



BONUS  
SCENE

IVAN

SOPHIE LARK

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Meet Sophie

Sloane has been living at the monastery with me for a few months now. I've never actually lived with a woman before, and I have to say, I love it. Falling asleep with her slim body wrapped tight in my arms, and then waking up with her nuzzled against me...Smelling the scent of her skin first thing in the morning...Watching her wash her face, brush her teeth, pin up her hair at the little vanity table I bought for her...

I'm obsessed with the tiny details of her femininity. Sloane is not delicate in the slightest — she's strong, capable, even ruthless when she needs to be. But she's still a woman. I never realized how very beautiful the female form can be.

Her hands are so much smaller than mine. Her skin has an extraordinary smoothness, like a stone that's been polished over and over in the ocean. Her neck is long and graceful. I love when she puts her hair up, so I can see that fine edge of her jaw against the curve of her throat. Every time I watch her do something as simple as twist her hair up in a bun, with the sun illuminating the edges of her profile, I think I ought to hire a painter to capture every detail of this woman right now, exactly as she is.

Of course, she also drives me insane. She's relentlessly nosy, always poking through my books and papers and every room of the monastery. I think she

already knows this place better than I do. She probably knows more about *me* than I do, since she's also had access to my computer.

This transparency is something new for me. I've always hidden myself from the women I dated. They couldn't know the details of my business, let alone my behavior. If anyone knew me before it was my brother, and even with him, I had to maintain the confidence and bearing of a leader.

I can tell Sloane anything. Anything at all. Most of the time I don't even have to tell her, because she's already figured it out. She ought to play poker, with her ability to read my tells.

I don't claim to have the same ability with her, though I'm certainly trying. She's a mystery I'll spend my whole life decoding.

I love discovering new things about her. For one, I now know that she's insanely competitive. I pity the children who tried to best her in whatever sports little Americans play. Because I honestly think she might break my leg to win a race against me.

Sloane and my brother have been playing Chess in the evenings. They're both quite good — I think in their running tally, they're within a game or two of each other.

They play as if they're generals marshaling troops on a battlefield. When one of them loses a man, they jump up from the table and yell and pace around, as if they just lost a whole battalion in a bloody skirmish.

Sometimes they both fall deadly silent, staring at the board, and if anyone interrupts them, they'll throw a book or a shoe at them until the intruder flees the room in terror.

Knowing this about my little fox, I try not to compete with her unless I'm sure I can win. She likes to bait me, to draw me into her challenges. I'm

careful which ones I accept, because I know that the core of our attraction for one another is a rare level of mutual respect.

However, we've begun working out together in the mornings. I used to train with my brother Dominik, but he's been sneaking out of the house to see some girl. He thinks he's being very subtle, but I know everything that goes on among my men.

So now Sloane and I go for a run in the city streets, or train in the large gymnasium on the south end of the monastery.

The gymnasium is a new addition, built where the monks once grew peas and carrots in a massive greenhouse.

We have all kinds of equipment — particularly for combat training. My men train in *systema* and *sambo*, the programs used by the Russian special forces. We also have plenty of classic boxing equipment, since some of my boys came up through the ranks of the underground boxing circuit in St. Petersburg.

It amused Sloane to no end when she learned that the Rocky movies are cult classics here, particularly the ones that include Ivan Drago as the Soviet heavyweight champion. Of course, here Drago is seen as the hero of the film, not Rocky, since Drago is physically superior and more disciplined in his training, unlikely to be bested by an American who pulls farm equipment around in the snow.

I've shown Sloane the *systema* training, and in return, I asked her to teach me some of her American training. I thought she'd show me the CIA offensive program she learned from her father, but instead she introduced me to American CrossFit.

I saw at once why it appealed to her — ramping up the speed of Olympic lifts and pitting opponents against one another in time and weight. Her

favorite workout was the “Murph”, which she said the American CrossFitters did every Memorial Day. She showed me a video from 2013 where Samantha Briggs came in second place overall, almost besting the male competitors along with all the women.

So today, I’ve set the perfect trap for my little fox.

Sloane comes skipping down to the gymnasium at 7:00 am sharp. It’s my turn to pick our workout, so I know she’s expecting me to choose one of my own favorites. Instead I have our weight vests prepared, right next to the pull-up bars.

“What’s this?” she says, suspiciously.

“I thought you might want to do the Murph again,” I say.

Last time we competed, she trounced me, finishing in 44 minutes, almost a full minute faster than me. Sloane’s endurance is her greatest strength. While I always start ahead of her, she just gets faster and faster the longer she goes. It’s goddamned infuriating.

“You want to get beat again?” she teases me.

“I don’t think so,” I say, crossing my arms over my chest. “I’ve been practicing my pull-ups.”

“Oh yeah?” she says.

She’s grinning at me. She’s full of confidence.

“Yes,” I say, giving her a superior look. “In fact, I’m willing to make a bet on it.”

I can see her eyes lighting up. She loves a good wager.

“What’s the bet?” she says.

“If you win, we take a vacation together,” I tell her. Sloane has been wanting me to take a few weeks off so we can go exploring, just the two of us.

“And if you win?” Sloane asks.

“I want you to set a date for our wedding. An immediate date,” I tell her.

Sloane accepted my ring four months ago, but she’s hasn’t actually said her vows to me yet. I know she wants to, but she’s frightened of it.

I understand, but I’m not a patient man. I want her to be my wife. And I don’t want to wait any longer.

She bites her lip, considering. She’s annoyed at me for twisting her arm. Still, she can’t resist the challenge. Especially since she thinks she’s going to win.

“Alright,” she says, lightly. “It’s a deal.”

We put on our weighted vests. Typically, men wear a twenty-pound vest, women fourteen pounds. It barely feels like anything at all when you start, but over time, the vests make the workout even more grueling than it already is.

The Murph starts with a one-mile run. Sloane and I have a route mapped out, taking us out of the monastery, through the plot of woods beyond the walls, and back to the gymnasium again.

I start the timer and we sprint out the doors. I’m faster than Sloane to begin with, but I don’t let that go to my head. I know all too well how good she is at conserving her energy for the point in time when I begin to flag. Then she turns on her engine like a locomotive — steady and relentless. I can hear her running along behind me, not breathing hard at all.



I dash through the wooded part of the run, jumping over fallen logs, and avoiding puddles from the last rainfall. Russian forest is dark and dense. It's the forest of fairytales, full of ancient evergreens taller than any building in St. Petersburg.

I beat Sloane back to the gymnasium, by less than a minute. Without any rest, I start the pull-ups. Again, I have a slight advantage — upper body is my strongest feature, while Sloane is stronger in her legs.

The Murph consists of one hundred pull-ups, two hundred push-ups, and three hundred squats. I jump up to grab the rusted iron bar, and pull myself up so my chin clears the top. Only 99 more to go.

I've only finished twenty when Sloane comes jogging into the gym. She smiles up at me, unperturbed. She jumps up on the bar next to mine and begins her pull-ups. She's slower than me, but she doesn't stop to rest. I take a break every twenty or thirty pull-ups.

I finish with about the same lead I had before. No rest for the wicked — I drop down to my knees to start the push-ups.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Sloane finishing her pull-ups. She's slowed down significantly. She's sweating a little, and I see the look of annoyance on her face as she huffs and puffs through the last ten.

She joins me in the push-ups, and again, she's slower than usual. I know her father used to make her do a hundred push-ups every morning and every night. Generally, she can crank them out just as quickly as I can. But today she's dragging. She gets more and more frustrated, and redder in the face.

Finally, we're on to the squats. This is usually the part where Sloane starts to catch up to me. She goes up and down relentlessly, ass to grass, her legs working like pistons. But not today. Today she has to stop repeatedly, something unheard of for my darling Sloane.

I try to hide my smile. She casts a look in my direction, wary and flustered. She's wondering why I'm not teasing her like I usually would. I finish my squats just ahead of her, something I've never managed before.

Now it's down to the final one-mile run. Usually Sloane pulls ahead of me on the run and I just can't catch her. She sprints ahead through the woods like she's not tired at all, my elusive little fox.

Not today.

Today it's me that starts out first, with Sloane half a step behind me. I'm running harder than I have in my life. I see my prize so clear that I can almost reach out and touch it. I see Sloane standing at the altar, unutterably beautiful in a white lace dress. I'm going to give her the diamond tiara that's been in my family for two-hundred years. I'm going to lift the veil off her face and take possession of her forever.

I hear her gasping and panting behind me. I know she's sprinting too, more out of a pure desire to beat me than anything to do with our bet.

But the wager is everything to me. It's something I've been planning for weeks.

I run harder and harder, tasting the blood in my throat.

I'm the machine now. I'm the unstoppable force.

I barrel through the woods, branches whipping at my arms. I sprint back through the gates, across the yard, and into the gymnasium. I beat Sloane by a solid twenty-two seconds.

She comes dashing in after me, still running hard, though she knows she's already lost.

She's breathing harder than I've ever seen, sweat running down her face.

She can't speak, either from exhaustion, or from temper at losing.

"God!" she says at last. "I was so tired today. My legs felt like lead."

She strips off her vest. It falls to the floor with a thud.

She looks quickly down at the vest, and then over at me.

I try to keep my face perfectly still. But she reads my expression in an instant.

She snatches up the vest, and starts opening the pockets. She pulls out the weights, counting them as she drops them on the floor.

She's supposed to have fourteen pounds in total. Instead, I added twenty-two, carefully spread out so she wouldn't notice the difference.

When she's done counting, she spins around and shouts, "You filthy cheater!"

"What?" I say, innocently.

"You added more weight!"

I also removed five pounds from my own vest, but she doesn't know that. Not yet, anyway.

"So what?" I say, calmly.

"So the bet's off!" she says.

I glower at her.

"Absolutely not. A deal's a deal."

"But you cheated!"

"I outwitted you," I tell her. "Either way, I won."

She stares at me, open-mouthed and outraged.

I can tell she's furious.

But a fox respects trickery. Even more than skill.

She closes her mouth. She's still glaring at me, eyes narrow and cheeks aflame. Still, I can see the ghost of a smile tugging at her lips.

“You think you're going to take me to the altar by subterfuge?” she says.

I take a step closer so I'm towering over her, so she has to tilt her chin up to maintain eye contact.

“I'm taking you there one way or another,” I growl. “Consider this the easy way.”

I see a shiver running over her skin. The tip of her little pink tongue darts out to moisten her bottom lip. Sloane tosses her head, defiant as ever. But I know the thrill it gives her, when I'm forceful. I know what she likes.

I grab her by the ponytail, her black, curly hair soft as a silken tassel. I tilt her head back even further.

“You will be mine, *moya malen'kaya lisa*.”

“Be careful what you wish for,” Sloane says, softly.

“I don't wish for things,” I tell her. “I take them.”

I kiss her hard on the mouth, crushing her full lips under mine. I tug on her long, dark ponytail, exposing her throat. I run my tongue down the length of her neck, tasting the salt on her skin.

I see her chest rising and falling faster than ever. Not from running now — from being trapped in my arms. I grab the neck of her tank-top in both

hands and I tear it in two, from top to waist. Her bare breasts glisten with a sheen of sweat. Her chest is flushed pink, her nipples erect.

I pull the remains of her shirt down her arms, wrapping the tattered fabric around her wrists so her arms are bound behind her back. This is how I first met my little fox — as my captive. It's a game we've reenacted many times. Nothing brings her to a fever pitch of arousal faster than being bound at my mercy.

I take her soft little breast in my mouth. I suck hard on the nipple, feeling its pebbled point rolling against my tongue. Sloane's skin is warm and humid. I can smell her scent stronger than ever. That intoxicating cocktail unique only to her — it invades my senses and drives me out of my mind.

I want this woman. I want her over and over and over.

I want her to give herself to me, more than the last time and the time before. The deeper I dig the well of my obsession with her, the more I realize there is no bottom.

I shove my hand down the front of her shorts. I part her pussy lips with my fingers, finding her just as wet as I expect her to be. Her pussy is on fire, her whole body flushed from the workout, a good five degrees hotter than normal.

She moans when I touch her down there. I know she wants more.

But she won't allow herself to submit so easily.

We're standing on the mats we use for grappling, when we practice *samozaschita bez oruzhiya*, the Soviet martial art. Sloane has been a good student. Quick as a whip, she sweeps her leg under mine, shoving my chest with the heel of her hand to knock me backward.

I land hard on the mats, Sloane on top of me. She's pulled her wrists out of the tattered tank top. She's trying to pin my arms instead, trying to get her forearm across my throat so she can keep me down.

She's straddling my hips, her strong thighs gripping me tight. Her bare breasts are above my face, incredibly distracting. I almost want to give in to her, so I can take them in my mouth again.

But that temptation isn't even close to the drive to overpower her, to take control of her.

My cock strains against my shorts. It can sense the heat between her thighs. It's desperate to get to that place: the warmest, tightest, most inviting space imaginable.

Sloane is a good student, but I'm still the master.

I buck my hips, throwing her off. While she's tumbling face-first onto the mats, I grab her arms again, pinning them behind her back. I put my knees between hers to force her legs apart. I rip down her shorts, so she's completely naked on the mats.

I loose my cock from my shorts. It stands out straight from my body. I feel like I'll die if I don't bury it inside of her immediately.

Sloane is still kicking and wriggling underneath of me. Everything is a contest to her. Everything is a battle. It's what I love about her, more than anything.

I have the same drive in me. I have to conquer her anew, every day.

I plunge my cock inside of her. She stiffens and lets out a groan of tortured pleasure. I wrap my arms tight around her, pressing her down into the mats. I thrust into her again and again, each time harder than the last.

It's part wrestling, part fucking. She's still trying to twist around, trying to flip me over so she can climb on top once more. I have to pin her down, have to hold her tight. We're both slick with sweat, every muscle straining.

I sit up, but only so I can take her breasts in my hands as I pull her down onto my lap, still facing away from me. I grope her breasts, pinching and squeezing the nipples. I run my hands down her body, gripping her waist and driving her hips down into mine.

She arches her back so she can tilt her head and nibble on my earlobe. Her tongue is warm and wet against my ear, sending shivers down my spine.

I turn her around now. She wraps her legs around my waist. I kiss her, tasting my own salty sweat on her lips. Beneath that, I taste the rich, sweetness of her tongue.

When she exhales, I inhale, taking her breath into my lungs. The same molecules that have been in her will be in me.

She's looking into my eyes, not resisting me anymore.

Every day I take her. And every day she gives herself to me.

I feel her pussy tighten around me. It clenches again and again as her eyelids flutter. She rides the waves of pleasure, fast and hard at first, and then slower and longer, her hips rolling and grinding against mine.

Fighting arouses her. But it's the moment of connection that always makes her cum. I know what Sloane wants, and I know what she needs.

She wraps her arms around my neck, pressing her forehead against mine as she rides out the last of her climax.

I wait for her to finish, until the last drop of pleasure has been wrung from her flesh. Then I let go, too. I unleash myself inside of her. Just as I've

taken her breath into my lungs, I put my seed deep into her belly.

I want this woman for my wife, and the mother of my child.

My body shakes, as the orgasm draws the last ounce of energy from my flesh to my bones. It's pleasure, and relief, and the only way I can express to Sloane, in the paucity of my words, how much I need her.

When I finish, we lay down on the mats together. Our panting breath is the only sound in the silent gym.

We lay side by side because we're still so hot, our fingers twined together.

At last, Sloane says, "June first."

"What?" I say, my mind still floating a dozen feet above us.

"June first," Sloane repeats, rolling over on her elbow so she can fix me with her mischievous dark eyes. "For the wedding."

My heart gives a lurch as I realize she's agreeing at last.

But I can't give in so easy.

"Why not May first?" I demand.

She laughs, tossing back her dark curls.

"You always have to have the last word!" she says.

"I'll only be worse when I'm your husband," I tell her, sternly.

"May first, then," Sloane agrees, surprising me. "But we ARE going on a vacation. For our honeymoon."

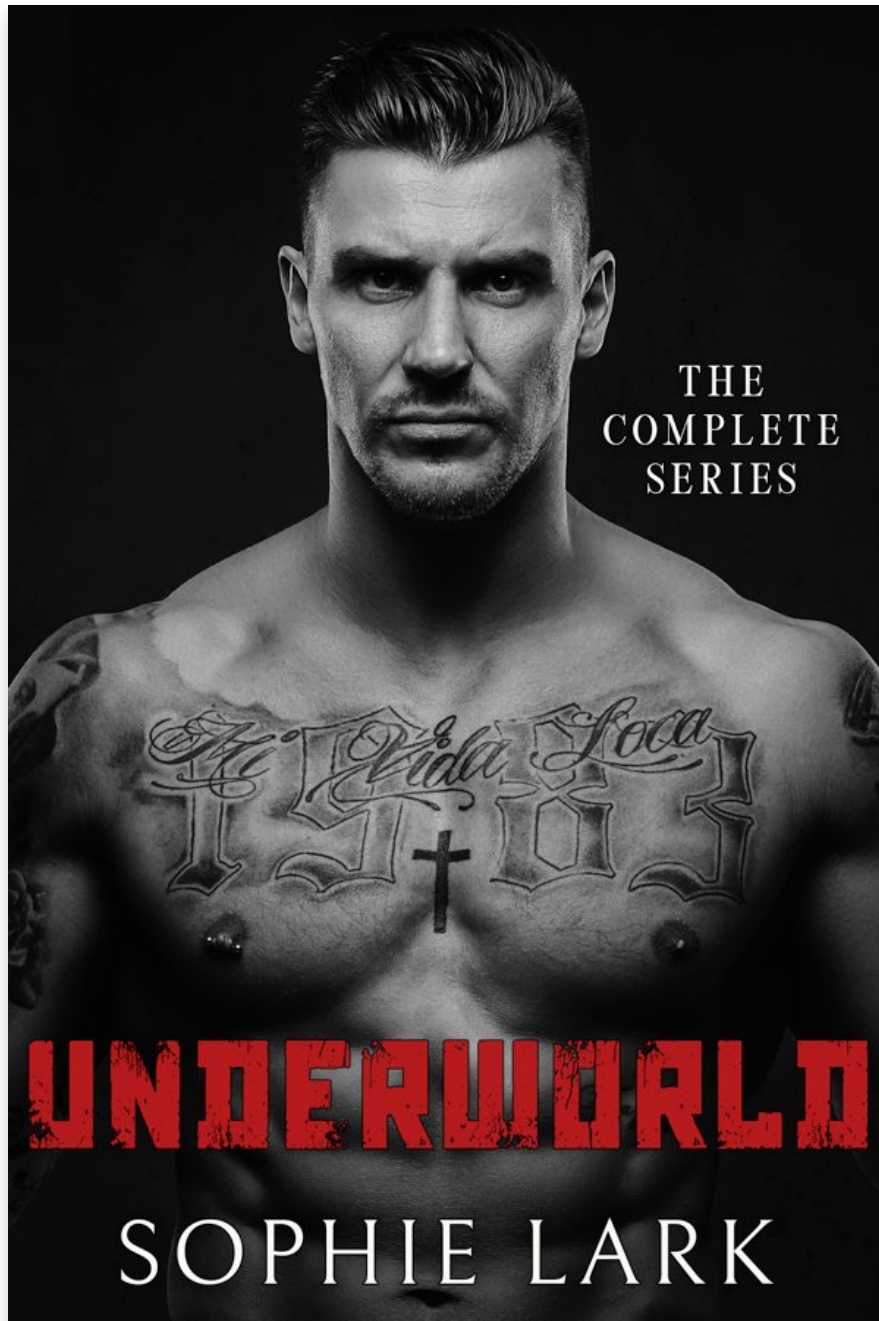
"Alright," I say, trying not to show her how pleased I am. "Two weeks. Anywhere you like."



“THREE weeks,” Sloane says. “And we’ll pick the spot together.”

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THE BULLY – JUNE 2021  
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\*\*\*\*\* (SON OF \*\*\*\*\*)

KINGMAKERS SERIES PAGE



***Amazon Bestselling Author***

Sophie lives with her husband, two boys, and baby girl in the Rocky Mountain West. She writes intense, intelligent romance, with heroines who are strong and capable, and men who will do anything to capture their hearts.

She has a slight obsession with hiking, bodybuilding, and live comedy shows. Her perfect day would be taking the kids to Harry Potter World, going dancing with Mr. Lark, then relaxing with a good book and a monster bag of salt and vinegar chips.

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