hope. Frankie's one of the best people I know. You're a lucky man." The way she said it made something warm bloom in Frankie's chest. Ryan laughed, clearly charmed.

They found a high-top table near the edge. Irena slid onto the stool beside Frankie, her knee brushing Frankie's thigh and staying there. The contact sent a

quiet spark up Frankie's leg.

"So, Ryan," Irena said, leaning forward with genuine interest, "Frankie tells me you're in commercial real estate. That must be intense. What's the wildest deal you've ever closed?" Ryan launched into a story about a downtown high-rise negotiation that had gone sideways at the last minute. Irena listened with her whole body — head tilted, eyes bright, asking sharp, funny follow-up questions that made him laugh. Every time she turned to include Frankie in the conversation, her hand would rest briefly on Frankie's forearm or the back of her chair, fingers warm against bare skin.

Frankie watched them talk and felt a complicated knot form in her stomach. Relief, because Ryan and Irena were getting along so easily. Something tighter, too — a strange little twist of heat when she noticed the way Irena's full lips curved when she smiled at him, or how her breasts shifted under the black top when she laughed.

At one point Irena caught the bartender's eye and ordered without asking. "Two more IPAs for the table and a glass of that cabernet Frankie likes. And can we get the truffle fries? My treat."

Ryan raised an eyebrow, impressed. "You remembered her wine?"

Irena shrugged, but her eyes flicked to Frankie with something soft and private. "I pay attention to the people I care about."

Frankie's breath caught. She took a sip of her fresh glass of wine and felt the warmth spread through her chest, down to the place between her thighs that had no business reacting like this in public.

The conversation flowed easily for the next hour. Irena told a ridiculous story about their boss trying to do a team-building trust fall that ended with him on the floor and everyone pretending it was intentional. Ryan howled with laughter. Frankie found herself laughing too — real, belly-deep laughter that loosened something tight inside her.

At one point Irena leaned in close to whisper something to Frankie while Ryan was checking his phone. Her breath brushed the shell of Frankie's ear.

"You okay?" she asked quietly, voice low and intimate. "You've been quiet. Still feeling raw from everything?"

Frankie nodded, her skin prickling where Irena's shoulder pressed against hers. "Better now. You make it easier."

Irena's hand found hers under the table and squeezed once, firm and reassuring. "That's what I'm here for, sweet girl."

The pet name slipped out so naturally it didn’t even feel like a name — just warmth. Frankie’s nipples tightened against the lace of her bra. She shifted on the stool, suddenly very aware of the ache building low in her belly.

When the check came, Irena insisted on paying for the whole round. “My way of saying thank you for letting me crash your date night.”

Ryan grinned. “Anytime. Seriously. You’re great.”

They said their goodbyes on the sidewalk outside the bar. Ryan wrapped an arm around Frankie’s waist while Irena hugged them both — first Ryan, quick and friendly, then Frankie, slower, her cheek brushing Frankie’s as she murmured, “Text me when you get home safe, okay?”

Frankie nodded, her heart beating too fast.

Later, back at the condo, Frankie had just kicked off her heels and poured herself a glass of water when her phone lit up.

Irena: Ryan seems really sweet. You deserve that kind of steady. But if you ever need someone who sees all of you — the messy, beautiful, minxy parts too — I’m right here. Always.

Frankie stared at the screen, a slow, hot flush creeping up her neck and across her chest. She read the message twice, then a third time, her thumb hovering over the keyboard. Her body felt alive in a way it hadn’t in months — skin sensitive, breath a little shallow, a deep, liquid warmth settling between her thighs. She typed back before she could overthink it.

Frankie: Thank you. Tonight was really good because of you.

The reply came almost instantly.

Irena: That’s all I want, Frankie. To make things good for you.

Frankie set the phone down on the kitchen counter and pressed her palms flat against the cool marble, trying to steady herself. Outside the windows, Denver glittered like it was celebrating something she couldn’t name yet.

She touched her fingers to her lips, still feeling the ghost of Irena’s breath against her ear, and let out a soft, shaky exhale.

For the first time since the breakup, the condo didn’t feel quite so empty.

Chapter 3

Bestie

Chapter 3: Wardrobe Advice

Saturday morning sunlight poured through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Denver condo, painting long golden stripes across the hardwood floors. Frankie stood barefoot in the kitchen in an old tank top and soft cotton shorts that hugged her minxy hips and rode up just enough to show the smooth curve of her ass. Her auburn hair was still messy from sleep, falling in loose waves around her shoulders. She felt raw and soft this morning — the kind of vulnerable that came after a good cry and a better night's sleep.

The doorbell chimed.

When she opened the door, Irena stood there with two large coffees in a cardboard carrier and a paper bag that smelled like fresh croissants. She looked effortlessly beautiful in leggings and a cropped hoodie that showed a sliver of toned stomach and the swell of her fuller breasts.

"Morning, sweet girl," Irena said, her voice warm and low like it had been every time they'd spoken since that first night. "I brought reinforcements. And I figured you might want company that isn't just your own thoughts."

Frankie's chest loosened the second she saw her. "You're spoiling me."

"I like spoiling you." Irena stepped inside, set everything on the island, and pulled Frankie into a quick, tight hug. Her body was compact and strong, the soft press of her breasts against Frankie's sending a quiet spark straight down Frankie's spine. "How'd you sleep?" "Better than I have in weeks." Frankie meant it. She could still feel the ghost of Irena's arms around her from the night before, the way she'd held her until she drifted off.

They settled on the couch with their coffees, legs tucked under them, knees touching. The conversation flowed easily — Irena asking gentle questions about how Frankie was feeling, sharing a funny story about her morning run, making Frankie laugh until her stomach hurt. Every time Irena smiled, her whole face lit up, and Frankie found herself staring at the curve of her lips a little too long.

After a while Irena glanced toward the hallway. "Can I ask you something kind of personal?" Frankie nodded.

"You've got this incredible body and I feel like you've been hiding it under oversized sweaters and sad breakup clothes. Would you let me help you go through your closet? Just for fun. No pressure. I just think you deserve to feel hot again."

Frankie's cheeks warmed. "You think I'm hot?"

Irena’s eyes softened, but they didn’t look away. “Frankie, you’re fucking stunning. That auburn hair, those minxy curves, the way you move… yeah. I think you’re hot. And I think you’ve forgotten how to see it.”

The words landed low in Frankie’s belly like warm honey. She bit her lip and nodded. “Okay. Let’s do it.”

They ended up in the master bedroom, closet doors open, morning light spilling across racks of clothes Frankie hadn’t touched in months. Irena stood close behind her, one hand resting lightly on Frankie’s lower back as she flipped through hangers.

“This one,” Irena said suddenly, pulling out a deep emerald-green dress Frankie had bought on impulse two years ago and never worn. It was short, tight, with a low neckline and a hem that would barely cover her ass. “God, this would look incredible on you. You have the perfect minxy shape for it — that little waist, those hips, the way your tits would sit in this neckline…”

Frankie laughed, embarrassed and flattered all at once. “You’re ridiculous.”

“I’m honest.” Irena held the dress up against Frankie’s body, her knuckles brushing the underside of her breasts through the thin tank top. “Try it on. For me.”

Frankie’s heart beat faster. She took the dress into the bathroom and slipped it on. The fabric clung to every curve — hugging her modest but full breasts, cinching at her waist, stretching tight over the round swell of her ass. When she stepped back out, Irena was waiting by the full-length mirror.

“Jesus, Frankie…” Irena’s voice dropped. She stepped behind her, eyes traveling slowly down Frankie’s reflection. “Look at you.”

Frankie stared at herself. The dress made her look like sex and sin and something dangerously soft all at once. Her nipples had tightened into hard little peaks against the thin material, clearly visible. A flush crept up her chest and neck.

Irena moved closer. “Can I zip you up?”

Frankie nodded, too breathless to speak.

Irena’s fingers found the zipper at the small of her back. She pulled it up slowly, deliberately, the backs of her knuckles grazing Frankie’s bare skin the entire way. When she reached the top, her hands lingered — one resting on Frankie’s hip, the other sliding up to smooth the fabric over her shoulder.

“See?” Irena murmured, her mouth close to Frankie’s ear. “You’re already standing taller. Shoulders back. Tits out. You look like you know exactly how fuckable you are.”

Frankie’s breath caught. Heat flooded between her thighs, sudden and slick. She could feel her pulse throbbing low and heavy, her clit swelling with every slow stroke of Irena’s thumb against her hip.

“Irena…” she whispered.

“I’ve got you,” Irena said softly, the same words she’d used that first night. Her hand slid around to Frankie’s stomach, fingers splayed just below her breasts. “You don’t have to hide anymore. Not from me. Not from yourself.”

They stood there in the mirror, bodies close, breathing in sync. Frankie could feel the warmth of Irena’s fuller curves pressed against her back, the steady rise and fall of her chest. Her own body felt electric — skin flushed, nipples aching, the thin lace of her panties growing damp. Irena met her eyes in the reflection and smiled, small and real and full of something that made Frankie’s chest ache.

“You’re not broken, Frankie,” she whispered. “You’re just waking up.”

Frankie leaned back into her without thinking, letting Irena’s arms come around her waist. For a long moment they stayed like that — two women breathing in the same quiet morning light, bodies warm and close, hearts beating a little too fast.

And Frankie had never felt more seen. Or more wanted.

Chapter 4

Bestie

Chapter 4: The Yoga Session

The living room of the Denver condo had been transformed. Irena had pushed the coffee table aside and rolled out two thick yoga mats side by side in the golden afternoon light. Soft instrumental music played from her phone on the kitchen island. She stood barefoot in black leggings and a sports bra that hugged her full breasts and showed off the toned lines of her stomach. Her blonde hair was pulled into a high ponytail, a few loose strands framing her face.

Frankie hovered near the couch in her own yoga clothes — a soft gray sports bra and highwaisted shorts that clung to her minxy curves and rode high on her thighs. She felt exposed and strangely excited at the same time.

“You sure about this?” Frankie asked, tucking a strand of auburn hair behind her ear. “I haven’t done yoga in forever. I’ll probably look ridiculous.”

Irena turned and smiled, that warm, genuine smile that always made Frankie’s stomach flutter. “That’s the point. We’re not doing it to look good. We’re doing it so you can feel good in your body again. Come here.”

Frankie stepped onto the mat. Irena moved behind her, close enough that Frankie could feel the heat radiating from her skin.

“First, we just breathe,” Irena said softly. Her hands came to rest lightly on Frankie’s shoulders. “In through the nose… slow… and out through the mouth. Feel your ribs expand. Good girl.”

The words slipped out so naturally that Frankie didn’t even flinch. She just closed her eyes and breathed, feeling Irena’s palms warm against her skin.

They moved through gentle flows — cat-cow, downward dog, warrior poses. Irena stayed close the entire time, her voice low and encouraging.

“Beautiful,” she murmured when Frankie held a pose longer than she expected. “Your body was made for this. Look at the way your back arches… the curve of your spine. Stunning.” Frankie’s cheeks burned, but not from embarrassment. Every time Irena praised her, a warm pulse throbbed between her legs. Her nipples had tightened into hard peaks against the thin sports bra, and she was grateful the fabric was dark.

They moved into a standing forward fold. Frankie’s hamstrings protested as she reached for her toes.

“Bend your knees a little,” Irena instructed. She stepped in close behind Frankie and placed both hands firmly on her hips, guiding them back and down. “There.

Feel that stretch through the backs of your thighs?”

Frankie nodded, but her breath had gone shallow. Irena’s hands were strong and sure, thumbs pressing into the soft flesh just above her ass. The position left Frankie’s ass pushed back toward Irena’s hips, and the heat of the smaller woman’s body was impossible to ignore. “Perfect,” Irena said, voice lower now. “You’re doing so well.”

They transitioned into a low lunge. Frankie’s front leg trembled slightly as she tried to sink deeper.

“Easy,” Irena laughed warmly when Frankie wobbled. “I’ve got you.”

Before Frankie could steady herself, Irena moved in close, pressing the full length of her compact, curvy body against Frankie’s back. One arm wrapped around Frankie’s waist while the other hand slid down to her hip, holding her steady. Their bodies aligned — Irena’s full breasts pressing softly into Frankie’s shoulder blades, her hips nestled against the curve of Frankie’s ass.

Frankie’s breath caught hard. She could feel every inch of Irena — the warmth of her skin, the steady rhythm of her breathing, the way her thigh muscles flexed as she held the pose. A rush of slick heat flooded between Frankie’s legs so suddenly she had to bite her lip to keep from making a sound.

“There we go,” Irena murmured right against her ear. Her voice was soft, affectionate, almost proud. “See? You don’t have to do it alone. I’m right here with you.”

They held the pose together for a long moment, breathing in sync. Frankie could feel her own heart hammering against her ribs. Her clit throbbed with every slow exhale. She was wet — really wet — and the thin fabric of her shorts was doing nothing to hide it.

Irena finally eased them out of the pose but didn’t step away immediately. Her hand lingered on Frankie’s hip, thumb stroking slow circles over the bare skin just above the waistband. “You okay?” she asked gently, turning Frankie to face her. Their faces were only inches apart. “Your breathing changed.”

Frankie swallowed. Her cheeks were flushed, her lips parted. “Yeah. Just… intense.” Irena’s eyes searched hers for a moment, then softened with that same caring warmth that had been there since the very first night. She reached up and brushed a strand of damp auburn hair from Frankie’s forehead.

“You’re allowed to feel things, Frankie,” she said quietly. “In your body. In your heart. All of it. I’m not going anywhere.”

Frankie looked at her — this petite, powerful woman who showed up with coffee and stayed through the hard nights and now stood here touching her like she was something precious —

and felt her chest swell with something bigger than gratitude.

“I know,” she whispered. “That’s why it feels so good.”

Irena smiled, small and real, then leaned in and pressed a soft, lingering kiss to Frankie’s cheek. Her lips were warm. Her breath smelled faintly of mint and something sweet. When she pulled back, her hand was still on Frankie’s hip.

“Want to keep going?” she asked. “Or do you need a break?”

Frankie’s body was humming. Her nipples ached. Her thighs were slick. Every nerve ending felt alive and electric.

She met Irena’s eyes and answered honestly.

“I don’t want to stop.”

Chapter 5

Bestie

Chapter 5: The First Supplement

The sun had dipped low over the Denver skyline, painting the condo in soft amber light. Frankie sat curled on the couch in an oversized sweater and nothing else, her bare legs tucked beneath her. The yoga session two days earlier still lingered in her body — the memory of Irena pressed against her back, the way her hands had guided her hips, the heat that had pooled between her thighs and refused to fully fade.

She was scrolling absently on her phone when the doorbell rang.

Irena stood in the hallway holding a small brown paper bag and a bottle of wine, her blonde hair loose and slightly windblown. She looked smaller than usual in an oversized cream sweater that still managed to show off the generous curve of her breasts and the compact strength of her frame.

“Hey,” Frankie said, smiling before she could stop herself. The sight of Irena always did that now — made something warm and alive unfurl in her chest.

“Hey, you.” Irena stepped inside and set the bag on the island. “I brought wine. And something else.”

Frankie followed her into the kitchen, watching the way Irena moved — confident, graceful, completely at ease in Frankie’s space. It had started to feel natural having her here. Irena turned, holding up a small amber glass bottle with a handwritten label. “I made these for you.”

Frankie tilted her head. “Made them?”

“Custom wellness blend,” Irena said, her voice soft and proud. “Vitamins, adaptogens, a few things to help with stress and sleep and… that glow you’ve been missing. I’ve been researching blends for months. I wanted something that would actually help you feel like yourself again.”

Frankie’s heart squeezed. “You made them yourself? For me?”

Irena nodded, stepping closer. “Of course for you. You’ve been through so much, Frankie. I hate seeing you carry it all alone. Let me help carry some of it.”

The words landed deep. Frankie looked at the bottle, then back at Irena’s face — those clear eyes, the gentle curve of her mouth, the way she always seemed to know exactly what Frankie needed before she asked.

“Can I see?” Frankie asked.

Irena unscrewed the cap and shook one small, pale pink capsule into her palm. “Just one a day to start. They’re gentle but effective. I’ve been taking a similar

blend for years. It changed everything for me."

Frankie took the capsule between her fingers. It felt warm from Irena's hand.

"Want to try the first one now?" Irena asked, her voice dropping into that low, intimate register that always made Frankie's skin tingle. "We can make it a little ritual. Something just for us."

Frankie nodded, suddenly shy and excited at the same time.

Irena poured them both a small glass of water, then took the capsule back. She held it between her thumb and forefinger and stepped in close — so close Frankie could smell the clean, warm scent of her skin and the faint citrus of her shampoo.

"Open," Irena murmured, eyes locked on Frankie's.

Frankie parted her lips.

Irena placed the capsule gently on her tongue, her fingertip lingering for a second against the soft, wet heat of Frankie's mouth. Their eyes stayed connected. Frankie's breath hitched. The touch was so small, so careful, yet it sent a sharp pulse of heat straight between her legs. "There we go," Irena whispered. "Now the water."

Frankie sipped, the capsule sliding down easily. Irena's fingers brushed her lower lip as she took the glass back, and Frankie's nipples tightened instantly beneath her sweater. "How do you feel?" Irena asked, searching her face with genuine concern and something warmer.

Frankie swallowed. Her body felt flushed, alive. "A little… warm. Tingly, almost." Irena smiled, small and pleased. She reached up and tucked a strand of auburn hair behind Frankie's ear, her knuckles grazing the side of her neck.

"That's normal. It means it's already starting to work with your system. You're going to feel so much better, Frankie. I promise."

Frankie leaned into the touch without thinking. "Why are you so good to me?"

Irena's expression softened into something achingly tender. She cupped Frankie's face in both hands, thumbs stroking her cheekbones.

"Because you deserve it," she said simply. "Because when I look at you, I see this beautiful, strong, incredibly sexy woman who's been dimming her own light for too long. And I want to help you turn it back on. All of it."

Frankie's throat tightened. Her heart was racing. Between her thighs, she was slick and aching, her body responding to every gentle word and every careful touch like it had been waiting for this.

Irena leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to Frankie’s forehead, then another to the tip of her nose, and finally, after a brief pause, a slow, lingering kiss to the corner of her mouth. When she pulled back, her voice was barely above a whisper.

“Welcome to day one, sweet girl. I’m going to take such good care of you.”

Frankie stood there in the golden evening light, capsule already working its way through her system, body humming with warmth and want.

Chapter 6

Bestie

Chapter 6: Ryan’s “Stress”

The Thai containers sat open on the coffee table, the smell of lemongrass and coconut still lingering in the air. Frankie sat curled on the couch with her legs tucked beneath her, the oversized sweater riding up just enough to expose the smooth skin of her thighs. Irena had kicked off her shoes and was sitting close, one knee brushing against Frankie’s as they ate. Irena wiped her mouth with a napkin and glanced over, her expression soft and thoughtful. “Hey… can I ask you something?” she said, voice gentle. “At the happy hour the other night, Ryan seemed a little tense. Like, in his shoulders and the way he kept checking his phone. Did you notice that?”

Frankie shook her head slowly. “Not really. He seemed okay to me.”

Irena nodded, then reached over and rested her hand on Frankie’s bare knee. Her palm was warm, thumb tracing slow, soothing circles against her skin.

“I think he’s carrying more than he lets on,” Irena said quietly. “Work stress, probably trying to be the strong one for you while you’re still healing from everything. He’s a really good guy. I could feel that the second I met him.”

Frankie looked at her. Irena’s eyes were steady and full of that familiar warmth that always made something loosen in Frankie’s chest.

“I was thinking…” Irena continued, her voice dropping into that low, intimate register she only used when it was just the two of them. “Maybe I could take one thing off your plate. Talk to him. Spend a little time with him. Help him unwind a bit. You know… just be there as a friend so he has someone to vent to. Man-to-man, but from someone who actually gets it.” Her thumb kept moving in those slow, hypnotic circles on Frankie’s knee.

“You’ve already got so much going on right now. Let me handle this one thing for you. I don’t mind at all. I actually like Ryan. And I like helping you feel lighter.”

Frankie’s breath caught. She could feel the warmth of Irena’s hand spreading up her thigh, the gentle pressure of her fingers, the way Irena’s body was angled toward her on the couch. A slow, liquid heat began to build low in her belly.

Irena leaned in a little closer, her blonde hair falling forward as she looked at Frankie with open affection.

“I just want to make things easier for you, sweet girl. That’s all. You deserve to feel taken care of. You don’t have to carry everything by yourself anymore.”

Her hand slid just a fraction higher on Frankie’s thigh, still gentle, still comforting, but the touch sent a sharp little pulse straight between Frankie’s legs. She could feel herself getting wet, the soft cotton of her panties growing damp as Irena’s thumb continued its slow, steady rhythm.

Irena smiled, small and sincere.

“What do you think? Would that be okay with you?”

Frankie’s lips parted slightly as she looked at Irena, her heart beating harder in her chest. Irena’s hand stayed right where it was, warm and sure against her skin.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7: The Affirmation Journal

The evening had settled into that quiet, golden hour where the Denver skyline glowed beyond the floor-to-ceiling windows, turning the glass into a sheet of amber and fire.

Frankie sat curled at one end of the couch in an oversized cream sweater, her bare legs folded beneath her, still thinking about the conversation from the night before. The offer lingered in her body in a way she could not seem to shake—not just what Irena had said about Ryan, but the way she had said it, as if stepping into Frankie's life and carrying part of it for her was the most natural thing in the world.

Irena emerged from the kitchen carrying two mugs of tea and that same soft steadiness she seemed to bring into every room. She handed one to Frankie, then set the other on the coffee table before reaching into her tote bag.

"I got you something," she said.

Frankie looked up.

Irena held out a small leather journal, dark green and smooth, tied with a thin wraparound strap. It was beautiful in a quiet way—simple, elegant, the kind of object that seemed to ask to be touched.

Frankie took it carefully. "What's this?"

"A gratitude journal," Irena said, settling beside her on the couch. "Not in a cheesy way. In a useful way." She tucked one leg under herself and turned toward Frankie fully, close enough that their knees touched through the sweater's hem. "Three things every night. Small things, big things, whatever feels real. It helps train your mind to notice where the safety is instead of only where the panic is."

Frankie ran her thumb along the edge of the cover.

"That sounds…" She smiled faintly. "Actually kind of nice."

"I thought so." Irena's voice softened. "And I thought maybe we could do the first one together."

Frankie glanced at her. "Now?"

Irena smiled. "Now."

She took the journal gently from Frankie's hands, untied the strap, and opened to the first blank page. Then she handed Frankie a pen.

The page stared up at her, clean and expectant.

For a moment Frankie didn’t write. She sat with the pen hovering over the paper while the city light burned softly at the windows and Irena’s warmth rested beside her like something reliable.

“What if I’m bad at it?” Frankie asked.

Irena laughed quietly.

“You’re not being graded, sweet girl.”

The words made something soften low in Frankie’s chest. Irena reached out and rested her hand on Frankie’s thigh, just above the knee, her thumb moving in a slow, familiar stroke. “Start with what feels true,” she murmured.

Frankie nodded.

Then she bent over the page and wrote carefully:

1. I’m grateful Irena showed up when I thought I was going to drown in all of this. She felt Irena lean closer to read, the warmth of her shoulder brushing Frankie’s arm. “That’s honest,” Irena said. “Good.”

Frankie looked at the page, embarrassed suddenly by how intimate the sentence felt in her own handwriting.

Irena’s thumb kept moving in that same slow rhythm over her thigh.

“Another one.”

Frankie drew a breath and wrote:

2. I’m grateful for the way she makes things feel less impossible.

This time Irena was quiet for a beat after reading it. When she did speak, her voice had dropped lower.

“I like that,” she said. “Because that matters. Things don’t have to feel impossible all the time. Not when someone is willing to help.”

Frankie swallowed.

The pen hovered again.

Her mind drifted back to Ryan—to his tired smile, the tension Irena had noticed before she had, the offer to talk to him, to help him unwind, to take something off Frankie’s plate. Without entirely meaning to, she began writing the third line.

3. I’m grateful I don’t have to carry Ryan by myself if Irena is willing to help. The room went very still.

Frankie stared at the sentence the second it was written. It looked more serious on paper than it had sounded spoken aloud the night before. More binding. More real.

Irena read it once.

Then again.

A slow, pleased breath left her.

Frankie felt the hand on her thigh slide just a little higher, still gentle, still entirely easy, and yet the movement sent a quick pulse through her.

“I think that one is important,” Irena said quietly.

Frankie looked at her.

Irena took the pen from her fingers, but instead of setting it aside immediately, she tapped it lightly against the page.

“Do you know why?”

Frankie shook her head.

“Because it’s you telling the truth before fear talks you out of it.”

Frankie’s stomach tightened.

Irena set the pen down on the coffee table and turned back toward her, fully attentive now. “You have this instinct,” she said softly, “to hold everything yourself until it becomes unbearable. Your feelings. Other people’s needs. The things you’re afraid will fall apart if you loosen your grip even a little.” Her fingers traced another slow path over Frankie’s thigh. “And then you suffer twice—once from the weight of it, and once from pretending the weight belongs there.”

Frankie lowered her eyes to the journal in her lap.

“I guess,” she said.

Irena tipped her chin lightly with two fingers until Frankie looked back at her. “No guessing,” she said gently. “You know I’m right.”

Frankie’s breath caught.

There was no cruelty in Irena’s face. Only certainty. The kind that made argument seem childish.

“I’m right,” Irena repeated softly. “And that’s okay.”

Frankie felt heat rise into her cheeks.

Irena’s hand left her chin and came to rest flat on the open page, right beside the third line. “This,” she said, “is a good sentence.”

Frankie glanced down. “It is?”

“Yes.”

Irena’s mouth curved in the smallest smile.

“It says you’re learning something.”

Frankie looked back at her, uncertain. “What?”

Irena leaned closer, close enough now that Frankie could feel the warmth of her breath near her cheek.

“That Ryan does not become more loved just because you exhaust yourself trying to manage him alone.”

The words sank deep.

Irena’s gaze flicked to the sentence again.

“And more than that,” she continued, “it says you’re beginning to understand that care can look like letting someone else step in where they’re better suited to help.”

Frankie’s chest rose slowly with a breath that felt heavier than the last.

Irena took the journal gently from her lap and held it between them.

“I want you to read that third one out loud.”

Frankie blinked. “What?”

“Read it.”

There was no sharpness in the instruction. No edge. But it did not sound optional. Frankie looked at the words she had written.

Her own handwriting suddenly felt exposing in a way speech did not.

Still, she obeyed.

“I’m grateful I don’t have to carry Ryan by myself if Irena is willing to help.”

The sentence sounded even more intimate spoken aloud.

Irena’s expression softened with unmistakable satisfaction.

“Again,” she said.

Frankie’s pulse quickened.

But she read it again.

“I’m grateful I don’t have to carry Ryan by myself if Irena is willing to help.” This time Irena leaned in and kissed her temple when she finished.

“You hear how different that sounds from panic?” Irena murmured.

Frankie turned her face slightly toward her without thinking.

“It sounds…” she began, then stopped.

“Safer?” Irena supplied.

Frankie nodded. “Yes.”

“Exactly.”

Irena set the journal aside on the couch cushion and turned fully toward Frankie, one hand still on her thigh, the other now brushing a loose strand of auburn hair back behind her ear. “Now say it to me,” she said quietly.

Frankie swallowed. “What?”

“Not from the page.” Irena’s fingers rested lightly at the side of her neck. “To me.” Frankie felt a small, helpless flutter move through her chest.

“Irena…”

“Say it.”

Frankie looked at her.

Irena’s face was calm. Patient. Certain.

And somehow that made the request feel even bigger.

Frankie drew a breath.

“I’m grateful,” she said softly, “that I don’t have to carry Ryan by myself if you’re willing to help.”

Irena smiled.

“Better.”

Frankie’s lips parted slightly. “Better?”

“Yes.” Irena’s thumb stroked once at the side of her neck. “Because now you’re actually asking.”

The words made Frankie go still.

She had not thought of it that way.

But the moment Irena said it, she knew it was true.

The line in the journal had felt like reflection.

Saying it aloud to Irena felt like permission.

“I didn’t mean…” Frankie began, but her voice faltered.

Irena’s gaze held hers.

“You did,” she said softly. “You meant it before you were ready to admit you meant it.” Frankie’s heartbeat had become suddenly loud in her own ears.

Irena leaned just a little closer.

“Ask me again.”

Frankie’s fingers tightened in the sweater pooled over her knees.

“Irena—”

“Ask.”

There it was again—that same gentle firmness that always seemed to leave Frankie with less resistance than she thought she had.

She let out a small breath.

“If Ryan needs help,” she said quietly, “I want you to help him.”

Irena’s expression changed, warming with quiet approval.

“Again.”

Frankie looked at her, flushed now.

“If Ryan needs help, I want you to help him.”

Irena’s hand moved slowly up from Frankie’s thigh to rest at her waist.

“And again,” she said.

Frankie’s pulse jumped.

“Why?”

“Because I want to hear whether you can say it like you believe it.”

The answer went through Frankie like a shiver.

She tried again.

“If Ryan needs help,” she said, more steadily this time, “I want you to help him.”
Irena held her gaze for a beat.

“That’s closer.”

Frankie’s voice came out smaller than she intended. “Closer to what?”

“To honesty.”

The city glowed at the windows. The tea cooled untouched on the table. Frankie could feel her whole body tuned to Irena now, as if every quiet instruction had narrowed the room down to the space between them.

Irena’s fingers spread lightly at Frankie’s waist.

“One more time,” she said. “And this time, don’t talk around it.”

Frankie’s throat tightened.

She knew what Irena meant.

No condition.

No if.

No polite distance.

Just the thing itself.

Irena waited.

Frankie lowered her eyes for one second, then lifted them again.

“Help Ryan for me,” she whispered.

The silence that followed felt huge.

Irena’s hand at her waist tightened almost imperceptibly.

“There you are,” she murmured.

Frankie’s breath trembled on the way out.

Irena studied her face with something like tenderness and something more private beneath it. “Again.”

Frankie blinked. “I just said it.”

“I know.” Irena’s voice stayed low and calm. “Say it again.”

Frankie could feel heat in her cheeks, in her throat, under her skin.

“Help Ryan for me.”

Irena nodded once.

“And again.”

The words fell out more softly this time.

“Help Ryan for me.”

Irena leaned in and pressed a slow kiss to the corner of her mouth.

“That’s good,” she said.

Frankie’s eyes fluttered closed for a second.

When she opened them, Irena was still there, close enough to make the whole room feel altered.

“I want one more,” Irena said. “The whole thing.”

Frankie looked from Irena to the journal and back again.

“The whole thing?”

“Yes.”

Her hand slipped from Frankie’s waist to her thigh again, warm and grounding.

Frankie obeyed.

“I’m grateful I don’t have to carry Ryan by myself.” She swallowed. “I want you to help him. Help Ryan for me.”

The words hung between them.

Irena’s expression softened into unmistakable satisfaction.

“Do you hear yourself?” she asked.

Frankie nodded once, barely.

“Yes.”

“What do you hear?”

Frankie looked down at her hands.

Then, very quietly: “Relief.”

Irena touched her face.

“Exactly.”

Frankie leaned into the touch before she could think better of it.

For a long moment, neither of them moved.

Then Irena brushed her thumb over Frankie’s cheekbone and spoke in that same low, devastatingly steady voice.

“Ryan doesn’t need your worry as much as he needs the right kind of attention,” she said. “And you don’t need to prove your love by managing every strain that touches him.” Frankie’s throat tightened.

“You can let me do this,” Irena went on. “You can let me talk to him. Listen to him. Ease him. You can let me carry that part.”

Frankie’s whole body had gone still.

Not because she disagreed.

Because she didn’t.

Irena saw it in her face.

“Tell me.”

Frankie looked at her.

“You can help him,” she said.

Irena waited.

Frankie knew that look now. The patient one. The one that asked for precision.

“You can help Ryan for me,” Frankie corrected softly.

Irena smiled.

“Yes.”

Frankie’s chest rose and fell in an uneven rhythm.

“I don’t have to carry him by myself,” she said, almost to herself.

“No.”

“I can let you help.”

“Yes.”

Something in Frankie loosened all at once then, some last stubborn knot of guilt or pride or fear she had still been calling love.

Her eyes stung unexpectedly.

Irena kissed her forehead.

“That’s it, sweet girl.”

Frankie let out a shaky breath.

Irena reached for the journal again, opened it to the page Frankie had filled, and handed her the pen.

“Write one more,” she said.

Frankie looked at her. “A fourth one?”

“Yes.”

Her voice was soft, but there was no doubt in it.

Frankie lowered the pen to the paper.

For a moment she didn’t know what to write.

Then the words came.

4. I can ask for help with Ryan and still love him completely.

Her breath caught a little when she finished.

Irena read the sentence, then looked at her with an expression so warm and sure it made Frankie ache.

“Read that one.”

Frankie did.

“I can ask for help with Ryan and still love him completely.”

“Again.”

“I can ask for help with Ryan and still love him completely.”

Irena took the pen from her and set it aside.

“Good.”

Frankie’s voice was quiet. “Why does that feel so big?”

“Because you’ve been treating help like betrayal,” Irena said. “And it isn’t.” She brushed Frankie’s hair back from her face once more. “Not when the help is real. Not when it’s given by someone who knows what they’re doing.”

Frankie looked at her, breathing shallowly.

Irena held her gaze.

“You asked me,” she said. “I want you to remember that.”

Frankie nodded.

“Say it.”

A small tremor moved through her chest.

“I asked you.”

Irena’s fingertips rested lightly at the side of her throat.

“Again.”

“I asked you to help Ryan.”

“Again.”

“I asked you to help Ryan for me.”

Irena closed the journal, tied the strap around it, and placed it carefully back in Frankie’s hands.

“Keep that,” she said. “And keep tonight exactly the way it happened. No rewriting it in your head later. No pretending you were pushed into saying something you didn’t mean.” Frankie looked down at the journal in her lap.

The leather felt warm from both their hands.

When she looked up again, Irena was watching her with that same unreadable mixture of softness and command.

“You wanted relief,” she said quietly. “And you were honest enough to ask for it.” Frankie’s pulse was unsteady now, but there was something calmer beneath it. Something newly settled.

“And if it’s Ryan?” she asked.

Irena did not hesitate.

“Especially then.”

Frankie turned her face slightly toward her without meaning to.

Irena leaned in and kissed the corner of her mouth again—gentle, lingering, not quite a claim and not quite not one—then drew back just enough to look at her.

“You don’t have to carry him alone,” she murmured. “You already said so.”

Frankie held the journal against her lap and felt the truth of that move through her with quiet, dangerous force.

Because now it was written.

Said aloud.

Repeated.

And somewhere between the first line and the last, asking Irena for help with Ryan had stopped feeling like a passing thought and started feeling like something much more binding. Something she had wanted enough to say more than once.

Something Irena had made her hear until she could no longer pretend she had not asked for it herself.

Chapter 8

Bestie

Chapter 8: The First Real Compliment

Frankie stepped into the condo just after seven, her shoulders aching from a long day. She had barely closed the door behind her when she noticed the lights were already on and the faint sound of music playing from the living room.

Irena was there, curled on the couch with her laptop open. She looked up the second Frankie walked in, her face lighting up with that warm smile.

“Hey, you,” Irena said, closing the laptop. “Rough day?”

Frankie slipped off her heels and walked over, a small, surprised smile tugging at her lips. “How did you get in?”

Irena stood and met her halfway, pulling her into a hug. “You gave me a key last week, remember? After I stayed over that night you didn’t want to be alone.” Her arms wrapped around Frankie’s waist as she pressed a soft kiss to the side of her head. “I hope that’s still okay.”

Frankie melted into the hug for a moment, breathing her in. “Yeah… it’s okay.”

When she pulled back, Irena’s hands stayed resting on her hips, thumbs brushing lightly over the fabric of her black pencil skirt.

“You look good,” Irena said, her eyes moving slowly down Frankie’s body. “Really good, actually.”

Frankie let out a tired laugh. “I feel like a mess.”

Irena shook her head, gaze lingering. “No. You don’t. That skirt on you…” She paused, then smiled in that playful, teasing way. “You look fuckable in that skirt.”

The words hit Frankie like a spark. Heat rushed up her neck and across her chest as her face flushed deep red. Her nipples tightened beneath her blouse.

Irena laughed softly, the sound warm and easy. “I’m kidding… mostly. But seriously, Frankie. You look incredible. That skirt hugs every curve perfectly. Your waist, your hips… it’s hard not to stare.”

Frankie’s breath caught. Irena’s hands were still on her hips, warm and steady, thumbs now tracing slow circles over the tight fabric.

“You can’t just say things like that,” Frankie said, her voice coming out softer than she meant, a small laugh escaping despite the flush on her cheeks.

Irena grinned, but her eyes didn’t leave Frankie’s. They stayed there a beat too long, dark and appreciative, tracing the line of her auburn hair, the swell of her breasts, the way the skirt clung to her body.

“I can when it’s true,” Irena said quietly, her voice dropping. “You’ve been walking around looking like this all day and I’m supposed to pretend I don’t notice?”

She stepped closer, her hands sliding up to rest at Frankie’s waist. The touch sent a sharp pulse of heat straight between Frankie’s legs.

“You’re beautiful,” Irena murmured. “And sexy as hell. I don’t think you hear that enough.” Frankie’s lips parted as she looked at Irena, her skin flushed and sensitive everywhere Irena was touching her. The air between them felt thick, charged.

Irena’s eyes flicked down to Frankie’s mouth for just a second before returning to her eyes. “Want me to heat up the sushi I brought?” she asked, voice low and intimate.

Frankie stood there in the middle of the living room, still in her work clothes, Irena’s hands warm on her waist, the words “you look fuckable in that skirt” still echoing between them.

Chapter 9

Bestie

Chapter 9: Sleep Schedule

Frankie lay in bed staring at the ceiling, the soft glow from the city lights outside the skyscraper windows casting faint patterns across the room. It was only 10:32 p.m., but her body felt wired — too many thoughts from the day still circling in her head. The black pencil skirt from earlier was now folded over the chair, and she wore only a thin tank top and underwear, the sheets cool against her skin.

Her phone lit up on the nightstand.

Irena: Lights out by eleven, okay? You need your rest, sweet girl. I want you taking care of yourself tonight.

Frankie read the message twice. A warm, heavy sensation immediately began to spread through her chest and down into her belly. She didn't reply. She simply reached over, turned the phone to silent, and placed it face-down on the nightstand.

The moment the screen went dark, something in her body shifted. Her shoulders dropped. Her breathing slowed. A deep, liquid warmth moved through her limbs, like her muscles had been waiting for someone to tell them it was safe to let go. She slid further under the covers, the soft cotton brushing against her bare thighs.

A few minutes later, she heard the unmistakable sound of a key turning in the front door.

Frankie's heart gave a small flutter as she listened to Irena moving quietly through the condo — the soft click of the door closing, the gentle thud of shoes being left by the entryway, the faint rustle of her bag being set down. Then came the soft footsteps down the hallway.

Irena appeared in the bedroom doorway, her petite frame backlit by the hallway light. She was still in the cropped hoodie and leggings she'd been wearing earlier, her blonde hair loose around her shoulders.

"I saw that you read my text," Irena said softly, stepping into the room. Her voice was low and warm. "Good girl."

She crossed to the bed and sat on the edge, her hand coming to rest on Frankie's hip over the blanket. The touch was steady and reassuring.

"You've been pushing yourself too hard lately," Irena murmured. "I don't like seeing you this tired. From now on, we're going to make sure you actually rest."

Frankie looked up at her in the dim light, her body already responding to Irena's presence. "You came all the way over just because of a text?"

Irena smiled, small and tender. "I came over because I wanted to make sure you were actually following through." Her hand slid beneath the blanket, finding the bare skin of Frankie's thigh. Her fingers traced slow, soothing lines upward. "And because I like being here when you're winding down."

Frankie's breath caught as Irena's palm settled higher on her thigh, warm and grounding. A slow pulse of heat moved between her legs, her body already growing slick from the simple intimacy of the touch.

"Close your eyes," Irena said quietly. "I'll stay until you fall asleep."

Frankie obeyed without hesitation. She let her eyes drift shut, her body sinking deeper into the mattress. Irena's hand stayed on her thigh, thumb moving in slow, rhythmic strokes that sent little waves of warmth radiating outward.

"That's it," Irena whispered. "Just breathe. Let everything go. I've got you."

Frankie felt her muscles loosening one by one — her jaw unclenching, her shoulders melting into the pillow, the tension in her lower back easing. Every slow stroke of Irena's thumb made the heat between her thighs deepen. She could feel herself growing wetter, her clit gently throbbing in time with her heartbeat.

Irena leaned down, her breath brushing against Frankie's ear.

"You don't have to think anymore tonight," she murmured. "Just let me take care of you."

Frankie's lips parted slightly as a soft, involuntary sound escaped her throat. Irena's hand moved a little higher, her fingers now resting dangerously close to the edge of Frankie's underwear. The touch was still gentle, still caring — but it sent a sharp, delicious ache straight through her core.

Irena pressed a slow, lingering kiss to Frankie's forehead, her lips warm against her skin.

"Sleep now, sweet girl," she whispered. "I'm right here."

Frankie lay perfectly still, eyes closed, body humming with warmth and need, Irena's hand resting possessively on her thigh as the city lights continued to glow softly outside the window.

Chapter 10

Bestie

Chapter 10: The Matching Outfits

Frankie stood in front of the full-length mirror in her bedroom, adjusting the straps of the tight black tank top she'd thrown on that morning. It hugged her breasts and clung to the curve of her waist before flaring slightly over her hips. She'd paired it with soft gray lounge shorts that barely covered the bottom curve of her ass. Her auburn hair was loose and slightly messy from sleep.

She heard the front door open with the familiar sound of Irena's key turning in the lock. "Morning, sweet girl," Irena called out as she stepped inside. "I brought coffee and those croissants you like."

Frankie turned just as Irena walked into the bedroom, and her breath caught.

Irena was wearing an almost identical black tank top — the same deep neckline, the same fitted cut that showed off the generous swell of her breasts and the smooth line of her stomach. She'd paired it with black leggings that hugged every curve of her compact, powerful frame. Her blonde hair was pulled into a high ponytail, and she looked effortlessly sexy.

"Twins!" Irena said with a bright laugh, spreading her arms out. "Look at us!"

Frankie couldn't help but laugh too, the sound bubbling up from her chest. "Oh my god, we actually match."

Irena stepped closer to the mirror, standing right beside Frankie so their reflections stood side by side. "We look good together," she said, tilting her head as she studied them both. Her eyes moved over Frankie's body in the mirror — lingering on the way the tank top stretched across her breasts, the soft dip of her waist, the minxy curve of her hips.

Frankie felt heat rise in her cheeks. She could feel the warmth of Irena's body so close to hers, the faint citrus scent of her skin, the way their shoulders nearly touched. "Turn a little," Irena said, her voice playful but low. "Let me see the full effect." Frankie turned slightly, and Irena reached out without hesitation, her hands settling on Frankie's hips as she gently adjusted her stance. Her fingers pressed into the soft flesh just above the waistband of Frankie's shorts, warm and sure.

"God, Frankie," Irena murmured, her eyes meeting Frankie's in the mirror. "You have no idea how good you look right now. That top on you… it's criminal."

Frankie's breath hitched. She could feel Irena's thumbs tracing slow circles against her skin, the heat of her palms seeping through the thin fabric. Her nipples tightened visibly against the black tank top, and she knew Irena could

see it in the reflection.

Irena smiled, small and a little wicked. “See? Even your body agrees with me.”

Frankie laughed again, but it came out breathier than she intended. “Stop it.”

“Never,” Irena said softly. She slid one hand up Frankie’s side, her fingers brushing the underside of her breast for just a second before moving to adjust the strap of her tank top. “We should take pictures. Come on. Twins forever.”

They spent the next twenty minutes posing in front of the mirror — laughing, making silly faces, then shifting into more serious ones. Irena kept her hands on Frankie the entire time, guiding her hips, brushing her hair back, pressing close so their bodies aligned in the reflection. Every touch sent sparks across Frankie’s skin. She could feel the heat building between her thighs, the way her body responded to Irena’s proximity and attention. At one point Irena pulled Frankie back against her chest, wrapping her arms around her waist as they both looked at their reflection.

“See how good we look together?” Irena whispered against her ear. “Like we were made to stand next to each other.”

Frankie’s heart was racing. She could feel Irena’s full breasts pressed against her back, the steady rhythm of her breathing, the warmth of her breath against her neck. Her own body felt flushed and alive, her clit gently throbbing with every slow stroke of Irena’s thumbs across her stomach.

Irena met her eyes in the mirror, her gaze dark and full of quiet affection.

“Smile for me, sweet girl,” she murmured.

Frankie did.

And in that moment, with Irena’s arms wrapped around her and their reflections staring back at them, Frankie felt closer to her than she had to anyone in a very long time.

Chapter 11

Bestie

Chapter 11" "Financial Help"

It started with a late fee of thirty-eight dollars and fourteen cents.

Not enough to matter, really. Not enough to change Frankie’s life. Not enough to justify the hot wave of shame that moved through her the moment she saw the red notice on her screen. She had been standing barefoot at the kitchen island when the email came in, wineglass in one hand, laptop open in front of her, one heel still on and the other lying sideways near the entry rug where she had kicked it off without thinking. Outside the windows, Denver was all gray light and rain. Inside, the condo was immaculate in the way it always was when she was least okay—clean counters, folded throws, polished floors, and one private disaster glowing out of a browser tab.

Payment failed.

Assessment overdue.

Late fee applied.

She had stared at the screen for a long time.

Then, in the stupid, frantic way she always did things when numbers frightened her, she had opened her banking app and moved money from savings to checking. Then from checking to the other checking account. Then back again when she remembered a card payment was due overnight. By the time she finished, she no longer knew which problem she had solved and which one she had created.

That was when she texted Irena.

Can you come over?

No explanation. No context.

Just that.

Irena had replied three minutes later.

Already on my way.

Now Frankie stood in the kitchen with her arms wrapped around herself, waiting for the sound of the lock.

When it came, she nearly cried from relief.

Irena stepped inside carrying rain on the shoulders of her black coat and a canvas tote slung over one arm. She took one look at Frankie’s face, then at the open laptop on the island, then at the single heel lying on the floor.

She closed the door behind her quietly.

“How bad?”

Frankie let out a small laugh that broke in the middle.

“Not bad. Just—” She looked back at the screen. “Embarrassing.”

Irena set the tote down by the door and crossed the room.

“Show me the embarrassing.”

There was no automatic hug this time. No immediate softening. Something about that made Frankie feel even more exposed. Irena was not here to soothe the feeling. She was here to look directly at what had caused it.

Frankie turned the laptop toward her.

Irena read the notice once.

Then she looked at Frankie.

“What happened?”

Frankie felt herself flush all the way to her chest.

“I thought the transfer had gone through yesterday, but then I realized I moved money out of checking because the balance looked wrong and I didn’t like it sitting there and then I forgot the HOA thing was set to hit this morning and—”

“Stop.”

Frankie did.

Irena’s face remained calm.

“Again,” she said. “Slowly. In order.”

Frankie swallowed.

The shame was worse when she had to do it neatly.

“I saw the checking balance and it made me nervous,” she said. “So I moved money out. Then I remembered the insurance payment was due, so I moved money back. Then I paid a card because I didn’t want the balance sitting there. Then I forgot about the HOA withdrawal. So it bounced.”

Irena was quiet for a beat.

Then: “Did you know the HOA payment date?”

“Yes.”

“Did you forget it?”

“No.”

Frankie looked down.

“What did you do, then?”

Frankie’s throat tightened.

“I panicked.”

“Yes.”

The word was not unkind. That almost made it worse.

Irena slipped out of her coat and laid it over the back of a chair. Underneath, she wore a cream sweater tucked into dark jeans, simple and severe enough to make the whole room feel organized around her.

“Get me everything,” she said.

Frankie blinked. “Everything?”

“Your wallet. Your phone. Any mail you haven’t opened. The tax notice you keep pretending you’ll read when you’re in the right mood. The condo paperwork. Any card you use to move money around when you get scared.” She held Frankie’s gaze. “All of it.”

The command was so comprehensive that for one foolish second Frankie wanted to laugh. Instead she obeyed.

She went to the sideboard drawer where she kept the envelopes she did not want to look at. She brought back the wallet from her bag, her phone from the charger, two folded notices from the stack of magazines on the coffee table, the property tax envelope from the bowl by the door, and one credit card statement she had slipped into a cookbook three days ago because it had arrived during breakfast and she had not wanted to spoil her morning. By the time she returned to the island, her arms were full.

Irena looked at the pile.

“That many?”

Frankie set everything down carefully.

“I wasn’t hiding them,” she said too quickly.

Irena lifted her eyes to her.

“I know.”

The answer was so level that Frankie wished, absurdly, that Irena had sounded sharper. Anger would have been easier to resist than accuracy.

Irena pulled out a chair.

“Sit.”

Frankie sat.

Irena remained standing for a moment, surveying the island like a physician assessing a wound.

Then she began.

She sorted the mail into three piles without hurrying: urgent, routine, avoidant nonsense. She slid the late HOA notice into the first stack. The tax envelope into the second. The forgotten statement into the third.

Frankie watched her hands move and felt something low in her chest begin to loosen despite herself.

“Open your banking app,” Irena said.

Frankie picked up her phone.

“No,” Irena said. “On the laptop. Bigger. I want to see how you’ve been thinking.” Frankie did as she was told.

The account screen opened.

Irena did not touch the keyboard yet.

“Read me your checking balance.”

Frankie stared at the number.

“Irena—”

“Read it.”

The humiliation was immediate and physical. Not because the number was catastrophic. It wasn’t. But because it felt like being made to say aloud the private facts of her own disorder. She read it.

Irena nodded once.

“Savings.”

Frankie read that too.

“The second checking account.”

Frankie closed her eyes for one brief second, then read that.

Irena rested one hand lightly on the back of Frankie’s chair.

“Now show me the transfers from the last seven days.”

Frankie clicked.

Rows of movement appeared on the screen—small shifts, reversals, corrections, anxious little relocations of money that had felt sensible at the time and ridiculous now.

Irena looked at them in silence.

Then she said, “You’ve been moving money around to regulate your feelings.”

Frankie let out a strained laugh.

“That sounds awful.”

“It is awful.”

Frankie turned to look at her.

Irena’s expression stayed composed.

“Not morally,” she said. “Structurally. This is not budgeting. This is self-soothing.” The truth of it hit so cleanly Frankie could not even defend herself.

She looked back at the screen.

“God.”

Irena’s fingers brushed once over the back of her neck.

“What did you think was happening?”

Frankie swallowed.

“I thought I was staying on top of it.”

“No.” Irena’s tone remained calm. “You were touching every lever in the room because the lights were blinking.”

Frankie covered her face with one hand.

That image was so humiliatingly right she could feel it all the way through her. Irena let her stay that way for a moment.

Then she caught Frankie’s wrist gently and lowered her hand.

“Don’t hide from me while I’m fixing it.”

The sentence went through Frankie like heat.

Not loud. Not dramatic.

Just absolute.

Irena pulled the laptop a little closer and sat in the chair beside her.

“Now,” she said, “I’m going to ask you a question, and I want you to answer it without softening it.”

Frankie’s pulse was suddenly loud in her ears.

“What question?”

“Are you good at managing this?”

Frankie stared at the screen.

Rain moved against the windows in thin silver lines. The condo was silent except for the low hum of the refrigerator and the faint noise of traffic twenty floors below.

“No,” she said at last.

Irena tilted her head.

“No what?”

Frankie could feel the heat in her face.

“No, I’m not.”

“Again.”

Frankie turned to her.

Irena did not look cruel.

That was what made it impossible to resist. She looked certain. Attentive. Patient enough to wait until the truth arrived in the right shape.

Frankie drew a breath.

“No, I’m not good at managing this.”

Irena nodded.

“Better.”

She opened another tab.

“Now tell me what you need.”

Frankie laughed once, softly and helplessly.

“You know what I need.”

“I know,” Irena said. “I want to hear whether you do.”

Frankie looked down at her hands in her lap.

Her fingers were clasped too tightly.

“I need help.”

“With what?”

“My money.”

“What about it?”

Frankie closed her eyes.

The words felt impossibly exposing and impossibly relieving at once.

“I need help because I keep making it worse when I try to calm myself down.”

Irena was quiet for a beat.

Then: “Again.”

Frankie opened her eyes.

“I need help because I keep making it worse when I try to calm myself down.”

Irena slid her hand from the back of the chair to the nape of Frankie’s neck, her thumb resting there lightly.

“One more.”

This time Frankie did not hesitate.

“I need you to take over before I make it worse.”

The silence afterward was enormous.

Irena’s thumb moved once against her skin.

“There you are,” she murmured.

Frankie’s breath trembled on the way out.

Irena leaned in and kissed the side of her head—briefly, almost formally—then turned back to the screen.

“Password.”

Frankie gave it to her.

Irena logged in.

There was no ceremony after that. That was the frightening part. No dramatic declaration that she was crossing a line. No pause to admire Frankie’s vulnerability. She simply entered the machinery of Frankie’s life as if it belonged in competent hands and had finally reached them.

“What is this account for?” she asked.

“I don’t know anymore.”

Irena made a soft sound through her nose.

“Honest.”

Click.

“This one becomes condo and fixed costs.”

Click.

“This transfer stops.”

Click.

“This card gets paid twice monthly, not whenever it starts upsetting you.”

Click.

“These notifications are ridiculous. You do not need seven different alerts after the damage is already done. You need two before.”

Click.

She opened the HOA portal, corrected the payment method, enrolled it in autopay, and changed the notices to paperless delivery. Then she created an email filter so every condo message would bypass Frankie’s general inbox and land in a folder labeled CONDO / OPEN SAME DAY.

Frankie watched the label appear on the screen and felt a bizarre sting behind her eyes. Irena noticed.

“What?”

“That folder name.”

“Yes?”

“It’s so...” Frankie laughed weakly. “Specific.”

“It needs to be.” Irena did not look away from the screen. “You are not someone who benefits from vague good intentions. You need rules.”

The sentence sat in Frankie’s chest with terrible accuracy.

Irena continued.

She found three subscriptions Frankie had forgotten about and canceled them without comment.

She set the insurance payment to autopay and added an alert seventy-two hours before withdrawal.

She built a single monthly transfer for household obligations.

She moved a fixed amount into savings and renamed the account DO NOT TOUCH FOR

MOOD.

Frankie actually made a noise at that.

“Irena.”

“What?”

“You cannot call it that.”

Irena looked at her for the first time in several minutes.

“Is it inaccurate?”

Frankie opened her mouth.

Closed it.

Irena raised an eyebrow.

“That’s what I thought.”

And then, because she was not done humiliating her, she turned the laptop slightly so Frankie could see the account name glaring back at her in clean black text.

DO NOT TOUCH FOR MOOD.

Frankie laughed and wanted to disappear at the same time.

“That is so mean.”

“No,” Irena said. “That is memorable.”

She clicked again.

The practical violence of competence continued.

Irena clicked once more, then paused.

“The actual condo file,” she said.

Frankie blinked. “What?”

“The purchase folder. HOA login, insurance declarations page, tax notices, any title paperwork you kept from closing, whatever drawer you shoved it all into because it felt too grown-up and too sad to look at.” Her tone stayed matter-of-fact, almost absentminded. “I want every document connected to this place in one folder by the end of the week.” Frankie stared at her. “All of it?”

“Yes.” Irena did not glance away from the screen. “If this condo affects your stability, it belongs inside the system now. Property mail does not float around this apartment anymore. It comes to me first, I look at it first, and then I tell you what actually matters.” Something hot and embarrassed moved through Frankie’s chest.

“I don’t even know where all of it is,” she admitted.

Irena finally looked at her then, calm and unsurprised.

“I know,” she said. “That’s why I’m taking custody of it before it keeps owning more of your nervous system than it already does.”

Each small decision felt like an erasure and a rescue at once. None of them dramatic enough to count as rescue on their own. And yet taken together they felt like something much larger: a private structure Frankie had been poorly pretending to control, now reorganized in front of her by someone who saw through every excuse.

At one point Irena held out her hand.

“Wallet.”

Frankie gave it to her.

Irena opened it, looked inside, and removed two credit cards.

“This one stays in your wallet,” she said, returning the debit card. “This one,” she held up the travel card, “goes in the desk drawer unless you are actually traveling.” She held up the other. “And this one does not live in your purse if you are using it to comfort yourself.” Frankie stared at her.

“You’re confiscating my credit cards?”

“I’m relocating temptations you misuse when you’re dysregulated.”

The phrasing was so clinical that Frankie nearly laughed again.

Instead she said, very quietly, “That is humiliating.”

Irena met her eyes.

“Yes.”

Not cruel. Not apologetic.

Just yes.

And somehow the simplicity of that answer stripped the moment of melodrama and left only the truth of it: Frankie was humiliated because another woman had seen exactly how childish some of her habits were and was calm enough to organize around them.

Irena slipped the cards into a plain white envelope from the mail pile, wrote DESK on the front, and laid it beside the laptop.

“From now on,” she said, “if a number scares you, you do not start moving money to make the feeling stop.”

Frankie looked at the envelope.

“What do I do, then?”

“You text me.”

The answer came so easily it made her chest tighten.

Irena continued typing.

“I’m making a note on your phone,” she said.

Frankie watched as she opened the Notes app and typed a single line at the top of a new page:

When money makes me panic, I do not fix the feeling by moving it. I show it to Irena. Frankie looked at the words.

The shame of it should have overwhelmed her.

Instead she felt tears press unexpectedly at the back of her eyes.

Because for the first time in months the problem no longer felt invisible and private and shapeless. It had edges now. Language. Rules. Another set of hands.

Irena saved the note, then opened Frankie’s calendar and created a repeating appointment every Sunday evening.

MONEY WITH IRENA.

Frankie made a small sound.

“That too?”

“Yes.”

Irena set the reminder for 6:30 p.m., added a ten-minute alert, and color-coded it dark green. Then she finally closed the laptop halfway and turned toward Frankie in her chair. The island between them was transformed.

The piles were neat.

The late fee was paid.

The autopays were live.

The envelope marked DESK sat by Frankie’s elbow.

Her phone lay on the counter with a note inside it telling her, in plain language, not to trust herself with numbers when she was afraid.

Irena looked at her with that same calm, unreadable softness.

“Say it.”

Frankie’s pulse jumped.

“What?”

“What happens now.”

Frankie looked away first—at the rain, at the condo lights reflected in the windows, at the absurd elegance of her own kitchen while her life was being gently taken out of her hands on

the granite countertop.

Then she looked back.

“I don’t handle this alone anymore.”

Irena waited.

Frankie knew that look now. The one that meant she was close to the truth but not inside it yet.

She swallowed.

“I don’t handle this when I’m panicking,” she corrected.

“Better.”

Frankie could hear her own voice getting quieter.

“I show it to you.”

“Yes.”

The word settled over her like a hand.

Frankie looked down at the envelope again.

At the account name.

At the calendar reminder.

At the folder that would now catch every condo email before it could rot in some corner of her inbox.

A laugh rose in her throat and broke apart into something almost fragile.

“You really think I’m that bad at this.”

Irena reached out and touched her face with two fingers, turning it gently back toward her. “I think you are lovely at many things,” she said. “I think this makes you stupid.” The bluntness of it emptied the room.

Frankie stared at her.

Then, to her own horror, she felt relief hit so hard it was almost dizzying.

Because there it was. No euphemism. No performative kindness. No expectation that she go on pretending competence she did not possess.

Irena saw the relief as it moved through her. Of course she did.

Her hand slid from Frankie’s cheek to the back of her neck.

“And I think,” she added more softly, “that you have been waiting for someone to notice.” Frankie’s eyes stung.

She hated that this was true.

Hated it enough that it might have become anger if Irena had been even slightly less gentle. Instead it became something worse.

Submission to accuracy.

Frankie let out one unsteady breath.

“I was.”

“I know.”

Irena leaned in and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

Then another to her temple.

When she spoke again, her voice was quiet enough that Frankie felt it more than heard it. “You are not going to improvise with numbers anymore, sweet girl.”

Frankie’s whole body went still.

Irena’s thumb traced once at the nape of her neck.

“You are going to bring them to me before they turn into shame.”

The sentence landed deep.

Frankie nodded once.

Irena drew back just enough to look at her.

“Say it so I know you understand.”

Frankie’s lips parted.

The rain had slowed outside. The room smelled faintly of wet pavement and expensive soap and the cooling takeout Irena had left in the tote by the door. Everything in the condo seemed suspended around this one humiliating, clarifying little moment.

“I bring it to you before it turns into shame.”

Irena smiled, small and satisfied.

“Good.”

She stood then, finally, and crossed to the tote.

“I brought dinner,” she said over her shoulder, as if what had just happened were no more remarkable than setting a table. “You can eat while I finish writing down the fixed-cost schedule.”

Frankie stayed where she was.

The laptop remained half open beside her. The envelope sat by her hand. Her phone glowed softly with its new note, its new reminder, its new future.

When Irena returned and set a plate in front of her, Frankie looked up.

“What?”

Frankie shook her head.

Nothing articulate would come.

Only the humiliating, impossible truth of the thing:

that another woman had just looked directly at the ugliest little systems beneath her polished life and had not recoiled, had not lectured, had not left—

only taken them, named them, arranged them, and made Frankie say out loud that this was better.

Irena brushed her fingers through Frankie’s hair once and moved back to the laptop. “Eat,” she said.

Frankie picked up her fork obediently.

And while Irena finished setting the architecture of her money into orderly rows and rules and reminders, Frankie sat in the bright kitchen of her beautiful condo and felt the deepest part of the humiliation settle into something steadier, stranger, and far more dangerous than shame.

It felt like safety.

Chapter 12

Bestie

Chapter 12: The First Touch

The living room was dim and warm, lit only by the soft glow of the television and the distant city lights. Frankie and Irena were on the couch under a shared blanket, their bodies close and comfortable. They had been like this for nearly an hour — legs tangled, shoulders touching, the movie playing quietly in the background while they talked in low voices.

Irena’s hand had been resting on Frankie’s bare thigh for a while now, her palm warm and familiar against her skin. It wasn’t new anymore. Over the past few weeks, this kind of touch had become natural between them — comforting, grounding, and quietly intimate.

Frankie’s head was resting against Irena’s shoulder, her body relaxed from the supplement she’d taken earlier and the steady presence of the woman beside her. Irena’s thumb moved in slow, absent circles against her thigh, just below the hem of her soft cotton shorts. “You’ve been so much lighter lately,” Irena said softly, her voice barely above the sound of the movie. “I can see it in your face. In the way you move. I’m really proud of you.” Frankie smiled, a warm flush moving through her chest. “It’s because of you. You make everything feel easier.”

Irena turned her head slightly and pressed a soft kiss to Frankie’s temple. “That’s all I want, sweet girl. To make things easier for you.”

They fell into a comfortable silence again. Frankie let her eyes drift half-closed, her body sinking deeper into the couch. Irena shifted beside her, reaching for her margarita on the coffee table. As she leaned forward, her hand slid higher on Frankie’s thigh — and her fingers brushed directly over the thin fabric covering Frankie’s clit.

The touch was light, but unmistakable.

Frankie’s breath caught sharply. A sudden, intense pulse of heat shot through her core. Her clit throbbed hard against the accidental pressure, and she felt a rush of wetness soak into her panties almost instantly. Her nipples tightened painfully beneath her tank top.

Irena didn’t seem to notice. She sat back with her drink, completely unaware — or at least acting like she was. Her hand returned to Frankie’s thigh, resting in the same spot as before. Frankie’s heart was pounding. She stayed perfectly still, trying to control her breathing as the heat between her legs refused to fade. Her body felt electric, hyper-aware of every tiny movement.

A few minutes later, Irena laughed softly at something on the screen and shifted again, turning more toward Frankie. This time, as she adjusted her position, her fingers brushed

over Frankie’s clit once more — slower, more deliberate, lingering for half a second longer than they should have.

Frankie’s entire body jerked. A soft, involuntary whimper escaped her throat before she could stop it. The second brush sent a deep, aching throb straight through her clit and down into her core. She was soaked now, her panties clinging to her, her thighs trembling slightly under Irena’s hand.

Irena stilled.

For a moment, neither of them moved. Irena’s fingers remained exactly where they were — resting lightly, but unmistakably, against the damp fabric between Frankie’s legs. Frankie’s breath came in shallow, shaky bursts. Her face burned. Her body was screaming for more, even as her mind spun with confusion and heat.

Irena’s voice, when she finally spoke, was low and gentle.

“Sorry,” she whispered, though she didn’t move her hand away. “Didn’t mean to…”

But she still didn’t pull back.

Frankie sat there frozen, Irena’s fingers pressed lightly against her throbbing clit, the movie still playing in the background, her entire body flushed and aching with a need she couldn’t name.

Chapter 13

Bestie

Chapter 13: Ryan’s Needs

The condo was quiet except for the low murmur of the television and the distant hum of traffic far below the windows. The city had become a soft scatter of lights outside, blurred at the edges by the thin reflection of the living room glass. Frankie and Irena were still on the couch beneath the same blanket, their bodies tucked close in the warm dimness as if the room itself had settled around them.

Frankie’s bare legs were curled beneath her, one knee angled toward Irena. She still wore the same thin cotton shorts from earlier, and every place where the fabric touched her felt too noticeable now. Too exact. The charged silence left behind by those earlier brushes of Irena’s fingers had never really gone away. It had only changed shape—becoming quieter, denser, lodged somewhere low in Frankie’s body where it kept pulsing every time Irena shifted beside her.

Irena’s hand rested on Frankie’s thigh as though it belonged there. Over the past weeks that touch had become so normal—so woven into their evenings, their conversations, their small routines—that Frankie had stopped questioning it. Warm palm. Slow thumb. Just above the knee at first, then a little higher as the night went on. Comforting. Grounding. Familiar in a way that made her feel taken care of before she even realized she needed it.

Frankie had her head against Irena’s shoulder, breathing in the warm, faintly citrus scent of her skin. The supplement she had taken earlier had left her body loose and receptive, her thoughts soft around the edges. She felt pleasantly heavy, like she could have drifted to sleep right there if Irena asked her to.

For a while neither of them spoke. The movie played quietly in front of them, some forgettable scene unfolding in pale blue light across the screen. Frankie wasn’t really watching it. She was too aware of the blanket over their laps. Too aware of the slow drag of Irena’s thumb against her skin. Too aware of the memory of those two accidental touches from earlier—first quick and startling, then slower, impossible to dismiss.

Irena turned her head slightly and looked down at her.

“You okay?” she asked softly.

Frankie nodded without lifting her head. “Yeah.”

Irena’s thumb kept moving in those same easy circles. “You’ve been quieter tonight.” Frankie let out a small breath. “Just thinking, I guess.”

“About?”

Frankie hesitated. The honest answer felt too large to say out loud. About the way your hand felt when it brushed me. About how my whole body reacted. About how I haven’t stopped thinking about it for the last hour. Instead she said, “Everything. Work. Life. Ryan. You.” At that, Irena smiled faintly.

“Me?”

Frankie’s cheeks warmed, though she was grateful Irena couldn’t fully see it from this angle. “You’re… kind of a lot to think about.”

Irena made a soft sound—almost a laugh, but gentler—and leaned down to kiss Frankie’s temple.

“I don’t mind that,” she murmured. “I like being on your mind.”

The words slid through Frankie with the same slow warmth as the supplement. Her body answered before her mind did. A pulse low between her legs. A tightening beneath the thin fabric of her shorts. She pressed her thighs together just a little, hoping the movement would go unnoticed.

Irena’s hand remained where it was, but her thumb slowed.

After a moment, she said, “There’s actually something I’ve been meaning to talk to you about.”

Frankie lifted her head then, just enough to look at her. “Yeah?”

Irena’s expression stayed soft. Open. The same expression she used whenever she wanted Frankie to feel safe before saying something that mattered.

“It’s about Ryan.”

Frankie’s stomach gave a small, uncertain dip. She sat up a little straighter beneath the blanket, though she didn’t move away. “What about him?”

Irena tucked one leg under herself, angling more fully toward Frankie on the couch. The shift brought their bodies even closer. Her hand never left Frankie’s thigh.

“I wanted to tell you how things have been going with him,” she said. “Since you said it was okay for me to check in on him. I should’ve told you sooner, honestly. I just wanted to make sure I was actually helping before I made a big thing of it.”

Frankie searched her face. There was nothing defensive there. Nothing guilty. Just warmth. Calm. A quiet sincerity that immediately made Frankie feel a little foolish for the flicker of unease in her chest.

“Oh,” she said. “Okay.”

Irena smiled and gave her thigh a gentle squeeze.

“He’s been leaning on me more than I expected,” she said softly. “Not in some dramatic way. Just… reaching out. Letting himself be a little honest with someone.”

Frankie nodded slowly. She could picture that. Ryan was steady, kind, a little self-contained. The sort of man who carried things in his shoulders and jaw until the strain showed everywhere except in his words.

Irena looked down at her hand where it rested on Frankie’s thigh, then back up.

“Last week he lost out on that big commercial deal he’d been working on for months,” she said. “The one he thought was basically done. He called me right after the client backed out.” Frankie’s face softened immediately. “He didn’t tell me that.”

“I know.” Irena’s voice remained quiet and understanding. “I don’t think he wanted to dump it on you when you’ve already been dealing with so much. He was trying to be careful with you.”

That landed hard in Frankie’s chest. Not because it hurt, exactly, but because it fit. Ryan was always trying to be decent. Always trying to be the stable one.

Irena went on.

“He sounded so disappointed. Not loud or angry or anything like that. Just… flat. Like someone had reached inside him and turned the volume down on everything.” Her thumb resumed its slow movement against Frankie’s skin. “So I just stayed on the phone with him. Let him talk. Let him get it out.”

Frankie watched her, listening.

“I told him losing one deal doesn’t mean he’s losing,” Irena said. “That it just means the right one hasn’t shown up yet. I reminded him that he’s sharp, that people trust him, that he knows what he’s doing even when things go sideways.” She smiled a little. “By the end of the call he was laughing again. He actually said talking to me made him feel like he could breathe.” A warm swell moved through Frankie—gratitude first, uncomplicated and sincere.

“That’s really sweet,” she said softly. “Thank you.”

Irena’s expression deepened into something tender. “Of course.”

She shifted a little closer. Frankie could feel the heat of her through the blanket now, through the shared closeness of the couch, through the strange and growing intimacy of hearing another part of Ryan’s life retold in Irena’s voice.

“A couple nights after that,” Irena continued, “we met up at that café near his office. The one with the mismatched chairs and the awful espresso.”

Frankie smiled faintly. “I know the one.”

Irena smiled too, pleased by the point of recognition.

“He still had some of that disappointment hanging on him,” she said. “So I decided the best thing to do was make fun of him until he snapped out of it.”

Frankie laughed before she could help it. “That sounds like you.”

“It is very much me.” Irena’s fingers traced a lazy line a little higher on Frankie’s thigh before settling again. “I told him if he kept walking around looking like a sad golden retriever, people were going to start tossing him treats out of pity.”

Frankie let out a surprised little laugh. “You did not.”

“I absolutely did.”

“And what did he say?”

“He tried to pretend he was offended for about three seconds.” Irena’s smile widened. “Then he laughed so hard he snorted coffee out his nose.”

Frankie laughed again, fuller this time, the image arriving vividly in her mind: Ryan trying to maintain dignity while Irena dismantled it with gentle precision. The laugh loosened something in her chest. It felt good—good to picture Ryan lighter, good to imagine him with someone who knew how to reach him when he got too locked inside himself.

“We spent the whole time roasting each other,” Irena said. “By the time we left, he looked completely different. Like the weight had shifted.”

Frankie turned the image over in her mind and felt the gratitude deepen. There was even something soothing about the fact that Ryan and Irena had found their own rhythm. That they could occupy the same space without needing Frankie to mediate it.

“He hugged me when we left,” Irena added more quietly. “And he said he hadn’t laughed like that in weeks.”

Frankie looked at her with open warmth. “I love that you can do that for him.”

Irena’s eyes softened. “I love doing it for you.”

The line sent a low current through Frankie that had nothing to do with Ryan. She looked down instinctively, suddenly aware again of Irena’s hand on her thigh. Her thumb was still moving. Small circles. Patient. Familiar.

“I mean it,” Frankie said. “It really does mean a lot to me. That you’re looking out for him too. I feel like I’ve been so wrapped up in my own mess lately.”

Irena leaned in and pressed another slow kiss to her temple.

“You don’t have to apologize for that,” she murmured. “You’ve needed care. I’ve just been trying to make sure the people around you get some too.”

Something in the phrasing made Frankie’s chest tighten unexpectedly. The people around you. The world I’m tending for you. The idea of Irena quietly managing things, smoothing rough edges, stepping into places Frankie didn’t have the strength to occupy herself. It was comforting.

It was also, suddenly, a little dizzying.

Irena went quiet for a moment. The television flickered blue across her face. Her hand on Frankie’s thigh slowed almost to stillness.

Then she said, more softly, “There’s something else I should tell you.”

Frankie looked at her again. This time there was a different note in Irena’s voice—not guilt exactly, but care. Care before impact.

“What happened?” Frankie asked.

Irena held her gaze for a beat, as if making sure she had it fully before continuing. “We met again after that,” she said. “At that little bar near his office. The one with the dark booths in the back.”

Frankie’s stomach turned over faintly. She knew the bar too. Ryan had taken her there once early on, when everything between them had still felt simple and hopeful.

“We were just talking,” Irena said. “Normal stuff. His week. Work. You. He was telling me how proud he is of you. Of how you’ve been handling everything, even when it’s hard.” The mention of herself inside that conversation made Frankie’s skin prickle. Her body had become so attuned to Irena’s voice that even the smallest shift in tone registered physically. “He said that?”

“He did.” Irena’s thumb resumed its slow movement, one circle at a time. “He cares about you a lot, Frankie.”

Frankie swallowed. “I know.”

There was a pause.

Then, very gently, Irena said, “At one point, he shifted in the booth.”

Frankie waited.

“And I felt something press against my knee.”

Frankie blinked. For a second she didn’t fully understand what the sentence meant. It landed as sensation before meaning: dark booth, table between them, Ryan shifting forward, Irena’s knee brushing something solid under the table.

Her eyes lifted to Irena’s face.

Irena’s expression remained calm. “I didn’t know what it was at first. It happened so quickly. I just felt it there for a second and looked down.”

Frankie’s mouth had gone dry.

Irena did not rush the next part.

“He had an erection,” she said quietly.

The words struck Frankie with a strange, cold-hot force. Her first response wasn’t outrage or even jealousy. It was pure shock—the kind that emptied the body for half a second before everything rushed back harder.

“Oh,” she said, and the word came out small.

Irena’s hand stayed where it was. Warm. Steady. Her face held only concern.

“He looked mortified,” she said. “Not predatory. Not creepy. Just embarrassed. Really embarrassed. Like he wanted the floor to open up and swallow him.”

Frankie stared at her, trying to absorb it. Ryan. Hard in a bar booth. Talking to Irena. Talking about her.

A pulse beat once between her legs.

Irena seemed to notice the way her breathing changed, but she only kept speaking softly. “I honestly don’t think he meant for anything to happen,” she said. “If anything, he looked miserable about it. Tense. Flushed. Trying to pretend it hadn’t happened while also very obviously hoping I hadn’t noticed.”

Frankie let out a shaky breath.

Part of her wanted to laugh at the image. Another part wanted to recoil from it. And somewhere beneath both reactions, something deeper and less comfortable was already forming: the invasive, intimate fact of Ryan’s body responding in front of Irena. “He must have been so embarrassed,” Frankie whispered.

“He was.”

Another pause.

Then Irena said, in that same careful tone, “I didn’t really know what to do for a second. But he looked so tense. So wound up. And all I could think was… you’re not in a place to take care of this right now. Not really. You’ve had so much on your own plate. So I thought maybe I could help.”

Frankie’s eyes flicked to hers.

Help.

The word entered her body like the supplement had—slow and warm and disarming, making it harder to keep emotional distance from what she was hearing.

Irena’s thumb moved a fraction higher on her thigh.

“I reached under the table,” she said.

Frankie’s breath caught sharply.

“I just… put my hand there at first,” Irena went on, her voice still low and even. “Over his pants. Nothing dramatic. I wanted to calm him down more than anything. Let him know I wasn’t judging him. That he didn’t have to sit there trapped in that panic.”

Frankie could see it now with awful clarity. The booth. The dark little pocket of space. Irena’s hand disappearing under the table while Ryan tried to keep his face composed above it. The image hit her so hard she had to shift under the blanket.

Irena watched her carefully.

“He looked at me like he couldn’t believe I was doing it,” she murmured. “Like he didn’t know whether to stop me or thank me. He was already so hard, Frankie. So tense.” A deep, involuntary heat spread through Frankie’s belly. Her thighs pressed together on instinct, and she hated—then instantly didn’t hate—the slick awareness that followed. Irena did not comment on the movement. She only let her hand remain where it was, anchoring Frankie to the couch while the story unfolded around her.

“I stroked him through his pants for a little while,” Irena said. “Slowly. Enough to let him breathe. Enough to let some of that tension go somewhere.”

Frankie’s lips parted, but no words came.

“I kept talking to him the whole time,” Irena continued. “Like nothing was wrong. Like we were still just sitting there having a normal conversation. And little by little, I could feel him giving in. Letting himself stop fighting it.”

The description was doing something dangerous to Frankie’s body. Not just the sexual content of it, though that was bad enough. It was the emotional architecture around it. Ryan embarrassed and helpless. Irena calm and competent. Taking hold of the moment. Managing it. Making it easier.

Doing for him what she always did for Frankie.

The realization sent a fresh pulse of wetness through her panties.

Irena’s voice grew quieter still.

“Eventually he came,” she said. “Right there in the booth. He bit his lip so hard trying to stay quiet.”

Frankie shut her eyes for a second. Her whole body seemed to tighten around the sentence. When she opened them again, Irena was still watching her. Patient. Gentle. Giving her room. “I know that’s a lot,” she said softly.

Frankie nodded, but the motion was unsteady. “I just… wasn’t expecting that.”

“I know.”

They sat in silence for a few seconds. The movie still played. Someone on-screen was talking, but the dialogue felt absurdly far away.

Frankie’s thoughts moved in panicked little circles. Ryan coming in a bar booth with Irena’s hand on him. Irena deciding, in real time, to do that. Irena telling the story now while her own hand rested high on Frankie’s thigh.

Her body had become traitorous. She could feel her heartbeat low between her legs. Could feel the slick heat gathering there with every breath.

Irena reached up with her free hand and brushed a strand of auburn hair behind Frankie’s ear. “I didn’t want to keep it from you,” she said. “Especially not once things went further.” Frankie looked at her sharply. “Further?”

Irena held her gaze.

“Yes.”

The word fell softly, but Frankie felt it like an impact.

Irena gave her thigh a slow, reassuring squeeze before continuing. “Afterward, we left the bar together.”

Frankie’s mouth went dry all over again.

“I wasn’t really planning for anything else to happen,” Irena said. “I need you to know that. My intention was to help him through a hard moment. That was all.”

Frankie wanted to believe that, and part of her did. Or maybe belief wasn’t the right word. Maybe what she wanted was the version of events where everything Irena did could still be folded into care somehow. Into help. Into service. Into something Frankie could live beside. “But when we got back to his place,” Irena said, “he kissed me.”

The sentence landed lower this time. Less shocking than the booth story, but somehow more intimate. Booth was impulse, pressure, crisis. A kiss was choice.

Frankie’s throat tightened.

Irena went on carefully, almost as if she were walking her through it one emotional step at a time.

“We got inside and he just turned toward me. Like he couldn’t stop himself anymore. He kissed me hard, Frankie. Not rough. Just… hungry. Like all that tension had nowhere else left to go.”

Frankie pictured it and immediately wished she couldn’t. Ryan at his apartment door. Irena still carrying the afterglow of what had happened under the table.

The space between them collapsing.

She took a shallow breath.

“I could have stopped it,” Irena said softly. “I know that.”

Frankie looked at her, startled by the plainness of it.

“But I also knew how long he’d been holding himself together,” Irena said. “For you. Around you. Through everything. And he was already there, already opening up in a way he clearly never lets himself do. So I let it happen.”

Her hand on Frankie’s thigh slipped another inch upward, just enough to bring heat to heat through the thin fabric of her shorts.

“He pulled me onto his lap on the couch,” Irena said.

Frankie’s pulse jumped.

“At first we were still clothed. Just kissing. Breathing each other in. But then I was straddling him, and he was so hard under me. I could feel him through everything. Every little movement.” Irena’s voice stayed calm, but it had deepened, gone huskier at the edges. “I started grinding against him before I even really decided to.”

Frankie let out a soft, involuntary breath. Her hips shifted beneath the blanket before she could stop them. The pressure between her legs had become almost unbearable in its insistence.

Irena’s eyes flicked down once, noting the movement, then returned to Frankie’s face. “He felt good,” she said quietly. “Thick. Hot. Desperate in that way some men get when they’ve been trying so hard to be controlled.”

Frankie’s inner thighs tightened.

Then Irena added, “And all I could think was how much relief he needed.”

Again that wordless twist inside Frankie. Jealousy should have come first. Or betrayal. But the shape of the story kept rerouting those instincts, binding them up in care until they

became harder to separate.

“What happened then?” Frankie whispered.

Irena held her eyes for another long beat before answering.

“He bent me over the arm of the couch.”

Frankie’s breath caught in her throat.

Irena did not rush through it. She seemed to understand instinctively that Frankie needed each piece to arrive with enough space around it to register fully.

“He was gentler than I expected at first,” she said. “Hands on my hips. Like he couldn’t quite believe I was letting him do it. But once he was inside me…” She let out a slow breath. “He relaxed. Finally. It was like all that pressure in him had found somewhere to go.” Frankie could hear every word too vividly. Could see too much.

“He thrust slow at the beginning,” Irena murmured. “Deep. Careful. Like he was still trying to stay good even while he was losing control.”

A trembling started in Frankie’s thighs. She pressed them together harder, but it didn’t help. If anything it made her more aware of how damp she’d become.

“I came once just from that,” Irena said.

Frankie shut her eyes again, a wave of heat crashing through her so suddenly it almost hurt. Irena’s hand had gone still now—resting just beneath the hem of Frankie’s shorts, waiting. “When we moved to the bedroom,” Irena continued, “he was different. Less careful. Still sweet. Still grateful. But past the point where he could pretend he wasn’t starved for it.” Frankie opened her eyes and stared at her.

“He took me from behind on the bed,” Irena said softly. “Holding my hips so tight I knew I’d have marks later. Every time he thrust in, he kept saying the same thing over and over—how good it felt to finally let go. How long he’d needed it.”

The room seemed to shrink around Frankie. Her body was a collection of separate, urgent sensations now: tight nipples, shallow breathing, the pounding ache low between her legs, the unbearable awareness of Irena’s hand waiting just at the threshold of her shorts. And still Irena kept her voice gentle. Never crude. Never cruel. As if she were telling Frankie something important and intimate and necessary.

“He thanked me,” she said. “More than once.”

Frankie swallowed hard. “For what?”

Irena’s gaze softened.

“For taking care of him.”

The answer hit Frankie straight in the chest. Not because it was the most explicit part of the story, but because it completed something. Ryan wasn’t just a man who had sex with Irena. He had been gathered into the same emotional shape Frankie knew so well. Seen. soothed. handled. relieved.

Taken care of.

Irena’s fingers slipped under the hem of Frankie’s shorts.

Just barely.

The touch was enough to make Frankie’s entire body tense.

“I know this is a lot to hear,” Irena whispered. “I know.”

Her fingertips came to rest against the damp cotton of Frankie’s panties, not moving yet, only settling there. The contact sent a violent pulse through Frankie’s clit. Her breath broke into a small, helpless sound.

Irena leaned in, her lips brushing the shell of her ear.

“But I need you to understand why I did it.”

Frankie trembled beneath her hand.

Irena pressed slightly—not enough to stroke, just enough to make the wetness undeniable. “You weren’t able to take care of his needs right now,” she murmured. “You’ve been healing. You’ve been trying to keep your own head above water. He was carrying all of that tension by himself.”

Frankie’s hips twitched once under the pressure.

“So I stepped in,” Irena said. “For him. And for you.”

Her hand remained perfectly still, warm and possessive against the soaked fabric between Frankie’s legs.

“I did all of it for you, sweet girl,” she whispered. “So you wouldn’t have to worry about him. So you could focus on getting better. So there would be one less thing in the world demanding anything from you.”

Frankie’s breathing had gone ragged. Every word seemed to deepen the ache inside her rather than resolve it. She was shocked. Turned on. Hurt. Relieved. Grateful in some awful, impossible way. Her body could not separate any of it anymore.

Irena’s nose brushed gently along the line of her cheek.

“So you could let go,” she said.

Frankie’s thighs trembled harder.

“So you could trust me to handle what you can’t.”

The pressure of Irena’s fingers increased just a little.

Frankie let out a broken sound and grabbed at the blanket with one hand, her whole body pitching toward the touch without fully moving.

Irena’s voice dropped to a whisper.

“Feel how wet you are.”

Frankie’s face burned, but there was no point denying it. She could feel it herself. The damp cling of the fabric. The helpless throbbing beneath Irena’s

hand. The humiliating truth of what her body had made of the story.

Irena kissed just below her ear.

“There’s nothing wrong with that,” she murmured. “You’re just feeling it. All of it.” Her fingers still did not move. That somehow made it worse. The steadiness. The restraint. The fact that she could leave Frankie right there in the center of her own reaction and make her live in it.

“I took care of him,” Irena whispered. “And I’m taking care of you.”

Frankie’s eyes fluttered shut. Her entire body had narrowed to the place where Irena’s hand rested over her soaked panties, to the unbearable nearness of relief she wasn’t being given. “Irena…” she breathed, and the name came out thin and shaking.

“I know, sweet girl.”

The movie flickered on in front of them. The city glowed outside. Somewhere far below, traffic moved through the night as if the rest of the world were still ordinary. But on the couch, under the shared blanket, Frankie sat trembling in Irena’s hold with her body burning, her mind spinning, and Irena’s hand warm and unmoving between her legs as the full meaning of everything she had just been told settled into her one pulse at a time.

Chapter 14

Bestie

Chapter 14: The First Watch

Frankie was still trembling when Irena’s phone lit up on the coffee table.

For a second neither of them moved. The room held its shape around them—the dim

television glow, the blanket pooled over their legs, the soft pulse of city light beyond the windows—but Frankie felt as if everything inside her had been broken apart and rearranged. Her body was still caught at the edge of something unbearable. Irena’s hand remained warm and unmoving over the damp fabric of her panties, and every shallow breath Frankie took seemed to tighten the pressure there rather than ease it.

Then the screen lit the underside of Irena’s wrist.

Ryan.

Frankie saw the name before Irena reached for the phone, and the sight of it sent a fresh wave through her so sudden it almost made her flinch. He was no longer just Ryan now—not the careful man from rooftop drinks, not the steady boyfriend who remembered her coffee order and kept his hand at the small of her back. He had become, in the space of one conversation, a body in a dark booth, a mouth on Irena’s, hands gripping her hips while she took care of him in Frankie’s place.

The phone buzzed again.

Irena glanced down at the screen, then back at Frankie. Her expression didn’t harden or sharpen. If anything, it softened further, as though she understood exactly how raw the moment had become and wanted to guide it carefully.

“Speak of the devil,” she murmured.

Frankie’s breath came shallow and uneven. Irena’s hand was still there, still pressing lightly against the soaked cotton between her legs, and the simple fact that Ryan was calling now— while Frankie sat there wrecked and wet from hearing what had happened between them— made the whole room feel unreal.

Irena picked up the phone and answered in that same warm, easy voice she used when she wanted everything to feel ordinary.

“Hey, you.”

Frankie stared at her.

Irena listened for a moment, then smiled faintly. “Yeah. I’m at Frankie’s place.”

At the sound of her own name in that tone—gentle, casual, inserted into a private conversation Frankie now understood differently—Frankie's stomach tightened.

Irena turned her head slightly, looking at Frankie as she continued. "Actually, she's right here with me."

Frankie's pulse hammered in her throat.

Irena went quiet again, listening. Her fingers did not move. They simply stayed where they were, letting Frankie feel the full weight of them while Ryan's voice—faint, tinny, impossible to make out—passed through the speaker into the room.

Then Irena said, very softly, "Would you like to come over?"

Frankie's eyes widened.

Another pause.

Irena's gaze held hers as she added, "I think it would be good for all of us."

The words hit Frankie with dizzying force. Good for all of us. Not reckless. Not dramatic. Not transgressive. Framed immediately as something useful, soothing, clarifying. Frankie wanted to speak. Wanted to ask what she meant, or say no, or say wait. But her whole body was still trapped inside the aftermath of Chapter 13's confession, and the pressure of Irena's hand between her legs had left her feeling half-dissolved.

Irena listened a moment longer, then smiled.

"Okay," she said into the phone. "See you soon."

She ended the call and set the phone down carefully on the coffee table.

For a second she said nothing. The movie continued playing in front of them, some scene washing the room in pale shifting light. Frankie could hear her own breathing. Could feel the heat of Irena's body beside her. Could feel the hand still resting over her soaked panties like a claim.

"He's on his way," Irena said at last.

Frankie's throat tightened instantly.

"Irena…"

Irena turned toward her a little more fully, her body calm, her expression open. "I know." Frankie shook her head once, small and helpless. "I don't—I don't know if I can—" "Shhh." Irena leaned in and kissed her temple. Her lips were warm, patient. "You don't have to do anything."

Frankie closed her eyes for half a second at the softness of the contact.

“I’m not asking anything from you,” Irena murmured. “Just to stay with me. Just to watch.” The word landed low and electric.

Watch.

Frankie’s entire body answered before her mind did. A pulse against Irena’s fingers. A tightening inside her. The terrible, humiliating truth that some part of her had already begun to imagine it the moment Ryan’s name lit the screen.

Irena drew back just enough to look at her.

“I want you to see him,” she said quietly. “Really see him. How much lighter he is. How much this has helped.”

Frankie stared at her. The logic of it was obscene in its gentleness. Not *I want you to watch me with him.* Not *I want you to suffer through this.* But *I want you to see the good it has done.*

For him.

For you.

For us.

Irena’s hand finally moved—but only enough to slide out from beneath the hem of Frankie’s shorts and return to the outside of her thigh. The loss of contact was so sudden Frankie nearly made a sound.

“I did tell you all of that for a reason,” Irena said. “I didn’t want this to blindside you.” Frankie swallowed. “It still is.”

“I know.” Irena tucked a strand of auburn hair behind Frankie’s ear, her knuckles soft against her cheek. “That’s why we’re going slowly now.”

The line steadied something in Frankie even as it deepened everything else. Going slowly. As if there were a way for this to be slow now. As if she were already too far inside the structure of it to step outside and ask whether it should be happening at all.

“What if I hate it?” Frankie whispered.

Irena’s eyes searched hers. “Then you hate it. And I’ll be right here with you while you do.” The answer was so calm, so impossible to fight cleanly, that Frankie felt tears threaten for no clear reason. She looked away, toward the television, toward the windows, toward anywhere that wasn’t Irena’s face.

But Irena touched her jaw gently and brought her back.

“You don’t have to perform for me,” she said softly. “You don’t have to be okay. Just honest.” Frankie let out a shaky breath. Her body was still burning. Her panties were still damp. The entire room felt charged with what had already been said and what was now moving toward them by elevator and hallway and knock.

“Why does this feel…” She stopped, unable to finish.

Irena’s thumb stroked once along her jaw. “Like too much?”

Frankie nodded.

“Because it is a lot,” Irena said. “But a lot doesn’t always mean wrong.”

The sentence slipped into her like all the others had.

Irena stood then, slowly, and held out her hand.

“Come here,” she said.

Frankie looked at it, then at her. “What?”

“I want to fix you up a little before he gets here.”

The phrase should have sounded absurd. Instead it made Frankie’s stomach flutter. She took Irena’s hand and let herself be pulled to her feet.

The blanket slid away. Cool air brushed Frankie’s bare legs, and she became instantly aware of the thinness of her shorts, the way they clung now, the heat still gathered between her thighs. Irena looked her over in one slow, assessing glance—not cruelly, but thoroughly. “You’re shaking,” she said.

Frankie gave a tiny, humorless laugh. “No kidding.”

Irena smiled faintly. “Bathroom.”

She led Frankie down the short hallway with one hand at the small of her back. The touch was steady, guiding. Familiar enough now to make obedience feel easier than resistance. In the bathroom, the overhead light came on soft and warm. Frankie looked at herself in the mirror and almost didn’t recognize the flush in her cheeks, the dazed openness in her eyes, the way her lips were still slightly parted as if her body had forgotten how to compose itself. Irena stood behind her and met her gaze in the reflection.

“Breathe,” she said gently.

Frankie did.

Irena reached past her for a washcloth, ran it under cool water, and handed it over. “Pat your face.”

Frankie obeyed automatically, dabbing at her cheeks, her neck. She felt strangely young in that moment, strangely handled.

Irena took the cloth from her and set it aside. Then she used both hands to smooth Frankie’s hair back from her face, arranging the auburn waves with quiet care.

“There,” she murmured. “Better.”

Frankie watched her in the mirror. “Why are you doing this?”

Irena’s hands settled lightly on her shoulders. “Because I want you comfortable.”
“Comfortable,” Frankie repeated, and there was a breath of disbelief in it.

“As comfortable as you can be,” Irena corrected. Her voice remained patient. “I’m not pretending this is ordinary, sweet girl. I’m just making sure you don’t feel thrown to the wolves.”

The tenderness of that almost undid Frankie more than anything else.

Irena leaned in and kissed the top of her head.

“When he gets here,” she said, “you don’t have to talk much if you don’t want to. You don’t have to act cheerful. Just stay with me.”

Frankie nodded.

They went back to the living room together.

This time, Irena did not pull her back to the couch immediately. Instead she dimmed the television a little, lowered the volume, and turned on the lamp near the window. The room changed subtly under the warmer light. Softer. More deliberate. The couch no longer felt like a place they had happened to be sitting. It felt prepared.

Frankie noticed that and felt another nervous turn in her stomach.

Irena noticed her noticing.

“I don’t want it to feel harsh,” she said simply.

Frankie sank back onto the couch, but not all the way against it. She sat near one end, hands in her lap, body too alert now to recline. Irena sat beside her, close enough that their thighs touched, one arm draped lightly along the back cushion behind Frankie’s shoulders without quite enclosing her.

Minutes passed.

Every sound in the hallway outside seemed magnified. Elevator doors. Footsteps. Voices from somewhere distant. Frankie became acutely aware of her own body in space—her knees together, her shoulders drawn too tight, the wet cling of her panties cooling and then warming again against her skin.

“Irena,” she said quietly.

“Mm?”

“What if he can tell?”

Irena turned her head. “Tell what?”

Frankie’s cheeks burned. “That I’m…” She couldn’t finish it.

Irena’s expression softened. “Turned on?”

Frankie looked down.

Irena’s hand came to rest over hers in her lap. “He’ll be a little busy, I think.” The faint humor in the line loosened a tiny, unwilling breath from Frankie.

Then there was a knock.

Every muscle in her body tightened at once.

Irena squeezed her hand once and stood.

“Stay here,” she said gently.

Frankie did.

She watched Irena cross the room—small, poised, perfectly at ease in her own body—and open the condo door.

Ryan stepped inside.

Frankie’s first, disorienting thought was that he looked exactly like himself.

And then, almost immediately, that he didn’t.

He was wearing dark jeans and the charcoal button-down she liked on him, sleeves rolled to the forearms. His hair was slightly mussed, as if he’d run a hand through it more than once on the way over. There was still that steady, careful quality to him—that familiar decency in the set of his face—but now Frankie could see other things too. Or imagined she could. A looseness around the mouth. A restless energy in the way his eyes moved. A private awareness in the way he looked at Irena first, then past her into the apartment.

Then his gaze found Frankie.

“Hey,” he said.

The word was warm, careful, and impossibly normal.

Frankie’s throat tightened so hard it hurt. “Hey.”

He stepped farther inside. Irena closed the door behind him.

For a strange suspended second, the three of them simply occupied the same air.

Ryan glanced between them, some uncertainty moving under the surface of his expression. Not fear exactly. More like he understood this was a threshold and did not want to misstep on it.

“You look good,” he said to Frankie at last.

It was such an ordinary thing to say that Frankie almost laughed. Instead she managed a tiny nod.

“Thanks.”

Irena crossed back toward the couch, but stopped close enough to Ryan that their bodies almost touched. She looked from one to the other with that same quiet composure Frankie had come to know so well.

“I’m glad you came,” she said.

Ryan gave a small exhale through his nose, almost a laugh. “I wasn’t sure if I should.” “I know,” Irena said. “But you did.”

The way she said it made the room contract around the three of them. Frankie felt it in her chest. In her throat. In the hot ache low between her legs that had never truly subsided. Irena turned to Frankie then.

“Come sit where you can see.”

The sentence was so gently spoken that it took Frankie a second to understand it. Irena gestured—not to the couch between them, but to the armchair across from it. Not beside.

Across.

A place for watching.

Frankie’s heart pounded so hard she thought it might make her visibly shake. Still, she rose. Her legs felt unsteady as she crossed the room and sat down in the armchair. From there the couch faced her directly, the lamp throwing warm light across it, across Ryan’s body, across Irena standing between them.

She folded her hands tightly in her lap.

Irena turned back to Ryan.

For a brief second she simply stood in front of him, close enough that Frankie could see the subtle rise and fall of their breathing. The history Frankie had just been told seemed to gather itself in the air between them—the bar, the booth, the couch, the bed—and then become present.

Ryan looked at her with an openness Frankie had never seen directed at anyone.

Irena reached up and touched his cheek.

“Hi,” she said softly.

Then she kissed him.

It was not rushed. That was the first thing Frankie noticed. Not greedy. Not frantic. The kiss began almost gently, Irena’s hand still at Ryan’s face, his hands hovering uncertainly at her waist before finally settling there. But then Ryan leaned into it, and something in him seemed to give way. Frankie could see it happen. The carefulness didn’t vanish; it melted. What replaced it was hunger

shaped by trust.

Frankie’s pulse slammed low between her legs.

Irena kissed him deeper. Ryan responded immediately, one hand tightening at her waist while the other slid up her back. The sound of it—soft breath, the faint wet shift of mouths, the little involuntary exhale Ryan made into the kiss—filled the room far more completely than the television ever had.

Frankie’s thighs pressed together.

Irena pulled back only an inch, her mouth still close to his. “Better already?” she murmured. Ryan let out a shaky breath that was almost a laugh. “You know it is.”

The intimacy of the answer struck Frankie harder than the kiss had.

Irena smiled faintly, then kissed him again.

This time, as the kiss deepened, her hands moved lower—one resting at his chest, the other slipping to the buttons of his shirt. She began undoing them slowly, one by one, without breaking the kiss for long.

Frankie stared.

She had expected speed once it began. Expected that if this happened, it would happen all at once, in a blur she could barely track. But that wasn’t what Irena was doing. She was unfolding it. Making every step visible. Letting Frankie see the progression rather than merely the result.

Ryan’s shirt opened gradually under her hands. The warm skin of his chest appeared, then more of it, then the line of his stomach. He did not stop her. If anything, he seemed to settle deeper into the couch as her fingers worked.

Irena finally drew back enough to look at him.

“Sit,” she said softly.

He did.

The single word, and the ease with which he obeyed it, sent another painful throb through Frankie’s clit.

Irena slipped the shirt from his shoulders and let it fall away. Ryan sat there bare-chested in the warm apartment light, flushed already, his breathing visible.

Frankie had known his body before. Not like this, exactly, but enough that there should have been nothing shocking in the sight of his chest, his arms, the familiar planes of him. But the context had transformed everything. She was no longer seeing her boyfriend undressed in intimacy shared with her. She was seeing a man Irena had touched, soothed, relieved, and now displayed—not cruelly, but openly, as though this too were something she was taking care of.

Irena glanced at Frankie then. Not for long. Just enough to make sure she was still there, still looking.

“Stay with me,” she said quietly.

Frankie nodded once, unable to speak.

Irena turned back to Ryan and knelt between his knees.

The visual shock of it nearly stole Frankie’s breath. Irena, poised and compact and impossibly calm, looking up at him from that position. Ryan’s hands hovering uncertainly, then finding her shoulders.

Irena rested both palms on his thighs.

“Tell me how you’re feeling,” she said.

Ryan let out a breath and dragged one hand through his hair. “Nervous.”

“About?”

His eyes flicked toward Frankie, then back to Irena. “This. Her. All of it.”

Irena smiled gently. “That’s fair.”

Frankie’s chest tightened unexpectedly. The fact that Irena was naming the room, slowing the moment, making Ryan articulate himself before anything continued—it made the whole thing somehow worse and more intimate at the same time.

“You trust me?” Irena asked.

Ryan answered without hesitation. “Yes.”

Irena looked up at him another moment, then rose smoothly to her feet.

She took his hand and drew him up with her, then guided him back down onto the couch, farther in this time, where the light hit him more fully. She climbed over one of his legs and straddled his lap without hurry, settling there as if it were a natural destination rather than a revelation.

Frankie’s mouth went dry.

Irena rested her hands lightly at the base of Ryan’s throat. He looked up at her like a man already halfway gone.

“Watch,” she said softly.

The word was for Frankie.

Then Irena leaned down and kissed Ryan again, seated fully in his lap now.

The new angle changed everything. Ryan’s hands came to her waist, then her hips, holding but not directing. Irena controlled the pace. The depth. The rhythm. She kissed him until his hands tightened, until his body leaned up into hers, until

Frankie could hear the change in his breathing from across the room.

Irena pulled back only long enough to untuck her own top from her waistband and lift it over her head.

Frankie’s entire body tightened at the sight of her. Her compact, beautiful body laid open in warm light. The familiar swell of her breasts. The confident ease with which she let herself be seen. Ryan stared too, open and hungry, his hands already rising toward her.

Irena caught one wrist halfway and guided it lower—back to her waist.

“Not yet,” she murmured.

Ryan gave a tiny nod.

Frankie felt the command in her own body.

Irena unbuttoned Ryan’s jeans slowly. Not performing slowness for effect, but actually taking her time. Looking at him while she did it. Letting the intimacy accumulate. Ryan helped

when she tugged the denim down enough, lifting his hips just slightly. Frankie saw the outline beneath his underwear, already hard, and had to press her knees together harder to keep from shifting in the chair.

Irena noticed everything. She always did.

But she still did not look back at Frankie right away. She kept the focus on Ryan, on the careful unfolding of him, on the atmosphere of being handled and permitted and relieved. Only when she had him pushed back against the couch cushions, half-undressed and breathing hard beneath her, did she turn her head.

“Still with me?” she asked.

Frankie’s lips parted. “Yes.”

The answer came out almost inaudible.

Irena smiled—a soft, approving little curve of the mouth that went straight through Frankie. “Good girl,” she said.

Then she turned back, hooked her fingers into the waistband of Ryan’s underwear, and drew it down.

Frankie’s breath caught sharply.

There he was. Exposed fully now. Hard. Flushed. Unmistakably real in the room with them. Not a story told under a blanket. Not an image conjured by Frankie’s own mind. A body. Ryan’s body. Ryan’s need. Ryan sitting open under Irena’s hands while Frankie watched from across the room and felt herself grow wetter by the second.

Irena touched him with the same composure she had touched everything else all night. Not frantic.

Certain.

Her hand wrapped around him and stroked once—just once, slow and firm.

Ryan’s head dropped back against the couch with a low sound that Frankie felt in her own stomach.

Irena kissed along his jaw, then his neck, while her hand moved again. Another stroke. Another exhale dragged out of him. Frankie’s pulse was so loud now she could barely hear the movie at all.

Then Irena stood.

The loss of contact made Ryan blink up at her, dazed. Frankie watched Irena step out of her pants and underwear with unhurried ease, pushing the clothes aside with one foot. She climbed back onto the couch, naked now, one knee on either side of Ryan’s thighs. Every line of the scene seemed lit from within.

Irena settled over him and reached down between them. Ryan’s hands went to her hips instantly, his fingers spreading there as if he needed the anchor.

Frankie watched the exact moment Irena lowered herself.

Ryan groaned.

The sound was deep and helpless and utterly unlike the man who had stood in Frankie’s kitchen making polite conversation. His hands gripped hard. His eyes closed. Irena’s face tipped upward for one brief second, her own breath catching as she took him fully. Then she began to move.

Slowly at first.

Rolling hips. Deliberate descent and lift. Nothing theatrical. Nothing exaggerated. Just the visible fact of Irena using his body and his need with complete calm control while he gave himself over to her.

Frankie’s thighs pressed together so tightly it almost hurt. She could not look anywhere else. Could not think anywhere else. Every slow rise and fall of Irena’s hips translated directly into Frankie’s own body as heat and ache and unbearable curiosity. Ryan’s hands stayed locked to Irena’s hips, but it was clear even from across the room that he was not driving this. He was receiving it. Being ridden. Being managed.

Taken care of.

Irena looked at Frankie over Ryan’s shoulder.

“See?” she said softly, breath just a little unsteady now. “See how much he needed this?” The question pierced Frankie clean through.

Ryan made another low sound and thrust upward once, instinctive, but Irena answered it by setting the pace again immediately—slowing him, controlling the rhythm until he was back inside hers.

Frankie's hands tightened helplessly in her lap.

Irena's eyes stayed on her for another few seconds as she moved.

"He's been carrying so much tension," she murmured. "Look at him now."

Frankie looked.

Ryan's face was open in a way she had never seen. Pleasure, yes, but more than that—relief. Real relief. The loosening of a man who had been holding himself too rigidly and had finally been given permission to stop.

The recognition of it undid something in her. Because it was true. Because it was arousing. Because she hated that it was arousing. Because some part of her was already translating what she saw into Irena's language: this helps him. this helps all of us. this is what care looks like when Irena takes charge of it.

Irena rode him harder.

Not wildly. Just with more certainty now, more depth. Ryan's hands slid up her body, then back down, unable to settle anywhere except the places where he could hold on. The room filled with soft wet sounds, roughened breath, the occasional helpless noise from Ryan that made Frankie's whole body clench.

At one point Irena leaned forward, pressed one hand to Ryan's chest, and bent to kiss him again. The angle of her body changed. Frankie saw the flex of Ryan's stomach, the tense line of his thighs, Irena's hair falling forward over one shoulder as she moved over him. She was beautiful.

They were beautiful.

The thought shamed Frankie the instant it came and made her burn even hotter.

Irena lifted her head and looked at her again.

"You're doing so well," she said.

Frankie did not know whether she meant sitting there, watching, not running, not crying, not interrupting, or simply existing inside the unbearable mixture of arousal and emotional fracture without coming apart. Maybe all of it.

Ryan's breathing turned ragged. His hands tightened again on Irena's hips. Frankie could see the strain building in him, the loss of control he was too far gone now to hide. Irena noticed too.

She leaned down, lips brushing his ear, but her eyes stayed on Frankie.

"Come for me," she whispered to him. "Let her see."

Ryan’s whole body tensed.

The line hit Frankie like a blow—because it made her part of the event directly, because it turned her watching into function, because it asked her to witness not as outsider but as necessary third point in the triangle.

Ryan came with a deep, broken groan. His hips jerked up once, then again, while Irena stayed over him and rode out every pulse with calm, steady control. Frankie’s own body answered in violent sympathy. Her clit throbbed so hard it felt almost painful. She had to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from making a sound.

Irena slowed only when Ryan’s body had begun to soften beneath her.

Then she lifted herself off him carefully and stood.

Ryan slumped back into the couch, flushed and panting, one forearm over his eyes for a second as if he needed the darkness there.

Irena looked at him with a softness so intimate it made Frankie’s chest ache.

Then she turned fully and walked toward the armchair.

Frankie’s whole body tensed as she approached. Irena came to kneel in front of her, still naked, skin warm and faintly damp, breathing not yet fully even. But her face—her face was gentle. Concerned, even.

She rested both hands on Frankie’s knees.

“How are you feeling?” she asked softly.

Frankie opened her mouth, but nothing came out.

How was she feeling?

Ruined. Turned on. Humiliated. Seen. Forgotten. Included. Sick with want. Sick with gratitude. Like she had been split open and arranged around someone else’s needs and had not, horrifyingly, entirely minded.

She shook her head once, because no word she knew seemed broad enough.

Irena’s thumbs stroked the tops of her knees.

“I know,” she murmured.

Ryan sat up a little on the couch behind her now, still catching his breath, still very present in the room, and that made everything stranger. There had been no curtain. No cut. No transition back into ordinary. They were all still there together in the aftermath.

Irena leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to the inside of Frankie’s knee.

The contact made Frankie shiver violently.

“You did so well,” Irena whispered.

The praise went straight through her. She could feel her own body still pulsing under her clothes, her panties soaked, her breasts tight and aching beneath her top.

Irena kissed the same spot again, slower.

“I’m so proud of you.”

Frankie closed her eyes for half a second. Not to escape, but because it was too much to keep them open under that kind of tenderness.

When she opened them again, Irena was still there between her knees, hands warm, gaze lifted to hers.

Behind her, Ryan remained on the couch—flushed, quieter, undeniably altered by what had just happened. And Frankie understood with terrible clarity that she was altered too. Not just because she had watched.

Because she had stayed.

Because she had looked.

Because some part of her had already begun, against all logic, to experience Irena’s control of the entire room as its own kind of shelter.

Irena kept her hands on Frankie’s knees, steady and grounding, while Frankie sat trembling in the chair, overwhelmed and soaked through and more deeply inside the shape of their new arrangement than she had been a single hour earlier.

Chapter 15

Bestie

Chapter 15: Full Chemical Control

Frankie woke up the next morning feeling strange.

Not bad. Just… different. Her body felt warmer than usual, like a low, steady heat had settled beneath her skin. Her nipples were already tight against the thin fabric of her tank top, and there was a persistent, slick warmth between her legs that hadn't faded even after she'd cleaned up the night before.

She sat up slowly, her mind still hazy from sleep. The events of the previous night came rushing back — Irena's graphic stories about Ryan, the way she'd ridden him on the couch while Frankie watched, the overwhelming mix of shock and arousal that had left her trembling on the edge for what felt like hours.

Her clit gave a soft, involuntary throb at the memory.

She was still in the same cotton shorts from the night before. They were damp.

Frankie pressed her thighs together and let out a shaky breath. She felt… needy. Constantly. Like her body was humming at a higher frequency than usual, every nerve ending just a little too sensitive, every touch or thought sending ripples of heat straight to her core. When she walked into the kitchen, Irena was already there, pouring two cups of coffee. She looked fresh and radiant in one of Frankie's oversized shirts, her blonde hair loose around her shoulders.

"Morning, sweet girl," Irena said with a warm smile. She slid one of the mugs across the counter toward Frankie. "How are you feeling today?"

Frankie wrapped her hands around the warm mug, trying to steady herself. "I feel… strange. Warm. And kind of… sensitive. Everywhere."

Irena's smile softened with quiet satisfaction. She stepped around the island and came to stand in front of Frankie, reaching up to gently brush a strand of auburn hair from her face. "That's normal," she said softly. "I increased the strength of your supplements a little. Just a bit more of the good stuff to help you feel even better. More relaxed. More open. More… receptive."

Frankie's breath caught. "You increased them?"

"Mmhmm." Irena nodded, her fingers trailing lightly down the side of Frankie's neck. "You were responding so beautifully to the first blend. I thought you were ready for something a little stronger. How does it feel?"

Frankie swallowed. The heat in her body seemed to pulse in time with Irena's touch. She could feel her clit swelling, her panties growing wetter by the second. Her nipples ached. Her mind felt soft, hazy, and strangely eager to please.

“It feels… intense,” she admitted, her voice quiet. “Like I’m turned on all the time. Even when I’m not thinking about anything.”

Irena’s eyes darkened with quiet pleasure. She stepped closer, her body pressing lightly against Frankie’s as she reached up to cup her face with both hands.

“That’s exactly how it’s supposed to feel,” she murmured. “Your body is finally learning to stay open. To stay ready. To let go of all that unnecessary tension and just… feel good.” She leaned in and kissed Frankie softly, her lips warm and lingering. When she pulled back, her thumbs stroked Frankie’s cheekbones.

“You’ve been so good lately, Frankie. Watching last night. Being so open with everything I’ve shared with you. I’m so proud of you.”

Frankie’s knees felt weak. The praise sent another rush of heat straight between her legs. She could feel herself clenching around nothing, her body desperate for touch, for relief, for more of whatever Irena wanted to give her.

Irena’s hand slid down to rest on Frankie’s hip, her fingers slipping just under the waistband of her shorts.

“I want you to take your supplement now,” she said gently. “The new, stronger one. And then I want you to spend the day just feeling. No thinking too hard. No worrying. Just letting your body do what it wants to do.”

She reached into her pocket and pulled out a small bottle — different from the one Frankie had been taking before. The capsules inside were a deeper pink, slightly larger. Frankie opened her mouth without hesitation.

Irena placed the capsule on her tongue, then let her finger linger there for a moment, pressing lightly against the soft, wet heat. “Good girl,” she whispered. “Swallow.”

Frankie did. The capsule slid down easily, and almost immediately she felt a deeper, heavier warmth bloom in her chest and belly. Her arousal spiked — sudden and intense. Her clit throbbed hard, and she had to bite her lip to keep from moaning.

Irena smiled, clearly pleased.

“There we go,” she said softly. “That’s my girl. Now come sit with me on the couch. I want to hold you while this settles in.”

Frankie followed her without a word, her body moving on instinct. She felt floaty, needy, and strangely peaceful all at once. When they sat down, Irena pulled her close, one arm around

her shoulders while her other hand rested high on Frankie’s thigh — exactly where it had been the night before.

Frankie’s breathing was already shallow. Her body was burning. And as Irena’s fingers began their slow, familiar circles against her skin, she realized with a quiet, helpless thrill that she didn’t want it to stop.

She wanted more.

She wanted whatever Irena decided to give her next.

Chapter 16

Bestie

Chapter 16: The Lingerie “Gift”

Frankie was still feeling the effects of the stronger supplement when Irena walked into the living room carrying a sleek black shopping bag with delicate gold lettering.

“I got you something,” Irena said, her voice warm with quiet excitement. She placed the bag on the coffee table and sat down beside Frankie. “I saw it and thought of you right away. You’ve been so open lately… I wanted you to have something that makes you feel as sexy as you look.”

Frankie’s cheeks flushed. The new blend had left her body running hot all morning — a constant, low throb between her legs and a soft, aching sensitivity in her breasts that made even the lightest touch feel intense.

“You didn’t have to,” she said softly.

“I wanted to.” Irena reached into the bag and pulled out layers of tissue paper, revealing a delicate black lingerie set — a sheer bra with thin straps, matching panties so delicate they were almost transparent, a small garter belt, and sheer black stockings.

Frankie’s breath caught. “Irena…”

“Try it on for me,” Irena said, her eyes soft but full of heat. “Please? I want to see how it looks on you.”

Frankie nodded and took the bag into the bedroom. Her body felt hypersensitive as she undressed — the brush of fabric against her skin sent sparks through her. She stepped into the delicate panties first, then fastened the bra. The sheer material did almost nothing to hide how hard her nipples had become. She clipped on the garter belt and slowly rolled the stockings up her legs, the cool straps settling against her thighs.

When she stepped back into the living room, Irena was waiting on the couch. Her eyes darkened the moment she saw her.

“Turn around for me,” Irena said quietly.

Frankie turned slowly, feeling Irena’s gaze travel over every inch of her. The sheer panties clung to her already-wet folds, and she could feel how swollen and sensitive she was. Irena stood and stepped closer, her hands coming to rest on Frankie’s waist. “You look incredible,” she murmured. Her fingers traced up Frankie’s sides, brushing the undersides of her breasts through the thin lace. “This color against your skin… these curves…”

Frankie’s breath hitched as Irena’s thumbs brushed over her nipples through the sheer fabric. A sharp pulse of heat shot straight between her legs.

Irena moved behind her and knelt to adjust the garter straps. Her fingers brushed the sensitive skin of Frankie’s inner thighs as she tightened one of the clips, then lingered there a moment longer than necessary.

“These are a little loose,” Irena said, her voice low. She stood again and stepped in front of Frankie, reaching up to fix one of the bra straps. Her knuckles grazed the top of Frankie’s breast, then deliberately brushed over her hardened nipple.

Frankie gasped softly. Her clit throbbed hard.

Irena smiled, small and knowing. “Very sensitive today,” she murmured. Her hand stayed on Frankie’s breast, thumb circling her nipple through the lace with slow, deliberate strokes. “The new supplement is really working, isn’t it?”

Frankie could only nod, her breathing shallow. Her body felt like it was burning from the inside out — every nerve ending alive, every touch from Irena sending fresh waves of need straight to her core.

Irena leaned in and kissed the corner of Frankie’s mouth, then lower along her jaw. Her hand slid down Frankie’s stomach, fingers slipping just beneath the waistband of the sheer panties. She didn’t go further, but the promise of it made Frankie tremble.

“Walk for me,” Irena said softly. “Let me see how you move in it.”

Frankie walked slowly across the room, the garter straps shifting against her thighs with every step, the delicate fabric of the panties brushing against her swollen, aching clit. She could feel Irena’s eyes on her the entire time.

When she turned back, Irena was watching her with dark, appreciative eyes.

“Come here,” Irena said, her voice low and warm.

Frankie crossed the room and stopped in front of her. Irena reached up, pulled her gently down onto her lap, and settled her straddling her thighs. Her hands rested on Frankie’s hips, fingers tracing the straps of the garter belt.

“You’re perfect,” Irena murmured, her eyes locked on Frankie’s. Her hands slid up to cup her breasts through the delicate bra, thumbs stroking her nipples until Frankie’s breathing turned ragged.

Frankie’s body was on fire. She could feel how wet she was, the sheer panties completely soaked through and clinging to her. Every slow stroke of Irena’s thumbs sent sharp pulses of pleasure straight to her clit.

Irena leaned in and kissed her deeply, her hands still moving over Frankie’s body, warm and possessive.

Frankie trembled in her lap, her breath shaky, her body aching and desperate, completely lost in the moment.

Chapter 17

Bestie

**Chapter 17: The First Orgasm Conditioning*

Frankie stepped into the hotel room and let out a long breath she didn't realize she'd been holding. The sleek downtown hotel was only a few blocks from their office, but it felt like another world. Soft lighting, crisp white sheets, and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city lights. Irena had texted her earlier that afternoon with the room number and a simple message: *Come straight here after work. No laptop. I've got you.*

Irena was already there, standing by the window in a black silk robe that clung to her petite but powerful frame. Her blonde hair was loose around her shoulders, and the robe had slipped slightly off one shoulder, revealing the smooth curve of her collarbone and the top of her full breast. She turned when she heard the door open, her blue eyes lighting up with quiet satisfaction.

"There you are," she said, crossing the room. "I was starting to think the *Aligned* campaign had finally swallowed you whole."

Frankie dropped her bag by the door and stepped into Irena's arms without hesitation. The relief of being away from the office — even for one night — hit her harder than she expected. "I don't know what I'd do without you," she murmured against Irena's shoulder. "You always know exactly when I'm about to break."

Irena pulled back just enough to look at her, one hand gently brushing a strand of auburn hair from Frankie's face.

"That's because I pay attention," she said softly. "And because I hate watching you run yourself into the ground for that campaign. They keep pushing that whole 'let go and surrender' messaging for the app while they're grinding you into dust. The irony is almost funny."

Frankie let out a tired laugh. "Yeah. I've noticed."

Irena leaned in and kissed her — slow, deep, and full of quiet intention. When she pulled back, her voice dropped lower.

"Tonight isn't about work. Tonight is about you letting go. Really letting go. I want to help you release all of that tension you've been carrying.

She took Frankie's hand and led her toward the bed. The room was warm, the lighting soft. Irena had clearly planned this — there was a bottle of massage oil on the nightstand, along with two glasses of wine

"Take off your clothes," Irena said gently, but with that quiet authority that always made Frankie's stomach flutter. "All of them. I want you completely

relaxed.”

Frankie obeyed, slipping out of her work clothes until she stood naked in front of Irena. The stronger supplement — the one she now took with every meal — had left her body in a constant state of heightened sensitivity. Her skin felt warm, her nipples already tight, and there was a deep, persistent throb between her legs.

Irena let her robe fall open, then slip from her shoulders completely. She stood there for a moment, letting Frankie take her in — her compact, powerful body, the generous curve of her breasts, the soft line of her stomach, the flare of her hips. She looked strong and sensual all at once, her presence filling the room in a way that made Frankie’s breath catch.

“Lie down on your stomach,” Irena said, her voice warm but commanding. “I’m going to take care of y

Frankie climbed onto the bed and stretched out on her stomach. Irena poured oil into her hands and began massaging her shoulders with firm, deliberate pressure. Her strong fingers worked deep into the tight muscle, drawing a long, shaky breath from Frankie.

“The *Aligned* campaign is important,” Irena said as she worked, “but not at the cost of your sanity. I’ve seen how hard you’ve been pushing. As your Creative Director, I could push you harder… but tonight, I just want to help you surrender.”

Her hands moved down Frankie’s back, then lower, gliding over the curve of her ass and down the backs of her thighs. Every touch felt magnified. Frankie’s breathing had already grown shallow.

Irena shifted, moving to straddle one of Frankie’s thighs as she continued the massage. As she leaned forward to work on Frankie’s lower back, her body pressed against her. The warm, slick skin of her clit brushed along the curve of Frankie’s hip as she moved. She didn’t stop. She simply let the friction build naturally while her hands kept working.

A few minutes later, Irena’s rhythm changed. Her breathing deepened. Her hips gave a small, instinctive roll. Then she came — quiet and sudden — a soft moan escaping her as her body trembled lightly against Frankie’s. It was natural, unhurried, and completely organic. She stayed pressed against Frankie for a moment, breathing through it, before lifting her head with a satisfied smile.

“That’s one,” she whispered.

She sat back on her heels and looked down at Frankie’s naked body with quiet hunger. Her full breasts rose and fell with her breath, her skin flushed and glowing. She looked powerful, sensual, and deeply in control.

Irena reached down and began circling Frankie’s swollen clit with two fingers, slow and steady. Every few minutes, just as Frankie’s breathing would quicken and her thighs would begin to tremble, Irena would ease off, pulling her back from the edge with a soft, affectionate murmur.

“Not yet, sweet girl. Stay with me.”

The second time Irena came, it happened while she was leaning over Frankie, one hand still working between her legs. She had shifted forward, and as she moved, her clit rubbed along the smooth skin of Frankie’s lower back. The friction built gradually until Irena’s hips stuttered and she came again — longer this time, a low moan escaping her as her body pressed down against Frankie’s.

She stayed there for a moment, breathing hard, before lifting her head and kissing Frankie’s shoulder.

“Two,” she whispered.

Frankie was shaking. She had been edged so many times now that her entire body felt like one raw, desperate nerve. Her clit was throbbing painfully, her inner walls clenching rhythmically, her mind hazy with overwhelming need. The stronger supplement made every sensation feel ten times more intense.

Irena sat back and looked down at her, her blue eyes dark with quiet satisfaction. She slid two fingers inside Frankie while her thumb continued circling her clit, her movements slow and deliberate.

“You’re so wet for me,” she murmured. “I can feel how much you need this. How much tension you’ve been holding because of that damn campaign.”

She brought Frankie right to the edge again, then backed off. Then again. And again. Each time Frankie got close, Irena would slow down or change the rhythm, keeping her suspended in that aching, desperate place.

The third time Irena came, it happened while she was straddling one of Frankie’s thighs, grinding slowly against it while her fingers worked inside Frankie. Her body moved with natural, unhurried rhythm until she came with a soft, throaty moan, her hips pressing down harder as the pleasure moved through her in long, rolling waves.

She stayed like that for a long moment, breathing hard, before finally focusing entirely on Frankie.

This time, when she brought her to the edge, she didn’t stop.

Frankie’s orgasm hit her like a tidal wave. Her entire body seized, her back arching hard off the bed as the pleasure tore through her in long, powerful spasms. She came harder than she ever had in her life — wave after wave crashing over her until she was gasping and sobbing, her inner walls clenching

rhythmically around Irena’s fingers.

Irena stayed with her through every second of it, her free hand stroking Frankie’s hair, her voice soft and encouraging.

When it was finally over, Frankie collapsed back onto the bed, completely spent. Her chest heaved, her body still twitching with aftershocks. Irena slowly withdrew her hand and leaned

down to kiss her — soft, deep, and full of quiet affection.

She rested her forehead against Frankie’s, both of them breathing hard.

Irena’s hand stayed on Frankie’s stomach, warm and grounding, as the last tremors faded from her body.

Chapter 18

Bestie

Chapter 18: The Move-In

Frankie stepped into the condo and stopped.

The first thing she noticed was the smell — different. Not bad, just… not hers. The familiar scent of her favorite candle and the faint trace of her laundry detergent were gone, replaced by something cleaner, sharper. Citrus and cedar.

She took another step inside and her stomach dropped.

The art was wrong. All of her framed prints and personal photos had been replaced with large, moody abstract pieces in deep blues and blacks. The soft, warm lighting she'd always liked had been swapped for cooler, more dramatic fixtures. Even the furniture had been rearranged. Her favorite reading chair was missing. The couch had been moved to the opposite wall. New throw pillows in rich jewel tones sat where her old ones used to be. Frankie's breath caught.

She moved further inside on unsteady legs.

The kitchen was next. All of her dishes — the mismatched, colorful set she'd collected over the years — were gone. In their place were sleek, modern white plates and bowls that matched the new aesthetic perfectly. Even the mugs were different. Her favorite chipped one with the little cartoon cat was nowhere to be seen.

She kept walking.

When she reached the bedroom, her legs nearly gave out.

The closet doors were open.

Every single one of her clothes was gone.

In their place were Irena's clothes — neatly organized, color-coordinated, taking up every inch of space. Her shoes lined the bottom. Her coats hung in perfect rows. Even the hangers were different. Frankie's side of the closet was completely empty.

She turned slowly, taking in the full scope of what had happened while they were at the hotel. Irena had moved in.

Completely.

And she had erased every trace of Frankie in the process.

Frankie's hands started to shake. Her heart was pounding so hard she could feel it in her throat. A confusing rush of emotions crashed through her — shock, confusion, a strange sense of violation… and underneath it all, a deep, hot pulse

between her legs that made her press her thighs together.

She heard Irena's footsteps behind her.

Irena stepped into the bedroom, still in her work clothes, and leaned against the doorframe with a calm expression.

"Surprise," she said softly.

Frankie turned to face her, her mouth opening and closing without sound for a moment. "I… I don't understand," she finally managed. "When did you—?"

"While we were at the hotel," Irena said, her voice calm and matter-of-fact. "I had everything moved in yesterday. I wanted it to be a surprise. I wanted you to come home to a space that finally felt right."

Frankie looked around again, her eyes wide. "But… my things. My clothes. My art. Everything is gone."

Irena pushed off the doorframe and walked toward her slowly, her heels clicking softly against the hardwood.

"I know," she said gently. "I wanted a fresh start. For both of us. This condo has always been yours, but now it's ours. And I wanted it to reflect who we are now."

She stopped directly in front of Frankie and reached up to cup her face with both hands. Her thumbs stroked Frankie's cheekbones slowly.

"You've been so stressed. So overwhelmed. I wanted to take one more thing off your plate. You don't have to worry about any of this anymore. I've taken care of it."

Frankie's body was burning. She could feel how wet she was, her panties clinging to her, her clit throbbing with every beat of her heart. The combination of shock, violation, and the deep, instinctive knowledge that Irena had done all of this *for her* was making her dizzy. "Irena…" she whispered. "This is… this is too much."

Irena smiled, small and knowing. She leaned in and kissed Frankie softly, then deeper, her hands sliding down to rest on her hips.

"No," she murmured against her lips. "This is exactly right."

She backed Frankie up until her legs hit the edge of the bed, then gently pushed her down onto it. Irena climbed on top of her, straddling her waist, and looked down at her with dark, satisfied eyes.

Her hands moved to the buttons of Frankie's blouse, working them open one by one as she leaned down and kissed her again — slow, deep, and full of quiet possession.

Frankie’s body arched beneath her, her mind spinning, her heart racing, and a deep, overwhelming heat flooding through her veins as Irena’s hands continued their steady, unhurried work.

Chapter 19

Bestie

Chapter 19: The Rebrand

Frankie woke slowly on Saturday morning, the soft hotel-quality sheets still tangled around her legs. For a moment she forgot where she was — then the memories of the night before came rushing back. The hotel. Irena's hands. The way she had been edged for what felt like hours. The overwhelming orgasm that had left her shaking and tearful.

She was naked. She had slept naked, as Irena preferred now.

Beside her, Irena was already awake, propped up against the pillows with her phone in hand. She looked effortlessly beautiful in the morning light — her blonde hair slightly messy, her full breasts bare above the sheets, the curve of her hip visible where the blanket had slipped. Even relaxed, she carried that quiet, commanding presence that always made Frankie feel both safe and slightly small.

Frankie sat up slowly, her body still sensitive from the night before. "Morning," she said softly.

"Morning, sweet girl," Irena replied without looking up from her phone. "Coffee's already made in the kitchen. Be a darling and bring me a cup, would you?"

Frankie didn't hesitate. She slipped out of bed and padded naked into the kitchen. The condo still felt strange — Irena's things everywhere, her scent in the air, her art on the walls. But Frankie found she didn't mind as much as she thought she would. It felt… taken care of. She returned a few minutes later with two mugs. She handed one to Irena, then climbed back into bed and curled up against her side, resting her head on Irena's shoulder. Her bare skin pressed against Irena's warmth. It felt natural now.

Irena took a slow sip of her coffee, then set the mug on the nightstand. She reached over and picked up her iPad.

"Frankie," she said, her voice calm and affectionate. "I've done something special for you while you've been so busy at work."

Frankie lifted her head slightly, curious. "You have?"

"I have." Irena unlocked the iPad and opened Instagram. "I know how much stress the *Aligned* campaign has been putting on you. And I know how important your personal brand is — especially with everything you've been through lately. So I took care of it." She turned the screen toward Frankie.

Frankie's breath caught.

Her Instagram feed was completely different.

Every single photo of her old life — the casual selfies, the work photos, the pictures with friends — was gone. In their place were new images. Some were clearly AI-generated: soft, sensual shots of her in delicate lingerie, lying across beds, standing in front of mirrors, looking over her shoulder with a sultry expression. Others were real — photos she vaguely recognized from their daily life, but taken from angles she hadn't realized Irena was capturing. Frankie in the shower with water running down her back. Frankie stretching in the morning light. Frankie lying naked across the bed after one of their nights together. The captions were different too. They painted a new story — a softer, more sensual version of Frankie. Someone elegant, desirable, and quietly submissive. Someone who had "learned to let go" and "embrace her true self."

"I've been rebranding you," Irena said, her voice warm and proud. "I'm known for this at the agency, you know. People say I'm legendary at it. I created an entire new narrative for you. A whole new aesthetic. A whole new story."

Frankie stared at the screen, her heart pounding. She should have felt violated. She should have felt angry. But instead, a deep, confusing warmth spread through her chest. "You… did all this for me?" she asked quietly.

"I did." Irena set the iPad down and turned to face her fully. She reached out and tucked a strand of auburn hair behind Frankie's ear. "You've been so stressed. So overwhelmed. I wanted to take this off your plate too. From now on, you don't have to worry about posting or managing your image. I've hired a small team to handle it. They'll keep the content flowing — tasteful, sensual, exactly the right tone. All you have to do is be yourself." Frankie's eyes stung with unexpected tears. She pressed closer to Irena's side, her naked body curling against her.

"I don't know what I'd do without you," she whispered. "You think of everything. You always take such good care of me."

Irena smiled and kissed the top of Frankie's head. Her hand slid down Frankie's bare back, fingers tracing slow, lazy circles along her spine.

"I know, sweet girl. That's why I do it." Her voice dropped a little lower. "You deserve to feel beautiful. Desirable. Taken care of. And now the whole world can see it too."

Frankie's body was already responding. The warmth between her legs was growing stronger. She could feel herself getting wet again, her clit gently throbbing against Irena's thigh where it rested.

Irena noticed. She always noticed.

She set the iPad aside completely and turned onto her side, pulling Frankie closer until their bodies were pressed together. Her hand slid down to rest on

Frankie’s hip, thumb stroking

slow circles against her bare skin.

“See?” Irena murmured, her lips brushing Frankie’s ear. “Doesn’t it feel better already? Knowing I’ve taken care of this for you? Knowing you don’t have to think about any of it anymore?”

Frankie nodded, her breath catching as Irena’s hand slid lower, fingers tracing the curve of her ass.

“I just want to make everything easier for you,” Irena whispered. “Everything.”

Her hand continued its slow, deliberate path, and Frankie closed her eyes, letting herself sink into the feeling of being completely, thoroughly cared for.

Chapter 20

Bestie

Chapter 20: Career “Advice”

It was a quiet Thursday evening when Irena brought it up.

They were on the couch, the soft glow of a lamp casting warm light across the room. Frankie had her legs draped across Irena’s lap, still wearing the oversized t-shirt she’d thrown on after work. Irena was in soft black leggings and a cropped hoodie, her blonde hair loose around her shoulders.

Frankie had been venting about the *Aligned* campaign again — how the wellness app kept shifting their vision, how the whole “let go and surrender” messaging felt increasingly hollow the more pressure they piled on the team.

Irena listened quietly, one hand resting on Frankie’s bare thigh, her thumb tracing slow circles against her skin.

“You know what I’ve been thinking?” she said eventually, her voice calm and warm. “You’ve been killing yourself for this launch, and it’s not worth it. You’re too precious to be this stressed all the time.”

Frankie looked at her, surprised.

“I pulled some strings at work,” Irena continued. “I got you a promotion.”

Frankie blinked. “A promotion?”

Irena nodded. “Executive Assistant to the Creative Director. Which means you’ll be *my* personal assistant now. You’ll report directly to me. Flexible hours. Work from home a few days a week. No more late nights at the office. No more dealing with nightmare clients.” Frankie stared at her for a moment, processing. “You did that for me?”

“I did.” Irena’s hand slid a little higher on her thigh. “I know how much this campaign has been weighing on you. And I know how hard you’ve been trying to keep up. This way, you’ll still have a good role, but you won’t be drowning anymore.” She paused, then gave a small, slightly sheepish smile. “Plus… I know it’s selfish of me, but I want my bestie with me all the time. So we can actually *be* besties. Not just pass each other in the hallway between meetings.”

Frankie felt a warm rush of emotion in her chest. She shifted closer, resting her head against Irena’s shoulder.

“I don’t know what to say,” she whispered. “That’s… really thoughtful.”

Irena turned her head and kissed Frankie’s temple, then lower, along her jaw. Her hand slipped beneath the hem of Frankie’s t-shirt, fingers brushing against the soft skin of her stomach.

“I just want you close,” she murmured. “Is that so bad?”

Frankie’s breath caught as Irena’s hand moved higher, cupping her breast. Her nipple hardened instantly under Irena’s palm.

“No,” Frankie said softly. “It’s not bad at all.”

Irena shifted, gently pushing Frankie back against the couch cushions. She climbed on top of her, straddling her waist, and leaned down to kiss her deeply. Her hands worked the t-shirt up and over Frankie’s head, tossing it aside.

She kissed her way down Frankie’s body — slow, unhurried, savoring every inch. When she reached the waistband of Frankie’s panties, she hooked her fingers into the fabric and slowly pulled them down, leaving Frankie completely naked beneath her.

Irena sat back on her heels for a moment, just looking. Then she leaned forward again, but this time she didn’t go lower. Instead, she took Frankie’s hand and gently guided it between her own legs.

“I want you to taste me,” Irena said softly, her voice warm but laced with quiet command. “I’ve been thinking about this all day.”

Frankie’s heart skipped. She had never done this before — not with Irena, not with anyone. The idea made her nervous, but the way Irena was looking at her — open, wanting, trusting — made something inside her settle.

She moved down Irena’s body slowly, settling between her spread thighs. Irena leaned back against the couch, watching her with dark, appreciative eyes, one hand gently stroking Frankie’s hair.

Frankie hesitated for only a second before leaning in.

The first slow drag of her tongue made Irena’s breath catch. Frankie took her time, exploring with gentle curiosity, tasting her, learning what made Irena’s hips shift and her breathing deepen. She was nervous at first, but Irena’s soft sounds and the way her fingers tightened gently in Frankie’s hair encouraged her.

“That’s it,” Irena whispered, her voice husky. “Just like that, sweet girl. You’re doing so well.”

Frankie’s confidence grew. She became bolder, more focused, using her tongue and lips with increasing intent. Irena’s thighs trembled around her head. Her breathing grew heavier, her hips rolling gently against Frankie’s mouth as soft, breathy moans escaped her.

Frankie could feel how much Irena was enjoying this — not just physically, but emotionally. There was something deeply intimate about it, something that made her chest ache in the best

way.

When Irena came, it was with a low, broken moan, her hand tightening in Frankie’s hair as her body shuddered through the release. Frankie stayed with her through every wave, licking and sucking gently until Irena’s body finally relaxed.

Irena pulled her up and kissed her deeply, tasting herself on Frankie’s lips. She held her close, their foreheads pressed together, both of them breathing hard.

“God,” Irena whispered, her voice soft and full of affection. “You have no idea how long I’ve wanted that.”

Frankie smiled against her mouth, feeling a quiet pride mixed with something deeper — a sense of closeness she hadn’t expected.

Irena brushed a strand of hair from Frankie’s face and kissed her again, slower this time, her hands roaming gently over her naked body.

“You’re perfect,” she murmured. “And you’re mine.”

Frankie melted into the kiss, her body warm and pliant against Irena’s, the city lights glowing softly outside the window as the night stretched quietly around them.

Chapter 21

Bestie

Chapter 21: The Tattoo Idea

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon when Irena brought it up.

They were lying in bed together, the soft afternoon light filtering through the curtains. Frankie was on her back, completely naked, her body warm and relaxed against the sheets. Irena was propped up on one elbow beside her, also bare, her blonde hair falling loosely around her shoulders. Her full breasts brushed lightly against Frankie's arm as she traced slow, affectionate patterns across Frankie's stomach with her fingertips.

Irena's touch was gentle but deliberate, her strong hands moving with that familiar mix of care and quiet possession. She had been touching Frankie like this more and more lately — like she was something precious she wanted to explore and claim at the same time. "You know," Irena said softly, her voice warm and thoughtful, "I've been thinking about something."

Frankie turned her head to look at her. "Yeah?"

Irena's fingers drifted lower, tracing the curve of Frankie's hip with slow, deliberate strokes. She did this often now — touching Frankie like she was mapping out new territory. "I think you should get a tattoo," she said. "Something small. Something meaningful. Right here." She pressed her thumb gently into the soft skin just above Frankie's hip. "To mark how far you've come."

Frankie felt a flutter in her chest. "A tattoo?"

Irena nodded, her blue eyes soft but intense. "Nothing big or flashy. Just something small and elegant. Something only we would truly understand." She leaned down and pressed a slow, lingering kiss to the spot she'd been tracing. "Something that reminds you of your new responsibilities… and how much you've grown into them."

Frankie's breath caught. She knew exactly what Irena was referring to. Ever since that night on the couch — the first time she had tasted her — something had shifted between them. It had become a quiet, intimate ritual. Something Frankie now found herself thinking about more than she expected. Something that made her feel close to Irena in a way nothing else did.

Irena lifted her head and looked at her, a small, knowing smile playing on her lips. "I was thinking something delicate," she continued. "Maybe a tiny droplet. Just here." She traced a small, elegant circle on Frankie's hip with her fingertip. "Something that looks innocent to anyone else… but means something very specific to us."

Frankie felt heat rise in her cheeks — and lower. The idea of carrying a permanent mark of this new part of herself, of this new closeness with Irena, sent a deep, unexpected thrill through her.

“You mean… something that reminds me to…” She trailed off, suddenly shy.

Irena’s smile softened. She leaned in and kissed Frankie slowly, deeply, her hand still resting on her hip.

“Something that reminds you to taste me often,” she whispered against her lips. “To remember how good it feels. How natural it is. How much it means to both of us.” Frankie’s heart pounded. She felt a strange, powerful mix of pride and belonging swell in her chest. The idea of having something permanent — something that marked this new chapter of her life, this new role she had quietly stepped into — felt right in a way she couldn’t fully explain.

“I like that,” she said quietly. “A lot.”

Irena’s eyes lit up with quiet satisfaction. She kissed Frankie again, slower this time, her hand sliding down to gently squeeze her hip.

“I knew you would,” she murmured. “It would look so beautiful on you. And every time you saw it… every time you touched it… you’d remember.”

She kissed her way down Frankie’s neck, then lower, her lips brushing over her collarbone, her breasts, her stomach. When she reached the spot on Frankie’s hip she’d been tracing, she pressed another slow, deliberate kiss there.

“Right here,” Irena whispered against her skin. “Our little secret. Our little reminder.” Frankie’s body responded instantly. She could feel herself growing wet, her thighs pressing together as Irena’s mouth lingered on her hip. The combination of the suggestion, the intimacy of the moment, and the quiet possessiveness in Irena’s voice was making her dizzy with want.

Irena looked up at her, her blue eyes dark with quiet hunger and deep affection. “What do you think, sweet girl?” she asked softly. “Would you like that?”

Frankie reached down and gently ran her fingers through Irena’s blonde hair, her heart full and her body aching in the best way.

“Yeah,” she whispered. “I think I would.”

Chapter 22

Bestie

Chapter 22: The Loyalty Test

It was a quiet Wednesday evening when the phone rang.

Frankie and Irena were in the living room, the soft glow of the television playing in the background. Frankie was curled up on the couch wearing nothing but one of Irena's oversized sweaters, her bare legs tucked beneath her. Irena sat beside her, also relaxed in a black silk robe that had slipped open just enough to reveal the smooth curve of her inner thigh.

They had been talking about nothing in particular — the new project Irena was overseeing at work, the strange weather they'd been having, the way Frankie had been sleeping better lately. It felt easy. Domestic. Normal.

When Frankie's phone lit up on the coffee table, she glanced at the screen and saw the name: **Maya**.

Her old college friend. Someone she hadn't spoken to in months. Someone from before everything had changed.

Frankie reached for the phone, but before her fingers could close around it, Irena's hand gently covered hers.

"Leave it," Irena said softly.

Frankie looked at her, surprised. "It's Maya. I haven't talked to her in forever." Irena didn't remove her hand. Instead, she shifted closer on the couch, her thigh pressing against Frankie's. The silk robe parted further, revealing more of her skin.

"I know," Irena said, her voice calm and warm. "But I've been thinking about you all day. And right now, I don't want to share you."

Frankie's breath caught. She could feel the heat radiating from Irena's body, could see the quiet hunger in her blue eyes.

The phone kept ringing.

Irena leaned in, her lips brushing against Frankie's ear. "Ignore it," she whispered. "Stay with me instead."

Frankie's heart pounded. She looked at the phone again, then back at Irena. Something inside her shifted — a strange, quiet satisfaction settling in her chest as she made her choice without another thought.

She let the call go to voicemail.

Irena smiled, small and pleased. She reached up and gently pulled Frankie closer, guiding her down until Frankie was kneeling on the floor between her spread thighs.

“Good girl,” Irena murmured, though there was no edge to it — just quiet approval. She opened her robe fully, revealing herself completely. “I’ve been waiting for this all evening.” Frankie’s mouth went dry. She could already feel herself growing wet, her body responding instantly to the sight of Irena like this — open, wanting, and completely in control. She leaned forward without hesitation.

The first slow drag of her tongue made Irena’s breath catch. Frankie took her time, savoring the taste, the warmth, the way Irena’s thighs trembled slightly around her head. She licked and sucked with growing confidence, her hands resting on Irena’s hips as she lost herself in the act.

Irena’s fingers threaded gently through Frankie’s hair, guiding but not forcing. Her breathing grew heavier, her soft moans filling the quiet room.

“That’s it,” Irena whispered, her voice husky. “Just like that. You’re getting so good at this.” Frankie’s heart swelled at the praise. She doubled her efforts, her tongue moving with more purpose, more devotion. She could feel Irena getting closer — the way her hips began to roll, the way her grip in Frankie’s hair tightened.

When Irena came, it was with a low, broken moan, her body shuddering as she pressed Frankie’s face closer. Frankie stayed with her through every wave, licking gently until Irena’s body finally relaxed.

Only then did Frankie pull back, her lips wet, her breathing ragged. She looked up at Irena with wide, shining eyes.

Irena gazed down at her, her expression soft and deeply satisfied. She reached down and gently wiped a bit of moisture from Frankie’s lower lip with her thumb.

“You chose me,” she said quietly, almost to herself. “Even when someone from your old life called.”

Frankie nodded, her voice barely above a whisper. “I didn’t even think about it. I just… wanted this.”

Irena smiled and pulled her up onto the couch, settling Frankie against her chest. She wrapped her arms around her and pressed a slow kiss to the top of her head.

“I know,” she murmured. “That’s why it means so much.”

Frankie closed her eyes and let herself sink into Irena’s warmth, her body still humming, her heart full in a way she couldn’t quite explain. The phone remained silent on the coffee table,

forgotten.

Chapter 23

Bestie

Chapter 23: Identity Shift

It was a Friday night, and they were at a small dinner gathering with a few of Irena’s colleagues and their partners at a trendy restaurant downtown. Frankie had been looking forward to it — a chance to get out of the condo and feel like a normal person again after everything that had happened in the last few weeks.

She was wearing a simple black dress that Irena had picked out for her earlier that evening. It was shorter than she usually wore, hugging her curves in a way that made her feel both exposed and strangely desirable. Irena had helped her get ready, choosing her jewelry, fixing her hair, even applying a soft touch of makeup with careful hands.

“You look beautiful,” Irena had said as they left the condo, her voice warm with quiet pride. “Everyone’s going to love you.”

Now, sitting at the long table with six other people, Frankie was trying to relax. The conversation flowed easily around her — work stories, weekend plans, light gossip. Irena sat beside her, one hand resting casually on Frankie’s thigh beneath the table, her thumb tracing slow, absent circles against her skin through the thin fabric of the dress.

Everything felt normal until the moment the waiter came to take their drink orders. “What can I get for you ladies?” he asked, smiling politely.

Irena turned to Frankie with a soft smile, her hand giving her thigh a gentle squeeze. “What would you like, my little bunny?” she asked, loud enough for the whole table to hear. Frankie’s cheeks immediately flushed hot. The nickname hit her like a spark — unexpected, intimate, and completely public. She opened her mouth, then closed it again, unsure of what to say.

A few people at the table glanced over with amused smiles.

“Little bunny?” one of Irena’s colleagues, a woman named Claire, repeated with a teasing grin. “That’s adorable. Is that your pet name for her?”

Irena didn’t even hesitate. She turned to Claire with an easy laugh, her hand still resting possessively on Frankie’s thigh.

“It is,” she said warmly. “It suits her, doesn’t it? She’s so soft and sweet. My little bunny.” Frankie’s face burned even hotter. She could feel every eye at the table on her, but no one seemed to think anything was strange. If anything, they looked charmed.

“I love that,” another woman said, smiling at Frankie. “It’s so cute. Little bunny.” Frankie managed a small, embarrassed smile, her heart pounding. She didn’t correct them. She didn’t say anything at all. She just sat there, cheeks flushed, while Irena’s thumb continued its slow, soothing circles on her thigh.

The rest of the evening passed in a strange, hazy blur. Every time someone addressed her, they used the nickname. “Hey, little bunny, can you pass the salt?” “Bunny, what do you think about that new campaign?” “I love your dress, bunny.”

And every time, Frankie felt the same confusing mix of embarrassment and something deeper — something warm and strangely satisfying. She could feel Irena watching her, could feel the quiet approval radiating from her every time Frankie accepted the name without protest. Later, as they were leaving the restaurant, Irena slipped her arm around Frankie’s waist and pulled her close.

“You were perfect tonight,” she murmured against her ear, her voice low and full of quiet satisfaction. “Everyone loved you. And they loved the name.”

Frankie looked up at her, her cheeks still warm. “You… you really like calling me that?” Irena stopped walking and turned to face her fully, her hands resting on Frankie’s hips. She leaned in and kissed her softly, right there on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant. “I do,” she whispered against her lips. “It feels right. Like it was always meant to be.” She kissed her again, slower this time, her hands sliding down to rest just above the curve of Frankie’s ass. When she pulled back, her blue eyes were dark with quiet hunger.

“Come on,” she said, her voice low. “Let’s go home, little bunny.”

Frankie’s breath caught. She could feel the heat pooling between her legs, the way her body responded instantly to the name, to Irena’s touch, to the way everyone at dinner had so easily accepted this new version of her.

She didn’t say anything.

She simply nodded and let Irena take her hand as they walked toward the car.

Chapter 24

Bestie

Chapter 24: The New Girl

Frankie knelt naked in the middle of the living room, her knees pressed into the soft rug and her hands resting palms-up on her thighs exactly the way Irena liked. The condo was quiet except for the faint hum of the city outside the windows and the soft, periodic ticking of the kitchen clock. She had been waiting like this for nearly twenty minutes.

The waiting was part of it now.

At first, in the early days, waiting had felt temporary—an awkward little ritual that belonged to one evening, one request, one mood. But lately it had begun to feel more structural than that. Less like something she did and more like a position she occupied in the apartment itself. A place where Irena expected to find her.

Her body had adjusted before her mind fully had. The stronger supplements kept her in that low, constant state of heat now—never enough to overwhelm her outright, but enough that stillness made her more aware of herself, not less. Her nipples had tightened in the cool air long ago. The skin along the insides of her thighs felt slicker than it should have. Every small shift of weight sharpened her awareness of the space between her legs.

She kept her gaze lowered toward the rug.

The fibers were cream-colored with tiny darker threads running through them. She had picked it out herself months ago, back when the condo had still felt like an extension of her taste rather than a place she moved through carefully, as if someone else's preferences had settled over every surface.

That thought made her chest tighten.

She heard the front door unlock.

Her heart gave a hard, immediate kick. She stayed perfectly still, eyes down, palms open. Irena's voice entered first, warm and easy and already turned outward toward someone else. "…and this is the place," she was saying as she stepped inside. "I've been meaning to show it to you for a while now."

Frankie's stomach dropped before the second voice even answered.

A woman's voice.

Lighter than Irena's. Softer. A little laugh in it.

"Wow," the woman said. "It's really nice. Way bigger than I expected."

Frankie felt the blood leave her face.

For one brief second she thought, irrationally, wildly, that perhaps she had misunderstood— that this was a coworker dropping something off, a friend passing through, a conversation at the door that would never really enter the room.

Then she heard the door close.

Two pairs of footsteps crossed the hardwood.

The sound of heels she knew—sharp, measured, Irena's—and a second softer rhythm behind them. Not hesitant exactly. Just new. Unfamiliar enough to make Frankie's whole body go colder before it went hotter.

She kept her eyes on the rug until the footsteps stopped in front of her.

Only then did she let herself look up.

Irena stood a few feet away in fitted black trousers and a dark blouse that made her look every inch the composed, successful woman Frankie had first admired from across office rooms and happy-hour tables. Her blonde hair was pulled back into a sleek ponytail. She looked polished, self-contained, entirely at home.

Beside her stood the woman.

She was taller than Irena by a few inches, with long dark hair that fell over one shoulder in a loose wave. Her blouse was cream, soft-looking, tucked casually into jeans that fit her well without trying too hard. She had warm brown eyes, full lips, and the kind of natural poise that made Frankie understand, instantly and against her will, why Irena had brought her here. She was beautiful.

Not in the exact focused, commanding way Irena was. Softer than that. Easier. The kind of beauty that didn't seem to know it had already won.

And she was looking directly at Frankie.

Not recoiling.

Not startled.

Just taking her in.

The shame of that look hit Frankie before the meaning of anything else did. She was naked. On her knees. Hair brushed and lips glossed because Irena had told her that afternoon to "make a little effort." Her whole body was being seen before it was explained.

Frankie felt heat crawl up her throat.

Irena stepped a little closer and reached down to rest her hand on Frankie's head.

The touch was gentle. Familiar. Worse because of that.

“Laura,” Irena said brightly, “this is Bunny.”

The name landed like a quiet slap.

Not because Frankie hadn’t heard it before. She had. At dinner. At home. In bed. But this was different. This was introduction-language. Social language. The kind used to tell a stranger how to understand someone on first meeting.

My little bunny.

Not Frankie.

Not even, absurdly, your real best friend’s Frankie.

Just Bunny.

Irena’s fingers moved slowly through her hair, stroking once from crown to nape with open affection.

“My little bunny,” she said. “Isn’t she sweet?”

Frankie’s face burned so hot it felt feverish. She could not tell if the sound in her ears was blood or panic.

Laura’s expression changed—not with revulsion, not with delight, but with something gentler and somehow much worse.

Kindness.

“Hi, Bunny,” she said softly.

Her voice held no mockery at all. No edge. It was the voice someone might use to greet a shy child at a dinner party, or a nervous dog belonging to a friend they liked very much. It made Frankie want, all at once, to disappear into the rug and to lift her face higher in case being polite back would somehow save some tiny scrap of dignity.

“It’s really nice to meet you,” Laura added.

Frankie’s mouth opened. Closed. She was not sure whether Irena expected her to speak. Her body had gone so alert that even breathing felt deliberate.

She settled for the smallest possible nod.

Irena’s hand stayed in her hair another moment, petting slowly, approvingly. Frankie could feel the shape of the scene from outside herself with terrible clarity: the naked girl on the floor, the composed hostess, the beautiful new arrival being welcomed into the apartment as if this were all already settled.

No one was acting as if anything were strange.

That, more than anything, made the scene feel impossible to push against.

Laura’s gaze moved over the living room—not dismissing Frankie, but not lingering on her either, which somehow hurt more. She took in the rearranged furniture, the cool-toned art on the walls, the new fixtures, the sharp citrus-and-cedar scent that now belonged to the condo more than anything Frankie had once chosen.

“It’s beautiful,” Laura said.

Frankie’s stomach tightened.

Irena smiled with the easy pleasure of a woman being complimented on a space that reflected her taste.

“Thank you.”

Laura took another few steps into the room, turning slowly as she looked around. Her expression was genuine. Appreciative. Curious. She belonged to the apartment almost immediately—not because she was claiming it, but because she was comfortable enough to respond to it as though it already made sense that she should be here.

Frankie watched her with a kind of frozen dread. Every second Laura spent looking around seemed to settle her more firmly into the reality of the condo. The life. The room. The scene. A guest becoming less like a guest simply by not being shocked.

“God,” Laura said lightly, “the windows alone. I’d kill for this much natural light.” Irena laughed softly. “That was one of the selling points.”

Selling points.

The phrase snagged in Frankie’s chest. Not because it was damning on its own, but because it was exactly the kind of phrase a woman used for a place she inhabited with authority. Laura turned back toward her with an admiring smile.

“Did you buy it recently?”

Frankie felt the world narrow.

The question should have been simple. Innocent. Ordinary. But it landed in the exact place where all the old hurt lived: her parents’ money, the inheritance, the condo she had chosen as proof that something stable and adult and hers could still exist after loss.

She waited—stupidly, reflexively—for Irena to say something like *it was Frankie’s, actually* or *we live here together now* or even just *it’s ours.*

Instead, Irena gave the smallest shrug, still petting Frankie’s hair.

“Oh, it’s mine,” she said.

Frankie stopped breathing.

The sentence was delivered lightly. Casually. The way someone might clarify ownership of a lamp or a couch if there had been a harmless misunderstanding.

Laura nodded, taking it in without any visible alarm.

“I own it outright,” Irena continued. “It’s all paid off.”

Every word fell separately.

Mine.

Own.

Outright.

Frankie felt something cold move through her limbs.

A strange ringing opened in her ears. Her eyes remained on the rug for half a second too long before she forced them upward again, as if the room might look different now that the sentence existed inside it.

It didn’t.

Irena was still standing there calm and beautiful, one hand in Frankie’s hair.

Laura was still smiling, impressed in that easy, social way people smiled when hearing flattering facts about someone new.

Nothing in either woman’s face acknowledged the crater that had just opened in Frankie’s chest.

She thought, wildly: she’s lying.

Then, almost on top of it: no, she isn’t.

Because Irena didn’t lie this way. She didn’t stumble into big statements and hope they held. She said things with too much serenity for that. Too much administrative certainty. If she was saying this aloud to another woman in the condo, she had already made it true in her own mind long enough ago that speaking it cost her nothing.

Laura glanced around again. “That’s amazing.”

Irena smiled. “I try to be smart about these things.”

Frankie’s hands had started to tremble where they rested on her thighs. She curled her fingers inward to hide it. Smart about these things. The condo had been bought with the money from her parents—the only part of them left that had ever taken solid shape in her adult life. She

remembered signing papers alone in a quiet office. Remembered thinking, with a grief so tired it had almost gone numb, that at least this could be hers. At least something could. Now Irena was saying *I own it outright* in front of a woman

Frankie had never met. Laura’s admiration only deepened.

“You must be really good with money.”

There was no accusation in the line. No hint that she sensed a bruise under it. She was simply impressed.

Irena laughed softly.

“I try.”

Then, after the tiniest pause, as if offering one more harmless explanatory detail: “I actually transferred everything into my name a few weeks ago. It just made the most sense. Taxes, insurance, all that.”

That was the real blow.

Not the first sentence.

The second.

Transferred everything.

A few weeks ago.

It made the most sense.

Frankie’s stomach dropped so hard it made her dizzy. This was not a declarative fantasy spoken into the room. Not just Irena inhabiting authority linguistically. It was done. Papered. Completed. Not a threat. Not a plan. A past-tense administrative fact Frankie had not even been granted the dignity of witnessing.

She had not signed anything.

The thought struck her next, immediate and frantic. She had not signed anything. She had not gone to a lawyer’s office, had not sat at a closing table, had not been shown forms. She searched backwards through hazy weeks of supplements, autopay, accounts, little moments of being soothed and distracted and told not to think too hard.

Her skin went cold.

Then hot.

Then cold again.

The apartment around her seemed to tilt slightly, as if the floor itself had stopped belonging to her feet.

Laura was still talking—something appreciative, something about taxes being a nightmare— but the words blurred. Frankie could not fully hear them over the sudden roar of memory and disbelief. Her parents’ faces flickered in her mind not as whole memories but as emotional residue: hospital smell, paperwork,

grief, inheritance, survival. The condo had never just been square footage. It had been the solidified remains of losing them. The one inheritance purchase she had chosen for herself because it was supposed to mean permanence.

Irena had taken it.

Not with a fight. Not with a dramatic confrontation. Quietly. Efficiently. Off-page. And that, somehow, was the part that hurt worst.

If Irena had demanded it, Frankie might have had some feeling of participating in her own undoing. But this—this had happened while Frankie was living in the space, sleeping in it, thanking Irena for taking care of the bills, swallowing the little pink capsules and the deeper pink ones after that, drifting through days believing she was being steadied while something under her life was quietly cut loose.

Her throat ached suddenly.

She wanted to say *that was my parents' money.*

She wanted to say *you can't do that.*

She wanted to say *mine* at least once, just to hear the word spoken aloud in the room. Instead she stayed on her knees, naked and silent, while the realization bloomed inside her with terrible, slow finality.

And then, to her horror, her body answered.

Not immediately. That would almost have made more sense. First came the cold shock. The hollowing drop in her chest. The disorientation. The surreal sense of being displaced from her own life. Only after that—only after the sentence had finished carving itself into her—did she become aware of the heat.

A single pulse between her legs.

Then another.

Then a stronger, spreading wave that made the insides of her thighs feel suddenly too bare, too slick, too alive.

Frankie almost flinched.

No.

Not now. Not with this.

But it was already there, thickening rapidly, shamefully. The supplements had primed her body for weeks now, taught it to answer exposure and helplessness and Irena's approval with involuntary heat. And this was exposure of the worst kind. Helplessness of the purest kind. Her home, her money, her dead parents' last protection all folded casually into Irena's identity while a beautiful new woman stood there smiling.

The arousal hit her like betrayal from inside her own skin.

She could feel wetness gathering with humiliating speed. Her nipples hardened even more in the cool air. The sound of Irena’s voice, calm and self-possessed, only sharpened everything. Frankie’s body seemed to understand something her heart was still trying to reject: that the totality of Irena’s control had deepened again, and some ruined part of her responded to that deepening like touch.

She hated it.

She could not stop it.

Laura was saying something admiring now about how difficult homeownership could be, how impressive it was to have things so “put together,” and Irena was answering in the same easy tone she used at work when she was both humble and unmistakably in charge.

Frankie felt another pulse low between her legs. Stronger now. Her own wetness beginning to cool against the inner curve of her thigh.

Her body wanted to press her knees together. To chase friction. To do something, anything, with the ache. But she remained perfectly still because movement would mean

acknowledgment, and acknowledgment would mean everyone in the room might suddenly know that while her whole inner world was collapsing, some part of her was getting turned on by the collapse.

Irena’s hand drifted once more through her hair.

The tenderness of the gesture nearly broke her.

Because of course it was tenderness. Of course the woman who had erased the legal meaning of Frankie’s home would stroke her hair in front of a new lover while speaking in a bright social voice. Of course care and confiscation would continue to arrive braided so tightly together Frankie could no longer tear them apart.

Laura shifted her purse higher on her shoulder and smiled at Irena.

“You really have built something beautiful here.”

Built.

The word landed differently from *bought*.

Built suggested design. Intention. Taste. A life assembled piece by piece.

And maybe that was exactly what had happened. Only not by Frankie.

Irena’s fingers gave Frankie’s hair one last affectionate stroke before she let her hand fall away.

“Come on,” she said to Laura. “I’ll give you the full tour.”

The words were light.

Ordinary.

Then she glanced down at Frankie.

“Bunny can stay right here for now.”

Frankie felt the finality of the sentence in her spine.

Not *Frankie will be okay.*

Not *we’ll be right back.*

Bunny can stay right here.

Like furniture. Like placement. Like one more element in the room already arranged and understood.

Laura looked at Frankie one more time. There was no cruelty in her face. That somehow made it harder to bear.

“Nice to meet you, Bunny,” she said softly.

Then she followed Irena toward the hallway.

Frankie stayed where she was.

The sound of their footsteps receded through rooms that no longer felt like hers in any meaningful sense. She could hear Irena’s voice floating faintly from the bedroom now, easy and proud, pointing things out. Laura’s lower replies. A shared laugh.

Her body was still burning.

That was the most unbearable part. Not the shock itself, though that was immense. Not even the knowledge of the condo transfer, though it had ripped something foundational loose inside her. It was the fact that the heat remained. Growing, if anything. A deep, wet, aching pulse that made her feel split down the middle—grieving and aroused, dispossessed and turned on, furious in theory and helpless in practice.

A drop of her own wetness slid slowly down her inner thigh.

Frankie shut her eyes.

The condo was gone.

Not physically. The walls still stood. The furniture still sat where Irena had chosen to put it. The city still shone outside the same windows Frankie had once looked at with something like ownership.

But the meaning of it was gone.

And somewhere deep in the center of that realization, against every sane instinct she possessed, her body kept answering Irena’s total control with stronger and stronger waves of involuntary need.

She stayed exactly where she was on the rug—naked, silent, and slick with a desire she would have given anything not to feel—while the two women moved through the apartment beyond her, one giving the tour and the other learning the shape of a home that had once been Frankie’s and now, apparently, was not.

Chapter 25

Bestie

Chapter 25: Relaxing Together

Frankie knelt on all fours in the middle of the living room, completely naked. Her palms and knees pressed into the soft rug as she held herself steady. The position was already starting to strain her arms and back, but she didn't move. She had been told to stay exactly like this until Irena said otherwise.

Irena and Laura were on the couch, curled up together like they had been doing this for years. Laura was tucked against Irena's side, her long dark hair spilling over Irena's shoulder. Irena had one arm draped casually around Laura's waist, her fingers tracing lazy patterns on her hip through the thin fabric of her dress.

They were talking and laughing softly, completely at ease with each other. Every so often, one of them would reach for their wine glass or a small plate of snacks — and place it directly on Frankie's back.

The first time it happened, Frankie's breath caught. The cool base of the wine glass pressed against her skin, balanced carefully between her shoulder blades. She could feel the slight shift of the liquid inside as Irena picked it up and took a sip, then set it back down. Laura laughed at something Irena said and reached for a cracker from the plate resting on Frankie's lower back. The movement made the plate wobble slightly, and Frankie had to tense her muscles to keep it steady.

"She's really good at this," Laura said, her voice light and amused. She took a bite of the cracker and leaned her head against Irena's shoulder. "How long did it take you to train her?" Irena smiled and ran her fingers through Laura's hair. "Not long at all. She's a natural. Aren't you, Bunny?"

Frankie's face burned. She kept her eyes fixed on the rug, her arms trembling slightly from the effort of holding still. The weight of the plate on her back, the cool press of the wine glass, the casual way they were using her — it all sent a deep, confusing pulse of heat straight between her legs.

She could feel how wet she was. Her thighs were slick, and every small shift of her body made her more aware of it. The stronger supplements had left her constantly aroused, and the humiliation of being treated like furniture only made it worse. Or better. She couldn't tell anymore.

Irena picked up her wine glass again and took a slow sip, then set it back down on Frankie's back with deliberate care.

"She sleeps so much better now too," Irena said, her voice warm with quiet pride. "Ever since I moved in and took over everything. She doesn't have to think

about anything anymore. Just be my good little bunny."

Laura made a soft, appreciative sound and snuggled closer to Irena. "That's really sweet. You take such good care of her."

"I try," Irena said with a small smile. She reached down and gently patted Frankie's head, her fingers stroking through her hair. "She's been so good lately. Haven't you, Bunny?" Frankie's breath hitched. She could feel Laura's eyes on her, could feel the weight of both women using her body like it was nothing more than a table. Her arms were starting to shake, but she didn't dare move.

Irena noticed. She set her wine glass on the side table and leaned forward slightly, running her hand slowly down Frankie's spine.

"You're doing so well," she murmured. "Just a little longer, okay? Laura and I are having such a nice time."

She sat back again and pulled Laura closer, pressing a soft kiss to her temple. The two of them continued their conversation — talking about work, about a new restaurant they wanted to try, about some mutual friend's upcoming wedding — while Frankie remained beneath them, trembling, flushed, and aching with a need she couldn't name.

Every time one of them reached for something on her back, every time the plate or glass shifted, Frankie felt another sharp pulse of arousal shoot through her. Her clit throbbed painfully, her inner walls clenching around nothing. She could feel a drop of her own wetness sliding slowly down her inner thigh.

Irena glanced down at her and smiled.

"Such a good girl," she said softly, almost to herself.

She reached for another cracker from the plate balanced on Frankie's back and took a bite, completely at ease, while Frankie knelt there beneath them — naked, used, and burning with a heat that refused to fade.

Chapter 26

Bestie

Chapter 26: The Cowgirls

By the time Irena called her into the bedroom, Frankie already knew she was being arranged for something.

That knowledge had become its own kind of sensation lately. Not a thought exactly. More like a pressure in the body, a quickening under the skin. A change in the air before anything had actually happened. She could feel it now as she stepped barefoot across the hardwood and into the room, wearing only the little white cotton panties Irena had left folded on the bed for her.

Laura was there.

That was the first thing Frankie registered, and the thing that made her heartbeat stumble hardest.

The second was the hats.

Irena stood near the dresser in fitted jeans and nothing else but a pale cream cowboy hat tipped low over her blonde hair. Laura was perched on the edge of the bed in denim shorts and a soft white tank that had already been pushed halfway up, one long leg crossed over the other, a second hat in her lap. Her dark hair spilled over one shoulder in a loose wave. She looked easy there. Comfortable. Like someone who had already been invited all the way in. For a moment Frankie only stood in the doorway.

Irena turned and smiled the second she saw her.

“There’s my bunny.”

The name moved through Frankie with its now-familiar double force: humiliation first, then the shameful warmth that followed too quickly behind. She lowered her eyes.

Laura’s gaze slid over her, not crudely, not even hungrily at first. Just with calm, interested attention. The look was somehow harder to bear because of how unhurried it was.

“You were right,” Laura said softly to Irena. “She’s beautiful.”

Frankie felt heat rise instantly to her face.

Irena’s smile deepened, small and pleased, as if Laura had confirmed something obvious. “I know.”

There was no pause after that. No attempt to soften the fact that they were speaking about her in front of her, as though her presence did not require the old

manners anymore. Frankie had

once thought the worst part of this whole new life would be being watched. She had been wrong. The worse thing was being looked at and already understood.

Irena lifted the second hat from Laura’s lap and crossed the room toward Frankie. “Come here.”

Frankie obeyed.

Irena stopped directly in front of her, close enough that Frankie could smell the familiar clean-citrus warmth of her skin beneath the sharper leather scent of the hat. Then she set the hat lightly on Frankie’s head and adjusted the brim with both hands.

“There,” she murmured. “Now you match.”

Frankie swallowed.

The hat felt absurd on her. And then, almost immediately, not absurd at all. That was what was so dangerous now: how quickly Irena could take something that should have felt theatrical or silly and turn it into atmosphere, then expectation, then truth.

Laura smiled from the bed.

“Oh, that’s cute.”

Cute.

Not sexy. Not dramatic. Cute.

The word landed with a strange ache. Frankie could not tell whether it made the scene kinder or crueler.

Irena stepped back half a pace to admire her, eyes moving slowly over Frankie’s body. “Get on the bed, bunny.”

Frankie’s pulse jumped.

She climbed up carefully, aware all at once of her bare legs, the fragile thinness of the white cotton, the way both women were watching her now. The bedspread was cool beneath her knees.

“On your back,” Irena said.

Frankie hesitated only a second before lowering herself onto the mattress.

The room changed once she was lying there. Everything always changed when she was horizontal and they were standing over her. Angles shifted. Power clarified itself. The ceiling opened above her like pale distance, while the two women gathered at the edges of her vision and then moved closer, gradually eclipsing everything else.

Irena came to one side of the bed and Laura to the other.

Frankie looked up at them.

The hats made them feel like a pair before either of them even touched her. Not costumes, exactly. More like they had agreed on a private joke that had become an aesthetic and then, somehow, a structure. The same pale brims. The same easy denim. The same unhurried poise. Two women dressed for leisure, for sun, for play—while Frankie lay beneath them as the ground of it all.

Irena rested a hand lightly on Frankie's stomach.

"Relax," she said softly.

The word was impossible. Frankie's entire body was too alert, too aware, too alive. But still she let out a careful breath.

Laura climbed onto the bed first.

That, too, mattered. Frankie felt it instantly. Laura did not wait to be instructed down to the last detail. She moved with the confidence of someone who had already been welcomed into the logic of the room. One knee on the mattress, then the other, long hair sliding over one shoulder as she settled near Frankie's head and looked down at her with a small, unreadable smile.

Frankie's mouth went dry.

Irena watched Laura with visible fondness. Not surprise. Not management. Fondness. The soft approval of a woman pleased by how naturally another woman fit into place.

Then Irena climbed onto the bed as well.

The mattress shifted with the added weight. Frankie felt it through her spine.

Laura positioned herself with deliberate care, her knees bracketing Frankie's shoulders so the warm, solid weight of her settled over Frankie's upper chest and collarbone. The denim of her shorts pressed hot against Frankie's skin. Irena swung one leg over and straddled Frankie's left thigh, settling her own denim-covered sex firmly against the muscle there. The arrangement was perfect and unhurried: two women using their shared mount for their own slow pleasure while Frankie lay pinned beneath the truth of it.

And suddenly the scene became clear in a way that made her chest tighten: she was flat on her back beneath them both, the whole front of her body claimed by their placement. Laura above, near her head. Irena lower, one knee braced beside Frankie's hip. Two women finding their positions over her as calmly as if they'd done this before. Or as if they had imagined it long enough together that doing it now felt inevitable.

Irena looked up at Laura and laughed softly.

“Careful,” she said. “We’re sharing.”

Laura laughed too, low and easy. “I know.”

Something in the exchange went through Frankie like a blade wrapped in silk.

Because it was playful.

Because it was familiar.

Because it sounded less like improvisation and more like a rhythm they had already found. Irena’s hand stroked once across Frankie’s ribs, absent and affectionate, while Laura adjusted herself higher on the bed. The movement was slow, almost lazy. Nothing rushed. No one seemed interested in urgency. That was what made the image cohere so strangely and perfectly in Frankie’s mind: not riders spurring a horse forward, not anything wild, but two sun-warmed women out on a trail with nowhere to be, sharing the same mount because it amused them to, because it was pleasant, because the day was long and soft and belonged entirely to them.

That was the feeling of it.

A lazy ride.

A slow trail.

Two cowgirls letting the same body carry them.

Irena seemed to sense the shape of the thought in her too, because she smiled and said, “There we are.”

Frankie could not tell whether the words were meant for her, for Laura, or for the scene itself. Laura reached up and touched the brim of Irena’s hat with one fingertip, nudging it slightly back. The gesture was tiny. Intimate in precisely the way that breaks a heart faster than anything grand.

Frankie saw it.

And in seeing it, understood something before it had language.

Laura was comfortable touching what belonged to Irena.

No—that wasn’t quite it.

Laura was comfortable because she did not feel she was touching something borrowed. She moved like she belonged there too.

Irena turned her face toward Laura, smiling in a way Frankie had once believed was hers alone. Softer than flirtation. Deeper than simple appetite. It was the smile of recognition, of ease, of enjoying not just a body but a presence.

Frankie’s stomach tightened beneath Irena’s hand.

This was the lesson, then.

Not just that Laura was desired.

Not just that Laura was included.

That Laura fit.

Irena looked down at Frankie again and smoothed a strand of auburn hair back from her forehead.

“You’re doing beautifully.”

The praise hurt more now than it once would have. Or perhaps it hurt and soothed in exactly equal measure, which was worse. Frankie lay still beneath the gentle touch and let the sentence settle over her like a blanket she could not decide whether she wanted pulled away. Above her, Laura shifted again, a little more comfortably, and let out a small laugh. “This really is ridiculous,” she said.

Irena’s mouth curved. “Ridiculous good?”

“Very.”

They both laughed then—softly, lazily, not at Frankie exactly but around her, over her, through the arrangement her body made possible. And Frankie, to her horror, felt warmth spread through her at the sound.

As the laughter faded, Irena’s hand moved with unhurried purpose. She undid the button of Laura’s shorts and slipped her fingers inside, past the thin cotton, finding Laura already slick and swollen. Laura’s breath caught audibly, turning into a soft, breathy sound as Irena’s fingers began slow, lazy circles around her clit. At the same time Irena’s hips gave a subtle, rolling grind against Frankie’s thigh, pressing her own aching sex down in matching rhythm. The movements were conversational, like two women chatting on a long ride while their bodies found their own pleasure.

Frankie felt every shift. The mattress dipped and rose with their slow rocking. She could hear the faint, wet sound of Irena’s fingers moving through Laura’s folds, the soft catch in Laura’s breathing that no longer sounded entirely like laughter.

Because that was part of it too now: the body answering before the mind could defend itself. The simple fact of being placed here, held in the center of this private little joke made physical, made her feel exposed and erased and wanted all at once.

Laura glanced down again.

Her expression changed, only slightly. Not enough that someone else might have missed it. But Frankie saw the moment interest sharpened into something warmer.

“Look at her,” Laura murmured.

The line was meant for Irena, but it landed on Frankie’s skin.

Irena followed Laura’s gaze with visible satisfaction. “I know.”

Again that same answer.

Again that same tiny blade.

I know.

As if Laura were discovering something and Irena had already known it for a long time. As if Laura were being initiated not into a random scene, but into a truth Irena had curated and could now share.

The bed shifted in small increments as the two women settled more fully. Their movements were unhurried, almost drowsy in rhythm. Frankie felt the weight changes travel through the mattress in gentle pulses, like the slow plod of something large and patient beneath careful riders. The metaphor became impossible to escape now. Not because anyone said it aloud, but because the whole room had begun to move by it.

Slowly.

Playfully.

With no destination except pleasure drawn out long enough to become atmosphere.

Laura tipped her head back and laughed again at something Irena said too quietly for Frankie to catch. The sound floated above her, warm and open. Irena answered with one of those low little laughs Frankie had spent months learning to hear as both affection and victory. They were so at ease together.

That was the real blow.

Not spectacle.

Not novelty.

Ease.

Laura looked like someone who already knew how to be with Irena in the spaces between words. Irena looked like someone who enjoyed being understood there.

Frankie felt the realization begin, not in her thoughts but in the ache under her ribs. This was not a guest.

This was not just a woman passing through the structure.

This was someone being folded inward.

Someone moving closer to the center.

And if Laura was moving toward the center, then Frankie—however cherished, however petted, however praised—was learning exactly where that left her.

Irena bent over Frankie and kissed her forehead.

The tenderness of it nearly undid her.

“So good for us,” Irena murmured.

Us.

Frankie no longer knew whether that word included her fully, or only included her as arrangement, witness, offering. Maybe that was the point. Maybe the word itself had become elastic enough that Irena could stretch it over any shape she pleased.

Laura reached down and lightly adjusted Frankie’s hat when it began to slip sideways. The gesture was so casual, so oddly domestic, that Frankie felt a sharp and immediate rush of feeling—too much to name cleanly. Humiliation, yes. But also the awful intimacy of being handled by the woman who was quietly replacing her in a category she had not realized could be taken away until it already was.

“Can’t have our horse losing her hat,” Laura said lightly.

Irena laughed.

Frankie closed her eyes for one second.

Our horse.

Not *your* bunny.

Not *your* girl.

Our horse.

The phrase should have felt demeaning in a simple way. Instead it deepened the strange, dreamlike logic of the whole thing. Two cowgirls sharing one mount. No cruelty needed. No loud claim. Just mutual ease. Mutual assumption. Mutual enjoyment.

When Frankie opened her eyes again, both women were looking at each other.

Not through her.

Not because of her.

At each other.

And there it was.

Not yet named, but there.

The best-friendness of it.

Not in some childish or decorative sense, but in the adult, dangerous sense: two women who understood one another's play, one another's timing, one another's tastes. Two women sharing humor and posture and little glances above a third person who was necessary but not equal. Frankie had spent so long believing that whatever Irena built around her must prove something singular. But lying there now, watching Laura and Irena settle into the same mood as naturally as breath, she felt the first clean cut of a new truth.

Laura was the one beside Irena.

Frankie was the one beneath.

The distinction entered her body before it entered language.

Irena must have seen the shift in Frankie's face, because her hand came back to stroke slowly through her hair.

"What is it, bunny?"

Frankie could not answer.

What could she say? That the room had become legible all at once? That the hats and the laughter and the shared ease had told her more clearly than any speech could? That she was beginning to understand not just what role Laura played, but what role *she* played in contrast?

Laura leaned down slightly, her dark hair falling forward, and studied Frankie with something almost like sympathy.

"She gets it," Laura said quietly.

Irena's eyes stayed on Frankie's face for a long moment.

Then she smiled.

"Yes," she said. "I think she does."

And that was it.

No formal announcement. No pronouncement. Nothing blunt enough to argue with.

Just a look between them.

A look Frankie saw and felt and understood.

The room seemed to grow even softer after that, as if the hardest thing had already happened and all that remained was to let it settle. The women above her

moved with the same slow, easy rhythm as before, like riders in no hurry to reach the end of the trail. Their laughter came and went. Their weight shifted gently through the mattress. Once or twice they adjusted each other's hats. Once Laura brushed her fingers over Irena's shoulder and left them there, her thumb stroking slow circles. Irena caught Laura's wrist, brought those fingers to her own mouth, and sucked them in slowly, wetting them deliberately before guiding Laura's hand down into her own open jeans. Laura's fingers disappeared inside and began their own patient stroking. Irena's eyes half-closed in pleasure as she continued working Laura's swollen clit in the same unhurried rhythm. The two women touched each other above Frankie with the same lazy intimacy they used for everything else, their hips rocking in small, synchronized rolls against Frankie's body and each other's hands.

Frankie lay beneath them and absorbed every small thing.

That was what made it unbearable.

Not one devastating gesture, but the accumulation of little proofs.

How natural Laura looked here.

How pleased Irena was by that naturalness.

How thoroughly Frankie's body still responded to being included in the scene even as her heart finally recognized its meaning.

The slow rhythm built gradually, almost imperceptibly at first. Laura's hips rocked more steadily against Irena's hand, her thighs trembling on either side of Frankie's head. The wet sounds grew louder, more rhythmic. Irena's grinding against Frankie's hip became focused, her breath coming in soft, sharp pants. Frankie lay perfectly still, feeling every tremor, every clench, her own body responding helplessly even as her heart broke open with the clarity of what was happening.

By the end, when the room had grown warmer and quieter and both women had settled into that loose, satisfied stillness that follows prolonged pleasure, Frankie felt as if she had been carried a long way without moving at all.

Laura came first, with a low, intense moan that seemed to rise from deep in her chest. Her body went rigid, back arching, thighs clamping around Frankie's shoulders as the orgasm tore through her in powerful, rolling waves. Irena's fingers worked her through it without hurry, drawing every last pulse from her swollen clit until Laura collapsed forward slightly, shuddering with aftershocks, fresh slickness coating Irena's hand and dripping warm onto Frankie's collarbone.

Irena followed moments later, grinding down hard against Frankie's hip one final time, her free hand fisting in the bedsheets beside Frankie's head. Her orgasm

was quieter but no less intense—a sharp, broken gasp, her whole compact body locking up in ecstasy, inner muscles pulsing rhythmically as pleasure crashed through her. She rode it out with small, involuntary

twitches of her hips, then melted against Laura, both of them breathing hard in the satisfied stillness that followed.

Frankie felt the weight of their release settle over her like a blanket. The room had grown warmer, quieter, thick with the scent of sex and the soft sounds of their slowing breaths. Irena eventually leaned down and kissed her once more on the forehead.

“Such a good bunny,” she murmured.

Laura, still smiling faintly beneath the pale brim of her hat, looked down at Frankie with that same calm, settled interest she had worn from the beginning.

Frankie looked back at her and knew, with a certainty that hollowed and steadied her at once, that this woman was not a passing novelty in Irena’s life.

She was the woman beside her.

The woman laughing with her.

The woman sharing the ride.

And Frankie—flat on her back, quiet beneath them, carrying the shape of the scene on the whole front of her body—had just learned it the only way Irena ever seemed to prefer to teach anything:

by being placed exactly where the truth could be felt.

Chapter 27

Bestie

Chapter 27: The Demotion

The conversation happened the next afternoon in the living room.

That was part of what made it so devastating.

There was no theatrical setup. No late-nigh strangeness, no haze of wine, no bedroom shadows softening the edges of what was being done to her. The sun was still up, washing the condo in a pale gold light that made everything look crisp and ordinary—the marble kitchen island, the cream rug, the skyline through the windows, the framed prints on the walls that Frankie had once chosen and no longer really thought of as hers.

Irena had asked her to sit on the rug.

Laura was on the couch. Irena beside her.

Frankie sat where she had been told, knees folded under her, hands resting in her lap, looking up at the two women from below. The geometry of it was simple enough that it almost seemed accidental. Almost.

Laura wore one of Irena's white button-downs over jeans, sleeves rolled up, dark hair loose around her shoulders. She looked soft and composed, like someone at home on a lazy Sunday. Irena wore black leggings and a pale gray sweater, one bare foot tucked beneath her on the couch. She looked even calmer than usual.

There was a cup of tea on the coffee table in front of them.

For a few minutes, no one said anything important. Laura had made some light remark about the view. Irena had smiled. Frankie had sat still on the rug and felt something gathering in the room with the steady certainty of weather.

Then Irena set her tea down.

She looked at Frankie with the kind of expression that used to make Frankie's whole body unclench. Not stern. Not cold. Just settled. Certain. The face of a woman who had thought something through and expected to be understood.

"Bunny," she said softly.

Frankie's stomach tightened.

"Yes?"

Irena's eyes flicked briefly toward Laura, then back to Frankie.

"I want to make something clear."

Frankie felt the words before she understood them. Her spine straightened without meaning to. The room seemed to sharpen around her—the edge of the coffee table, the line of Laura's crossed ankles, the exact place where sunlight fell across the floorboards.

Irena folded one leg under herself and turned a little more fully toward her.

“You’ve been doing very well,” she said. “Very sweet. Very adaptable. And I’m proud of you for that.”

Frankie swallowed.

Praise first.

Of course.

It was always praise first when the real blow was coming.

Irena’s voice stayed even.

“But I think we’ve reached a point where you need to understand your place more precisely.” The sentence landed low and hard.

Laura did not interrupt. She stayed quiet beside Irena, one hand resting loosely on her own knee, listening with the same calm attentiveness that made everything worse.

Frankie looked from one woman to the other.

“My place,” she repeated, very softly.

Irena nodded.

“Yes.”

She leaned back against the couch, perfectly at ease.

“I think sometimes you still confuse being loved, or at least cared for, with being equal.” Frankie felt the blood leave her face.

Laura’s gaze lowered at that, not in disagreement, not in embarrassment—just in a kind of quiet acknowledgment, as if the sentence might be difficult to hear but not incorrect. Irena continued before Frankie could speak.

“That isn’t a criticism,” she said gently. “It’s understandable. You were in a very fragile state when I found you.”

Found you.

The phrase made something twist in Frankie’s chest.

Not *when we became close*.

Not *when you were hurting*.

When I found you.

Irena spoke on in the same warm, measured tone.

“You were barely sleeping. Barely eating properly. Barely keeping your head above water emotionally. You were drifting through your own life like a ghost.”

Each sentence struck with awful precision because none of it was fully false. Not at the beginning. Not in those first weeks when Frankie had opened the door with swollen eyes and let Irena into the silence because she had not known how to survive the night alone. Laura looked at Frankie with something almost tender.

“She was really there for you,” Laura said quietly.

Frankie’s eyes flicked to her.

The line should have felt kind. Instead it made Frankie feel as if some official record was being completed in front of her by two women who had already agreed on the facts. Irena nodded once, still watching Frankie.

“I was,” she said. “And I have been ever since.”

There was no vanity in it. That was what made it unbearable. She sounded like someone stating work history. Documented care. A service rendered consistently over time. Frankie’s fingers curled into her palms.

“I know,” she said.

Irena’s face softened a little.

“I’m glad you know.”

Then she crossed one leg over the other and changed Frankie’s life again.

“Because that means you should also be able to understand that Laura is my real best friend.” Frankie heard the sentence in pieces.

Laura.

My real best friend.

Real.

The word did the damage.

Not because she had not already felt it in before, not because she had not watched it taking shape right in front of her, but because feeling a truth and hearing it named were two different catastrophes.

For a second she thought she had misheard.

Then she looked at Laura.

Laura was not gloating. She was not smirking or leaning into the win. She simply sat beside Irena with a stillness that made everything final. She looked like someone who had not demanded the title but did not question it when it was spoken.

Frankie’s mouth went dry.

“I—”

Nothing coherent followed.

Irena waited, patient as ever. Patient enough to make Frankie feel childish for not having a better response ready.

“You what?” Irena asked gently.

Frankie looked down at the rug.

The fibers blurred.

“I thought—” she began, then stopped.

Irena’s voice remained kind.

“I know you did.”

That was worse than interruption. Worse than correction. She was granting Frankie the dignity of having been mistaken.

Irena reached across the couch and took Laura’s hand.

The gesture was simple. Casual. Deeply settled.

“A best friend,” she said, “is the woman who stands beside me. The woman who understands me as an equal. The woman I move through the world with.”

She gave Laura’s hand the smallest squeeze.

“That’s Laura.”

Frankie stared at their joined hands and felt something inside her fold in on itself. Irena kept going.

“You are very important to me, Bunny. But you are not that.”

The words should have left some room. Some kindness. Instead their very gentleness made them inescapable.

Laura spoke then, softly.

“That doesn’t mean no one cares about you.”

Frankie almost laughed.

The line was so tenderly delivered, so obviously intended to cushion the fall, that it made the fall feel total. No one cares about you would have been cruelty. That doesn’t mean no one cares about you was administration.

Irena nodded approvingly at Laura before returning her gaze to Frankie.

“Exactly,” she said. “This is not a rejection. It’s a clarification.”

Clarification.

Frankie could feel her heartbeat in her throat.

A few months ago, she might have argued. Might have stood up, said something sharp and wounded and proud, demanded that neither of them talk about her like this in a room she had once paid for, in a life that had once belonged to her.

But that was the terrible thing.

Irena had spent so long reorganizing the meanings of everything—care, rest, dependence, gratitude, ownership, names—that Frankie no longer knew where the solid ground for protest was.

She looked up at them and hated how small her own voice sounded.

“Then what am I?”

Neither woman answered immediately.

Irena and Laura exchanged the briefest glance.

Not a consultation

Not uncertainty.

Just a shared look between people who did not need many words to reach the same page.

Then Irena answered.

“You are someone we take care of.”

Frankie went very still.

Someone.

Not friend. Not partner. Not even possession, which at least would have acknowledged intensity. Someone we take care of. A category. A managed being. A person spoken about the way one might describe an elderly relative, or a rescued animal, or a houseguest who had stayed past the point of self-sufficiency and been folded into the domestic routine for everyone’s convenience.

Laura’s voice came gently from the couch.

“You need structure, Bunny.”

Frankie looked at her again.

Laura’s face was open. Earnest. She sounded as if she believed she was helping.

“Some people do,” Laura continued. “There’s nothing shameful about that.”

Irena smiled faintly, approving again.

“No,” she said. “There isn’t.”

Then her eyes settled back on Frankie and hardened by perhaps half a degree—not harshly, not theatrically, just enough to tell Frankie that a lesson was being moved from soft explanation into firmer territory.

“But it becomes shameful when you confuse being helped with being independent.”

That one hit clean.

Frankie inhaled sharply.

Irena saw it and did not slow down.

“Let’s be honest,” she said. “Without me, after the breakup, what would have happened?” Frankie said nothing.

She could not.

Because the question was a trap with truth at its center. She had been broken. She had been lonely. She had been stunned by grief and rejection and her own inability to regulate the wreckage of it. And Irena had arrived like warmth, like food, like patience, like a hand reaching into water.

Irena answered for her.

“You would have spiraled.”

The room seemed to contract.

Laura’s expression tightened slightly at the word, not in disagreement, but in sympathy for how hard it was to hear.

Irena continued in the same even voice.

“You would have hidden in this condo, stopped answering people, stopped taking care of yourself, and told yourself that because the lights were still on and the mortgage was already handled, you were functioning.”

Frankie’s throat burned.

“That’s not fair,” she whispered.

Irena tilted her head.

“It’s extremely fair.”

Then, more softly:

“It may hurt your feelings, but that doesn’t make it untrue.”

Frankie felt tears gathering already, hot and humiliating. She blinked them back too fast, which only made them spill harder.

Irena watched her with a level, almost compassionate gaze.

“Do you think money equals stability?” she asked. “Do you think owning square footage means you know how to live?”

The answer was no. The answer was maybe once. The answer was she did not know

anymore.

Irena spared her the need to speak.

“Before me, you had an inheritance and a breakdown,” she said. “Those are not the same thing as a life.”

Frankie actually flinched.

Laura drew in a quiet breath beside her, as if the line had landed harder than even she expected, but she still did not object.

That was the horror now. Not that Laura would encourage cruelty loudly, but that she would permit it when it was presented as necessary truth.

Irena leaned forward slightly, forearms resting on her thighs.

“And now,” she said, “without me and Laura?”

Frankie felt cold all over.

Irena did not raise her voice.

“You would be nowhere.”

The sentence dropped into the room like a stone.

Frankie stared at her.

Irena held her gaze.

“You would not know how to organize yourself. You would not know how to steady yourself. You would not know how to maintain what has been built around you.”

Each clause tightened the vise.

“You would drift from one half-solution to another,” Irena said. “You’d tell yourself you were being brave while slowly becoming the kind of woman other people have to rescue in shifts.” Frankie shook her head once, tiny and helpless.

“No.”

Irena’s expression did not change.

“Yes.”

Laura spoke, very gently, and that somehow hurt even more.

“She doesn’t mean you’d be literally out on the street tomorrow.”

Frankie looked at her, grateful for one wild instant.

Then Laura finished the thought.

“She means you’d have no real ground. No structure. No adults holding things together around you.”

The gratitude died so fast it left Frankie dizzy.

No adults.

Frankie felt herself go hollow from the inside.

Irena nodded, as if Laura had phrased it beautifully.

“Exactly,” she said. “That is exactly what I mean.”

Then she leaned back again, reclaiming the softness of her posture while saying the cruelest thing yet.

“You’d still have a roof for a little while, perhaps. But a roof isn’t the same as a home. And eventually, without guidance, women like you end up on somebody’s couch, in a smaller place they call ‘freedom,’ or clinging to whatever scraps of dignity are left while other people quietly notice they’ve become a mess.”

Frankie’s eyes flooded.

Women like you.

The phrase stripped the last illusion of singularity from her suffering. She was not being uniquely transformed. She was being placed into a type.

Irena’s type.

A dependent woman. An almost-homeless woman. A woman whose life had looked solvent from the street while collapsing inwardly enough that stronger people could step in and call the takeover rescue.

Laura uncrossed her legs and leaned forward a little.

“But you’re not there,” she said softly. “Because she caught you. And because now we have you.”

Frankie looked at her with wet, disbelieving eyes.

We have you.

Laura meant it kindly. That was clear. She meant it as reassurance. As evidence of inclusion. As proof that Frankie had not been abandoned but absorbed.

The kindness of it made Frankie feel sicker than contempt would have.

Irena’s voice dropped lower.

“Do you understand now why you are not my best friend?”

Frankie could not speak.

The tears kept coming, hot and silent.

Irena waited.

Laura waited.

The whole room waited until Frankie finally managed the smallest nod.

Irena did not accept that.

“Use your words, Bunny.”

The command was not sharp. It did not need to be.

Frankie’s lower lip trembled.

“I’m not your best friend,” she whispered.

Irena’s eyes stayed on her.

“And?”

Frankie closed her eyes for one second.

The next words felt impossible, which meant of course that they were required.

“Laura is.”

Irena’s face softened in quiet satisfaction.

“Yes.”

Laura reached out then—not to Frankie, but to Irena, resting a hand lightly on her arm. The gesture was affectionate, grounding, allied.

Frankie saw it.

Of course she saw it.

Every small movement between them seemed designed now to reinforce the doctrine being spoken aloud.

Irena went on.

“And you?”

Frankie’s entire body felt hot and weak.

She could not say it.

She knew that too.

Irena helped her, because Irena always helped.

“You are someone we look after,” she said. “Someone sweet, and vulnerable, and worth protecting. But not someone beside us.”

The words obliterated what was left.

Because there it was, finally, in exact language:

not someone beside us.

Frankie lowered her head.

She could not bear to keep looking at them from the rug while the geometry of the room became philosophy.

Tears hit the backs of her hands.

Her shoulders began to shake despite her effort to control them.

After a moment, Laura stood from the couch.

Frankie tensed instinctively, unsure whether she was coming closer in comfort or inspection Laura did come closer—but only as far as the edge of the rug. Then she knelt in front of Frankie, not low enough to equalize them, just enough to enter her line of sight when Frankie finally lifted her face.

Laura’s expression was gentle.

“Bunny,” she said quietly, “this is hard because you still think being cared for is smaller than being equal.”

Frankie stared at her through tears.

Laura’s voice remained calm.

“It isn’t smaller. It’s just different.”

Frankie almost broke at that.

Because Laura believed it. Or at least believed enough of it to speak convincingly. She was not sneering down at Frankie from a secure height. She was offering the creed itself. Making it sound humane. Livable.

“You don’t have to hold everything together,” Laura said. “Some people aren’t built for that. Some people do better when they’re held.”

A sob rose in Frankie’s throat before she could stop it.

Irena, from the couch, answered it at once.

“And thank God you were found by women generous enough to do that.”

Frankie bowed her head again.

That was the full demotion, in one sentence.

Not merely that she needed them.

That they were generous to accept the burden.

Irena stood then and crossed the room.

Frankie felt her approach before she saw her. Then Irena knelt behind Laura and slid one hand into Frankie’s hair, gathering it gently at the nape of her neck.

The touch was achingly familiar.

That old comfort.

That old hand.

The same tenderness that had once meant rescue now finalizing classification.

“I know this hurts,” Irena murmured.

Frankie let out a broken sound.

Irena’s thumb stroked once behind her ear.

“But hurt is not the same as harm.”

Frankie’s eyes closed.

“Listen to me,” Irena said softly. “You are not being thrown away. You are being kept.” The sentence went through her like fire.

Because that was the shape of the whole horror, wasn’t it?

Not exile.

Retention.

Not abandonment.

Permanent, managed inclusion on terms that stripped her of equality while framing the stripping as shelter.

Irena’s voice was almost unbearably warm now.

“You don’t have to be my best friend, Bunny. You don’t have to be anyone’s equal. You don’t have to prove you can stand alone in a world that has already shown what happens when you try.”

She leaned in and kissed Frankie’s temple.

“You just have to be good,” she whispered. “And grateful.”

Laura reached out then and laid her hand over Frankie’s where it rested in her lap. “We’ll take care of you,” she said.

Not *I*.

We.

The word sealed it.

Frankie started crying harder then, no longer able to hide it, shoulders trembling openly while one woman held her hair and the other held her hand. It was unbearable precisely because it did not feel like punishment. It felt like administration wrapped in softness. Reclassification through affection.

A few months ago she had thought the worst thing that could happen would be to lose Irena. Now she understood that there were far more intricate ways to be destroyed.

You could keep her.

You could keep the condo.

You could keep the hand in your hair, the kiss to your temple, the promise that you would be looked after.

And lose the right to imagine yourself beside her forever.

After a long time, when the crying had quieted into smaller, weaker breaths, Irena tipped Frankie's chin up until she was forced to look at both of them again.

Laura still knelt in front of her.

Irena still held her gently from behind.

"Tell me what Laura is," Irena said.

Frankie's lips trembled.

"Your real best friend."

Irena nodded.

"And what are you?"

Frankie closed her eyes, then opened them again.

It took everything in her to say it.

"Someone you take care of."

A small, pleased silence followed.

Irena kissed her temple once more.

"Good girl."

Laura squeezed her hand.

The room went very still.

Outside the windows, Denver shone in the late afternoon light as if nothing at all had changed. But Frankie knew better. Something final had been spoken into place inside the condo, and because Irena had spoken it in that calm, practical, affectionate voice, it felt less like a fight she had lost than a status she had been

assigned.

Laura rose first and returned to the couch.

Irena stood a moment later, but before she stepped away, she bent down one last time and brushed Frankie’s damp hair back from her face.

“You can stay here on the rug for a little while,” she said gently. “I think it’s good for you to sit with it.”

Then she turned and went back to Laura.

The two women settled side by side on the couch as naturally as breath, and Frankie remained where she was below them, crying quietly on the floor of the condo that had once been the proof of her adulthood and now felt, more than ever, like the place where stronger women had agreed to let her remain.

Chapter 28

Bestie

Chapter 28: The Shared Bedroom

Frankie stood at the foot of the master bed, completely naked, her hands clasped behind her back. The room was dim, lit only by the soft glow of the bedside lamps. Irena and Laura were already in bed — Irena on the left side, Laura on the right — both wearing nothing but thin silk robes that had slipped open just enough to reveal smooth skin and the curves of their bodies.

The new arrangement had been made clear earlier that evening. Frankie would no longer sleep in the bed. That privilege now belonged to Laura. Frankie's place was at the foot of it, on the small cot that had been placed there earlier in the day.

Irena looked at her from the bed, her expression calm and affectionate.

"Go on, Bunny," she said softly. "Get into your bed."

Frankie's stomach tightened. She glanced at the small cot — barely wide enough for her to lie on, with a thin blanket and a single pillow. It was clearly meant for a pet, not a person. She hesitated for only a second before climbing onto it, her movements slow and careful. The cot creaked softly beneath her weight as she settled onto her side, facing the bed.

Laura watched her with quiet interest, one arm draped across Irena's waist. She looked comfortable. Relaxed. Like she belonged exactly where she was.

Irena reached over and turned off the main lamp, leaving only the soft glow of the small bedside light. She turned onto her side to face Laura, their bodies naturally drawing closer together beneath the sheets.

"Come here," Irena murmured, her voice low and warm. She pulled Laura into a slow, deep kiss, their lips moving together with obvious affection. Laura responded immediately, her hand sliding up to cup Irena's breast through the open robe.

Frankie watched from the cot, her heart pounding. She could see everything — the way Irena's hand moved down Laura's side, the way their legs tangled together, the soft sounds they made as the kiss deepened. Her body responded instantly. Heat flooded between her legs, her clit throbbing as she watched the two women she now belonged to touch each other with such easy intimacy.

Irena broke the kiss and glanced down at Frankie, a small smile playing on her lips. "Comfortable down there, little bunny?" she asked, her voice gentle but unmistakably teasing.

Frankie nodded, her voice barely above a whisper. “Yes.”

“Good.” Irena turned back to Laura and kissed her again, slower this time, her hand slipping inside Laura’s robe to stroke her bare skin. “She’s learning her place so well, isn’t she?” Laura hummed in agreement, her fingers threading through Irena’s hair as they kissed again. “She really is. I think she likes it.”

Frankie’s face burned, but she didn’t look away. She couldn’t. Her body was burning with a confusing mix of humiliation and intense arousal. She could feel how wet she was, her thighs pressing together as she watched Irena and Laura continue to touch and kiss each other like she wasn’t even there.

After a few minutes, Irena pulled back slightly and looked down at Frankie again. Her expression was soft, but there was a clear command in her eyes.

“Come here, Bunny,” she said. “Just for a moment.”

Frankie climbed off the cot and crawled the short distance to the side of the bed. Irena reached down and gently stroked her hair, her fingers moving with that familiar affectionate rhythm.

“You’re going to sleep right here every night from now on,” Irena said quietly. “At our feet. Where you belong. And every night before you go to sleep, you’re going to kiss both of our feet and thank us for letting you stay.”

Frankie’s breath caught. She looked up at Irena, then at Laura, who was watching her with a small, satisfied smile.

“Yes,” Frankie whispered.

Irena smiled and leaned down, pressing a soft kiss to the top of Frankie’s head. “Good girl. Now go back to your bed. We’re going to sleep soon.”

Frankie crawled back to the cot and lay down on her side, facing the bed. She could still see Irena and Laura above her — their bodies pressed close, their hands moving slowly over each other beneath the sheets. They kissed again, softer this time, their voices low and intimate as they whispered to each other.

Frankie closed her eyes, but sleep didn’t come easily. Her body was still burning, her mind spinning with everything that had happened. The cot was small and uncomfortable, but she didn’t complain. She didn’t move.

She simply lay there, listening to the soft sounds of Irena and Laura loving each other above her, and waited for sleep to finally take her.

Chapter 29

Bestie

Chapter 29: The Photo Replacement

Frankie stepped into the living room after her shower and stopped.

Something was different.

It took her a moment to realize what it was. The walls. The photos. They had changed again. She moved closer, her bare feet silent on the hardwood floor. Where her old framed pictures used to hang — the ones of her and her parents, the ones from college, the casual selfies with friends — there were now new ones. Large, beautifully framed photographs of Irena and Laura together.

Some were clearly taken recently. Irena and Laura laughing at a restaurant. Irena kissing Laura's cheek on what looked like a quiet morning in bed. Laura resting her head on Irena's shoulder while they sat on the couch — *this* couch. Others were more artistic: soft, intimate shots of the two of them in various states of undress, their bodies pressed close, their expressions full of quiet affection.

Frankie's stomach tightened as she slowly walked around the room, taking it all in. Almost every single photo of her old life had been removed. The only one that remained was a small, unframed picture tucked into the corner of one of the new displays.

It was a photo of her.

She recognized it immediately. It had been taken a few months ago, before everything had changed so drastically. She was smiling at the camera, her auburn hair loose around her shoulders, wearing a simple white sundress. She looked happy. Normal. Like someone who still had a life of her own.

Now it sat there, small and almost hidden among the much larger photos of Irena and Laura, like a quiet afterthought. A reminder of who she used to be.

Frankie reached out and touched the edge of the small photo with her fingertips. Her chest felt tight. She could feel the familiar heat building between her legs — that constant, low throb that never seemed to leave her anymore — but underneath it was something heavier. Something that made her throat ache.

She didn't hear Irena come into the room until she felt warm hands slide around her waist from behind.

Irena pressed herself against Frankie's back, her chin resting lightly on her shoulder. She was still in her work clothes — a fitted black blouse and tailored trousers — but she had already kicked off her heels. Her body felt solid and warm

against Frankie’s bare skin.

“I thought it was time for an update,” Irena said softly, her voice calm and affectionate. “The old photos didn’t really fit anymore. This is who we are now. This is our home.” Frankie’s breath caught. She kept her eyes on the small photo of herself, her fingers still touching the edge of it.

“You kept one,” she said quietly.

Irena’s arms tightened around her. She pressed a soft kiss to the side of Frankie’s neck. “I did. I wanted you to have something to look at. Something to remind you of how far you’ve come.” Her voice dropped a little lower. “And how much better things are now.” Frankie closed her eyes for a moment, letting herself lean back into Irena’s embrace. Her body responded instantly to the contact — her nipples tightening, heat pooling between her legs — but her mind felt heavy. Overwhelmed.

Irena’s hands slid slowly up Frankie’s bare stomach, cupping her breasts with gentle possessiveness. Her thumbs brushed over her nipples in slow, deliberate strokes. “You don’t need those old pictures anymore,” Irena murmured against her ear. “You have us now. You have me and Laura. That’s all you need.”

Frankie’s lips parted as Irena’s fingers continued their slow, teasing movements. She could feel Irena’s breath against her neck, warm and steady. She could feel the weight of everything that had changed pressing down on her — the new photos, the new life, the way her old self was being quietly erased piece by piece.

And still, beneath it all, that strange, aching gratitude remained.

Irena kissed her neck again, then turned her gently around so they were facing each other. She looked at Frankie with those familiar blue eyes — warm, commanding, and full of quiet certainty.

“Come to bed soon,” she said softly. “Laura and I are waiting for you.”

She gave Frankie one last slow kiss, then turned and walked toward the bedroom, leaving Frankie standing alone in the living room surrounded by photos of a life that no longer belonged to her.

Chapter 30

Bestie

Chapter 30: The Final Offer

Frankie knelt in the center of the living room, her bare knees pressing into the soft rug. The condo was quiet, the only sound coming from the faint hum of the city outside. Irena and Laura sat on the couch in front of her, both relaxed and comfortable in their casual evening clothes. Laura's legs were draped over Irena's lap, and Irena's hand rested lightly on her thigh, her thumb tracing slow, absent circles against the fabric.

Frankie could feel the weight of the moment before either of them spoke. Something in the air had shifted over the last few days — a quiet finality that had been building ever since Laura had moved in. She kept her eyes lowered, her hands resting on her thighs, waiting. Irena was the one who finally broke the silence. Her voice was calm, gentle, and unmistakably serious.

"Laura and I have been talking," she said. "And we think it's time we gave you a real choice."

Frankie's breath caught. She lifted her head slightly but didn't speak.

Irena continued, her blue eyes steady and warm.

"You can leave. Right now. Tonight. We won't stop you. You can walk out that door and never come back. You'll be free to do whatever you want. We won't come after you. You'll have your life back."

She paused, letting the words settle.

"Or," she said, her voice softening even further, "you can stay. Permanently. As our shared pet. You'll belong to both of us. You'll do whatever we ask, whenever we ask it. You'll sleep at the foot of our bed. You'll serve us in every way. You'll be ours completely — body, mind, and soul. No more pretending. No more half-measures."

Frankie's heart pounded so hard she could feel it in her throat. Her body was burning — her skin flushed, her nipples tight, and a deep, aching pulse throbbing between her legs. She could feel how wet she was, the evidence of her body's reaction to the words being spoken so calmly in front of her.

Irena leaned forward slightly, her expression soft but unwavering.

"But if you stay, that's it. There's no going back. This becomes your life. You'll be our obedient little toy. Our degraded little pet. And you'll thank us for it every single day." The room fell quiet again.

Frankie’s mind raced. She thought about everything that had led her here — the slow, steady way Irena had taken over her life piece by piece. The supplements. The move-in. The social media. The job. The photos. The demotion. The way her old self had been quietly erased until there was almost nothing left.

And still, beneath all of it, that same deep, unshakable gratitude remained.

She didn’t want to leave.

She didn’t want to go back to a life without Irena. Without this.

Her voice came out barely above a whisper.

“I want to stay.”

Irena’s expression didn’t change, but something in her eyes softened. She reached out and gently cupped Frankie’s cheek, her thumb stroking slowly across her skin.

“Are you sure?” she asked quietly. “Once you say it, that’s it. No more chances.” Frankie nodded, her voice trembling but clear.

“I’m sure. I want to stay. Please.”

Irena smiled — small, satisfied, and deeply affectionate. She leaned down and pressed a soft kiss to Frankie’s forehead, her lips lingering for a long moment.

“That’s my good girl,” she whispered. “I knew you would.”

She sat back again, her hand still resting gently on Frankie’s cheek.

“From now on, you belong to us completely. No more pretending. No more hiding. You’re ours.”

Laura reached over and gently ran her fingers through Frankie’s hair, her touch light but possessive.

Frankie stayed exactly where she was, kneeling between them, her body warm and trembling, her heart full of something she could no longer name.

Irena’s hand stayed on her cheek, warm and steady, as the quiet weight of her choice settled over the room like a blanket.

Chapter 31

Bestie

Chapter 31: Full Acceptance

Frankie stood in front of the bathroom mirror, completely naked except for the thin black collar around her neck. The morning light was soft and golden, casting gentle shadows across her skin. She had been standing there for several minutes, just looking at herself. Her auburn hair was still messy from sleep, falling loosely around her shoulders. Her breasts rose and fell with each slow breath, her nipples already tight from the cool air. The collar sat perfectly against her throat — simple, elegant, and undeniably permanent. She reached up and touched it with her fingertips, tracing the smooth metal as if seeing it for the first time. She didn't feel shame. She didn't feel regret.

She felt peace.

The door behind her opened quietly.

Frankie didn't turn around, but she saw Laura's reflection appear in the mirror a moment later. Laura was wearing one of Irena's oversized white button-up shirts, the fabric hanging loosely off one shoulder and barely covering the tops of her thighs. Her long dark hair was tousled from sleep, and she looked soft and relaxed in the morning light.

Laura paused in the doorway when she saw Frankie standing there. She didn't speak right away. She simply watched her for a moment, her head tilted slightly, her expression calm and curious.

After a few seconds, she stepped fully into the bathroom and closed the door behind her. She walked up behind Frankie and stopped just a few inches away, close enough that Frankie could feel the warmth of her body.

"You've been in here a while," Laura said softly, her voice still a little husky from sleep. She reached out and gently placed her hands on Frankie's bare hips, her thumbs stroking slow, soothing circles against her skin. "Everything okay?"

Frankie met Laura's eyes in the mirror. She didn't look away.

"I was just… looking," she said quietly.

Laura nodded, understanding in her expression. She stepped even closer, pressing her body lightly against Frankie's back. The soft fabric of the button-up shirt brushed against Frankie's skin as Laura wrapped her arms around her waist from behind.

"You look different this morning," Laura said, her voice low and intimate. She rested her chin on Frankie's shoulder, both of them looking at their reflection

together. “Softer. Like

something finally settled.”

Frankie’s breath caught slightly. She could feel Laura’s warmth against her back, could feel the steady rhythm of her breathing. Her body responded in its usual way — heat blooming between her legs, her nipples tightening even further — but beneath it was something deeper. Something quieter.

“I feel different,” Frankie admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. “I feel… like I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be.”

Laura smiled against her shoulder. She tightened her arms around Frankie’s waist and pressed a slow, gentle kiss to the side of her neck.

“I’m glad,” she said softly. “Irena and I were talking about you last night after you fell asleep. We both agreed — you made the right choice. You belong here with us.”

Frankie’s eyes stayed on the mirror, on the image of herself wearing nothing but the collar, wrapped in Laura’s arms. She could see the contrast between them — Laura looking relaxed and in control, Frankie looking open and surrendered. The sight sent a deep, aching pulse of arousal through her.

Laura’s hands slid slowly up Frankie’s stomach, cupping her breasts with gentle

possessiveness. Her thumbs brushed over her nipples in slow, deliberate strokes as she continued to watch their reflection.

“You’re ours now,” Laura murmured against her skin. “Completely. And we’re going to take such good care of you.”

Frankie leaned back into her, her body melting against Laura’s warmth. She could feel Laura’s breath against her neck, could feel the steady beat of her heart against her back. Everything felt right. Everything felt settled.

Laura kissed her neck again, then rested her chin on Frankie’s shoulder once more, both of them still looking at the mirror.

“Take your time,” she said quietly. “We’re not going anywhere.”

Frankie stayed exactly where she was, her eyes fixed on her own reflection, her body warm and pliant in Laura’s arms, and the quiet certainty of her new reality settling deep into her bones.

Chapter 32

Bestie

Chapter 32: Serving Laura

Frankie knelt between Laura’s spread thighs, completely naked, her hands resting lightly on Laura’s knees. They were in the master bedroom, the afternoon light soft and golden through the curtains. Laura was sitting on the edge of the bed, still wearing one of Irena’s oversized white shirts, the fabric unbuttoned and falling open to reveal the smooth skin of her stomach and the curve of her breasts.

Irena stood a few feet away, leaning against the dresser with her arms crossed, watching quietly. She was fully dressed in soft black leggings and a loose grey sweater, her blonde hair pulled back into a low ponytail. Her expression was calm, focused, and unmistakably proud. Laura looked down at Frankie with a small, expectant smile.

“Go ahead, Bunny,” she said, her voice warm but firm. “Show me what you’ve learned.” Frankie’s heart was racing. She had done this with Irena many times now, but this was different. This was Laura. This was the woman Irena had chosen as her real best friend. The woman who now shared everything with her — including Frankie.

She leaned forward slowly and pressed a soft kiss to the inside of Laura’s thigh. Laura’s skin was warm and smooth beneath her lips. Frankie kissed higher, moving slowly, deliberately, the way Irena had taught her. When she reached the center of Laura’s thighs, she paused for only a second before leaning in and dragging her tongue slowly along Laura’s folds. Laura let out a quiet breath, her hand coming to rest on top of Frankie’s head.

“That’s it,” she murmured. “Just like that.”

Frankie’s tongue moved with growing confidence, licking and sucking with focused attention. She could taste Laura’s arousal, could feel the way her thighs trembled slightly every time she hit a sensitive spot. Her own body was responding in its usual way — heat blooming between her legs, her clit throbbing, her inner walls clenching rhythmically. Behind her, she could feel Irena’s eyes on her. The weight of her gaze made Frankie’s skin flush even hotter.

“You’re doing so well,” Irena said from across the room, her voice low and full of quiet pride. “Look at you. Such a good girl for both of us now.”

Frankie’s heart swelled at the praise. She doubled her efforts, her tongue moving with more purpose, more devotion. Laura’s breathing grew heavier. Her fingers tightened in Frankie’s hair as her hips began to roll gently against her mouth.

“Fuck,” Laura whispered, her voice slightly breathless. “She really is good at this.” Irena chuckled softly and stepped closer, stopping just behind Frankie. She reached down and gently stroked Frankie’s hair, her touch affectionate and grounding.

“I told you she would be,” Irena said. “She learns fast. And she wants to please so badly now. Don’t you, Bunny?”

Frankie moaned softly against Laura’s pussy, the sound muffled but unmistakable. She kept licking, kept sucking, her entire focus on bringing Laura pleasure. Her own body was burning — her nipples tight, her thighs slick with her own arousal — but she didn’t touch herself. She didn’t even think about it. All that mattered was serving.

Laura’s breathing grew ragged. Her hips moved faster, grinding against Frankie’s face with increasing urgency. Frankie stayed with her, her tongue working steadily until Laura’s thighs suddenly tightened around her head and she came with a low, broken moan.

Frankie didn’t stop until Laura’s body finally relaxed. Only then did she pull back slowly, her lips wet, her breathing heavy. She looked up at Laura, then glanced over her shoulder at Irena.

Irena was smiling — a real, genuine smile full of pride and affection.

“Look at that,” she said softly, reaching down to stroke Frankie’s cheek. “Such a perfect little pet for both of us.”

She leaned down and kissed Frankie gently on the lips, tasting Laura on her mouth. “You did so well,” Irena whispered against her lips. “I’m so proud of you.”

Frankie’s chest tightened with emotion. She stayed exactly where she was, kneeling between Laura’s thighs, her body warm and trembling, and let herself sink into the quiet satisfaction of having pleased them both.

Chapter 33

Bestie

Chapter 33: Bestie

The late afternoon light moved slowly across the living room, soft and golden, as if the day itself had decided to linger. Irena and Laura sat close on the couch, their bodies angled toward one another with the easy intimacy of people who had long stopped pretending they were anything but bound together. Laura’s legs were draped across Irena’s lap, and Irena’s fingers traced slow, thoughtful patterns along her calf as they spoke in low, warm voices. Frankie knelt on the rug between them, naked except for the thin black collar around her neck. Her hands rested on her thighs, her breathing steady. She had grown so used to this position that it no longer felt like a punishment. It simply felt like where she belonged. Irena glanced down at her and smiled — that same small, private smile she had worn so often in the beginning, back when everything had still felt like friendship.

“We should finally book that cabin by the lake,” she said to Laura. “Next month. Just the two of us. No work. No responsibilities. We’ve been talking about it for too long.”

Laura leaned her head against Irena’s shoulder, her dark hair spilling across the fabric of her sweater.

“I’d love that,” she said. “We can sleep in every morning. Take long walks. Fuck whenever we want. It’ll be perfect.”

Irena nodded, her fingers still moving gently along Laura’s leg.

“We’ll have to make arrangements for Bunny while we’re gone,” she said. “She’ll be fine here on her own. She knows how to behave now. She’ll keep everything in order until we come back.” She reached down and lightly stroked Frankie’s hair. “Won’t you, little bunny?” Frankie lifted her eyes and answered without hesitation.

“Yes.”

Laura looked down at her with a soft, almost fond expression.

“She really has become such a good girl for us,” she said quietly. “So obedient. So devoted. I can’t even remember what it was like before.”

Irena’s hand lingered in Frankie’s hair for a moment longer before she turned back to Laura. “She chose this,” she said. “Every step of the way. And now she’s exactly where she belongs.”

The two women continued speaking — about the future they would build, about the quiet rhythm they had fallen into, about the life that now belonged only to them. Their voices were warm, loving, and full of easy affection. Every so often, one of them would reach down and gently touch Frankie — stroking her hair, tracing her shoulder — as if she were simply another part of the peaceful scene they had created together.

Frankie remained perfectly still, her body warm, her mind quiet. She could feel the deep, unshakable truth of what she had become. She was no longer trying to be anything else. She was no longer carrying the weight of who she used to be.

Outside, the city kept moving — millions of people chasing connection, chasing purpose, chasing the fragile illusion that they were still the authors of their own stories. Inside, everything had finally settled into its proper shape.

And in that quiet, golden light, with Irena and Laura’s voices drifting above her like a soft, steady current, Frankie closed her eyes and let herself disappear completely into the only truth that remained.