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THERE IS NO
TURNING BACK

The background of the cover features a man's back and shoulder, heavily tattooed with intricate designs. A central skull is framed by ornate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral patterns. The overall color palette is dark, with highlights on the tattoos and the skull.

BRUTE'S REVENGE

EVIL FALLEN BRATVA MC

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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BRUTE'S REVENGE

Evil Fallen Bratva MC, 1

Sam Crescent

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Prologue

“Who sent you?” Brute asked. He had a gun pointed at the soldier’s head. The white dove was clear to see, displayed on the man’s neck. He knew exactly who sent them, but he wanted to hear the name straight from his lips before he snuffed him out. All he wanted to know was which fucking Brigadier thought they could mess with him.

For several seconds none of them spoke

Three men all looked the opposite way, hands by their sides. He’d stripped them of their weapons before coming out into the woods. The weather held cleared but he knew time was ticking. A storm was coming and he wanted to handle these traitors before it hit.

The one on the right turned around. “Come on, Brute, you know what the deal—” He never got to finish as he fired his gun straight into the man’s skull.

Brute wasn’t listening to reason or any of the shit they thought he needed to listen to. They were on his territory and he’d already told the Golubev Bratva if they came anywhere near the Evil Fallen Bratva MC and his territory, the whole lot of them would be dead. There wouldn’t be any mercy from him. He’d kill them all.

He wasn’t joking. They would all die and he’d gladly go to war to make it so.

One of the men whimpered.

Brute tutted. “Since when did the Golubev send spineless little wimps?” he asked.

No one spoke.

He was getting bored and the truth was, he wanted a good fuck. After being on the road for two weeks, he had every intention of coming back to his clubhouse, finding a willing pussy, which was never hard to do, and just enjoying

her until he was done. Instead, he found these three fucking traitors at his clubhouse, sneaking around.

There was no way anyone associated with the Golubev Bratva would ever survive. He had made a vow, one he intended to keep. So long as they stayed in their territory and didn't invade his business, they could live. Anyone who attempted to threaten or take him out would be eliminated.

He gave them a warning.

Brute killed the man on the left, and then kept his gun pointed at the guy in the center, moving around the dead body on the right to stand in front of the guy remaining. He'd not pissed or shit himself, and he considered that a huge plus.

He stared him straight in the eye, gun not wavering, ready to do what needed to be done.

"Tell me," he said.

"What's the point? You're going to kill me anyway."

This made him smile. "True, I am going to kill you, but you see, I can make it quick, or I can make it take a very long time. I love to hear men scream and listen to them beg for their mommy or daddy to come and save them. It's one of the highlights of my day." He winked at him and then blew him an air kiss.

"Golubev sent us," he said.

"Why?"

"He wanted to see if you ... would consider any chance of reconciliation. He wants this territory and knows the only way to do it is to create peace."

"Peace." Brute laughed. "The time for peace has ended, now all I want is war." And with that, he fired the gun, killing the final man.

"Do you think killing all three of them was really necessary?" Igor asked, sounding disappointed. He'd been waiting silently while Brute dealt with them.

“I’m not giving you toys to play with,” Brute said.

The storm was coming and now it was time to dispose of the bodies, but he would make sure Golubev got what he wanted. He pulled out his knife and with each body, he cut away the picture of the dove. All three pieces would get mailed to Golubev.

Chapter One

Faith Dawson knew she shouldn't be at the Evil Fallen Bratva MC clubhouse. She had no intention of being here, but this date, which was a disaster, wasn't helping. She stood out like a sore thumb. Every other woman wore a skimpy outfit that showed more flesh than covered it, while she was in a long circle skirt with a top tucked inside. Her mother always told her she had a weird body with big tits, hips, and thighs, but a small waist.

It wasn't that tiny, but on her body, it looked tiny, because everything else was so much bigger. All her life, her mother had complained about her weight, but Faith knew it had to do with her image and the attention she hoped to gain. Faith was nothing but a huge disappointment to Beverly, her mother.

She attempted to push all those insecurities to the back of her mind and instead focus on the party happening right in front of her. The last thing she wanted to do was go on this date with Pete, who was currently pulling in another woman to kiss her on the lips. She didn't mind that he was kissing other women. Her mother had organized this date and it had been awful.

First, the food was disgusting, and had come from some small van with no signs and no menu. Pete had ordered for her, and she couldn't eat any of the stuff, because it hadn't looked cooked. She'd watched as Pete took a bite of his chicken wrap. She didn't want to spend the next day throwing her guts up, seeing as the chicken still looked pink, if not red, on the inside. It was gross.

So, she was hungry and now she was at a place she had a feeling she would never leave. Holding her bag close to her body, she tried to stay as still as possible.

Pete was supposed to take her home, that was the deal. Food, a small walk, and then home, but instead, she had ended

up here. There was no one for her to call or any way to ask for help.

This was her mother's doing. She didn't know what Beverly hoped to achieve, but now that she had, Faith had a horrible feeling about tonight.

The club seemed to be alive. Men and women were everywhere, and none of them were caring who saw them, as they were in different states of undress, and having sex as well. Faith didn't have a clue where to look. She imagined this just made her look so ... immature. At twenty-five years old, she was still a virgin. She had never gone to a party, had never wanted to go to a party, and nerves hit her.

There was a sudden cheer and she turned toward the sound, only to see a woman being carried off, through a set of double doors, with three other men following behind.

Pete was long gone. Faith didn't know where he'd escaped to, but this wasn't good.

She had no way of getting home. The only thing she could hope for was to get out of here alive, even if it meant walking. She made her way toward the main door, which had become quite impossible with so many people there. She had beer and other alcoholic beverages thrown over her in the process of getting to the main door. The moment she did, she pulled on it and let out a sigh of relief as it opened for her. Success.

She stepped outside and took a deep breath at the sound of the door closing behind her. She made it.

Now all she had to do was figure out a way to get the hell out of the clubhouse, off the Evil Fallen Bratva MC's territory, and then for her mother to stop meddling in her life.

“Party not to your liking?”

The deep, guttural voice took her by surprise and she whirled around to see a large, muscular man in the shadows. She couldn't make out anything else about him, but she could

tell he wasn't small. The glow from his cigarette helped pinpoint his location.

"Er, my, uh, date kind of left me. Which is the best way to leave?" she asked. She did want to ask how was the best way to get out of his territory, but she had a horrible feeling that wouldn't be the right question for him.

"You don't want to party?"

"I'm not exactly a party person." She didn't want to insult this man. "It looks great but it's late. I should be getting home."

He let out a chuckle and she couldn't help but tense up. Was he mocking her?

"I don't believe in time. There is no such thing as 'getting late' in my world." He took a final, long pull on his cigarette and then flicked it out into the night.

There was no care or consideration to his actions.

She tried not to tense up as he drew closer. The moment he came into the light, she saw him clearly. Short, blond hair, blue eyes, his body heavily covered in ink. The leather cut he wore didn't hide the fact the ink played around his neck, and he reached up to run fingers through his hair, showing it was on his hands and even covered his wrists. There was no ink on his palms. Faith couldn't exactly make out what the ink was.

"You don't have to worry about work?" she asked. It was such a dumb question.

"Causing evil and chaos is my work." He chuckled. "But you, you look like you're far away from home."

Her heart started to race.

"I, uh, my mom set me up on a date with this guy Pete, and I'd just like to go home. Is there any way I can call a cab?" she asked.

He moved ever so close to her.

Faith tensed up. She held onto her handbag with a death grip, but didn't move away, not for a second. She waited.

"Why don't you stick around?" he asked. "You might learn to have a good time."

That seemed almost like a threat.

"I'm ... ugh ... I'm good. I really should be going."

She suddenly became aware of three other men surrounding her.

"But, you see, if you go, then that ruins my plans, and Rat Boy Pete, he promised me a little present, and you're my present."

The smile on his lips filled her with fear. This wasn't good. This was never going to be good. She spun around.

Rat Boy Pete stood right there.

"I don't know what this is about, but you've got the wrong person."

"So I don't have Faith Dawson, the bastard granddaughter to Sergey Golubev? Your mother isn't Beverly Dawson, who so happened to become a little side piece to your father, Nikki Golubev?"

Faith had tried to avoid her life like that. She hated knowing who she had come from. Her mother had often said if she had been prettier, she'd have been Bratva royalty, but instead, she'd been tossed aside. Nikki, her father, wanted nothing to do with her. He had a daughter who was the same age as her.

The only person to show her any real affection had been Sergey, which was insane, considering the reputation he had. She wasn't a fool.

On her eighteenth birthday, even though she tried to pretend she didn't know, her father had forced her to carry the dove of the Golubev Bratva on the inside of her wrist. She

always tried to hide it with either long sleeves, watches, or bracelets.

She didn't know if her grandfather even knew about the tattoo, but it didn't matter because it was there. He always told her he'd take care of her. Faith had never put him to the test, but she imagined this was the real test now.

Her life was in danger, and she had a horrible feeling this wasn't going to end well.

“Did I do good, Brute? I did, didn't I. That means I can stay, right?”

Brute didn't like Rat Boy Pete. He was completely unreliable and a weakling, but in this situation, he had done good. There was no way he was going to toss him out onto the street, not tonight at least.

“Go and get some food and tell one of the women I sent you, and you're to be treated good.”

He'd never make Rat Boy Pete one of them, but when he did good, he would be sure to help him be rewarded, and with Sergey Golubev's granddaughter currently locked in the basement of the clubhouse, that was a good thing.

He looked through the door to see her chained to the bed.

“What do you plan to do?” Igor asked.

Brute turned toward Igor and he saw the excitementtemptation in the other man's eyes. He was practically foaming at the mouth for a chance to get in there and use some of his newfound torture techniques on her.

“You're not going to touch her.”

Igor wrinkled his nose. “I didn't want to anyway.”

With that, Igor lost interest and made his way back upstairs.

“You don’t want Igor to have her, so what is the plan?” Road asked.

He turned toward the other man. They all had one enemy in common—Sergey Golubev. Road had a very good reason to hate him. The scars on his face were a constant reminder.

There was a time when Road had been a “pretty boy.” With just a wink or a smile, most women fell into his lap and were unable to resist him. Road had been used many times to garner information out of men and women.

No one had been able to resist his charms, not when Road turned them on, making them think they were his whole world, when the truth was, they were the furthest thing from it.

Brute didn’t know the exact details, but one evening, after going to Sergey with all the information he held, Road had come out, and his pretty face had been gone. Instead, he looked like he stepped out of a horror movie. His face had been stitched together, and Sergey had made sure they never quite healed right. The scars would stay with Road forever.

“Last I checked, the bastard daughter of anyone meant shit,” Road said.

“Yeah, but rumor has it, Sergey has a soft spot for this little bastard,” Vlad said.

“Rumor and gossip are not good points to go on,” Road said. “We all know the lies that are spread in pointless gossip. They get people killed.”

“My plan at the moment is for her not to go anywhere. I’m not even going to call Golubev to let him know what happened to her. Rat Boy Pete has his instructions, and that is all he is going to do.”

“Once Golubev finds out who was on a date with her, Rat Boy Pete is going to end up dead, and he will be useless to you,” Vlad said.

“Then that is bad news for Rat Boy Pete. Why do you think he’s going to enjoy a nice hot meal and some good, willing pussy?” Brute said.

Vlad and Road left him alone.

The party had been a front, and it had long since died down when he had his target. Rat Boy Pete had sent him the text confirming he’d gotten her and that they were on a date. Brute had told him to go to Beverly, to lie and pretend he was a good little soldier for Nikki. All Beverly wanted was the respect and title that only Sergey could give her. After she popped out a daughter, and Faith hadn’t lived up to Nikki’s standards, Beverly had meant nothing to him.

Brute knew how it all worked.

He stared at the woman who was chained to the bed by her ankle. She sat on the bed, back leaning against the wall, looking totally ... confused.

He knew he should leave her alone. The plan was to take her and keep her, but he couldn’t resist going inside to talk to Faith one more time. If needed, he would kill her, to make Golubev pay. She wouldn’t be the first woman he’d killed.

Faith tensed up, but she made no move to leave the bed. She folded her arms in front of her chest but the tension in her body was clear to see.

“Have you called my mother yet?” she asked, speaking first.

He grabbed a chair and dragged it across the floor. The noise filled the air, and it was horrible. He saw her wince, and he kept going until the chair was in front of her bed.

“No.”

“Why not?” she asked. “If it’s money you’re after, if you call my mom, she’ll figure out a way to contact my dad.”

“Wow, you do surprise me, Faith. Talking so openly about who you’re related to.”

“I’m not stupid. I saw the name of the club when Pete drove us here. You’re the Evil Fallen Bratva MC. I don’t know what that means, but I’ve heard your name mentioned a time or two, and I know my mom is afraid of you. She told me that if I ever saw any of you, I was to look the other way or run. You know who I am. You knew who I was the moment I walked through the door. There’s no point in playing dumb or denying the obvious.”

Brute was impressed. He couldn’t remember a woman ever talking to him so bluntly. There was no smile on her face, no laughter.

“I don’t know what any of this is about. I ... I didn’t want to go on this date. My mom made me.”

“Yeah, your mom will be so disappointed.” He tutted. “She expected someone to impress, didn’t she? Rat Boy Pete is a nobody, and he’s not going anywhere fast, trust me.”

“Just add it into a long line of disappointments. My mom won’t be surprised.”

Brute stared at her. “Why aren’t you begging?”

“Will it do me any good?” she asked.

“No.”

“Then I won’t beg.”

This made him smile. “So there *is* some Golubev inside you.”

She shrugged.

Golubev was known for not begging. He took until there was nothing left.

“What do you want?” she asked.

“Nothing for you to worry that pretty little head over. You might want to get comfortable. It’s going to be a long time before you’re free.”

He got to his feet and made his way toward the door.

“Are you going to kill me?” she asked.

“That I’m not sure about.” He winked at her and then slammed the door closed, flicking the lock into place. A lot of his men would love to spend a short time with her, releasing their aggression and hatred on a Golubev. They wouldn’t even care if it was a woman.

There was no way she could be innocent since she had Golubev blood running through her veins. In their book, that instantly tainted her.

Brute couldn’t help but have one last, lingering look. She wasn’t what he anticipated, but she’d do.

Chapter Two

She'd been locked away two days so far. Faith had only come to that conclusion because of the two different breakfast meals she'd been presented with. The first had been some toast with jam. She hated jam, but she wasn't going to complain.

While one of the men watched, she ignored the butter and slathered the jam on her bread. She felt quite proud of herself for not wrinkling her nose.

The guy who brought her breakfast was a little stumped when she politely asked to use the bathroom. There wasn't any way for her to go in her cell. Part of her expected them to bring in a bucket, but Brute came down less than five minutes later, removed the chain, and pulled her back upstairs, toward the main room she'd seen the night before, and shoved her in the toilet, then into a cubicle.

She didn't get any privacy.

He stood there with his arms folded and when she asked for privacy, all he did was snort and tell her no. She was never going to get that luxury. It made her hate him just a little bit more.

How dare he, but then, what did she expect? They had taken her against her will, and now she was at their mercy. After she had finished using the toilet, he allowed her to wash her hands, and then back down to her cell she went, chained up, and left alone.

The first day in her cell, she tested how far she could get from her bed. Exactly five steps. That was all she was allowed. Five tiny steps.

She divided her time between laying down on the bed, sitting on the floor, and then slowly walking around. Several hours of doing this was weighing on her mind, driving her crazy, and she found it hard to accept this was happening.

Faith held it all inside. Not once did she freak out, start throwing furniture, not that there was a lot to throw—a single mattress and a bed frame, that was all.

Staring at the floor, she had a horrible feeling he would have left her alone in the cell with nothing and found some way of chaining her up. So, like a good little prisoner, she sat on her bed, on the floor, or walked the small distance she had been given grace.

Brute kept coming down every three hours or so, to escort her to the bathroom. She had figured out his name by overhearing people coming into the basement. Several men and women had entered and left. They didn't touch her cell, and she had to wonder if they were even aware of how clear it was to hear. She doubted it.

By the end of the second day, she felt gross.

It had now been three days since she last showered, seeing as she didn't get the chance to do so before her date with Rat Boy Pete, as he was referred to.

Then she'd been taken, and now two days later, she was pretty sure she smelled. She wasn't sure if the rancid smell was herself or something else. By the end of that second day, she had a horrible feeling she was going to be close to begging.

Her dinner was brought down, a couple of slices of pizza that tasted like cardboard. She was used to eating crappy food as she'd grown up with her mother's cooking, and that hadn't been good at all. Beverly Dawson had been more interested in trying to garner the attention of Nikki Golubev and Sergey Golubev to even care how to cook or clean house.

To her mother, taking care of her home was an afterthought. Whenever she did get to spend time with her mother, it was often spent with Beverly daydreaming about what could have been. The people she could have commanded. The fear they would have had because of who her husband was.

Instead, Beverly was nothing. She had been passed over time and time again. She didn't get any respect.

The door to her cell opened and Faith looked over to see Brute stepping into her room.

"May I shower?" she asked.

He burst out laughing. "You want to shower?"

"Yes."

He tutted.

"You're not going to allow me to shower?" she asked.

"Sweetheart, this isn't a hotel."

She sighed. "What have I ever done to you?"

"You've done nothing to me, but I have it on good word that you're one of Sergey's favorites."

This made her laugh. "No, I'm not."

"Really, so he doesn't come and check up on you, give your mother money to help provide for you?"

"I don't live with my mom."

Brute smiled even wider. "So he gives your mother money to keep her out of your life. Faith Dawson lives a separate life from the one her family is associated with. You work at a small artisan food shop and have been doing so since you were eighteen. You help them at local food markets, and serve at the shop. You moved into your small apartment in a very nice neighborhood when you were twenty years old."

She had grown tired of her mother's constant lashing out and screaming fits. At two in the morning, Beverly, drunk, would blame her for all her life's problems.

Faith loved her mother, but there were limits to what she was prepared to accept. She didn't know if that made her a bad person or not, but she just couldn't take anymore.

"Do you know who owns that building you live in?" Brute asked.

“No.”

He chuckled. “Your grandfather does.”

“I had no idea.” And she didn’t. She had found the rental advertisement in the paper and phoned, hoping it wasn’t taken but figuring it was. Then, when she got the call to say it hadn’t been taken, she had gone to see it and agreed to the terms.

Now, as she looked back, the rental had been within her price range. She thought because it was a slightly smaller apartment than the others within the block, but now she knew it had nothing to do with that and everything to do with who owned it.

“What are you hoping to achieve?” Faith asked.

Two days was nothing, but that was now two days of work she’d missed. She doubted she would have a job, and she knew the company was struggling, as everyone was in the constant rise of products.

“I know Golubev and he doesn’t take care of just anyone.”

“Not even family?” she asked.

“You’re not family. You’re the product of a fuck that his son had with a whore.”

Faith took a deep breath. It wasn’t the first time she had heard her mother called a whore. She knew her mother would do anything so long as they gave her what she wanted—money, prestige, a title, something that made her stand out above the crowd. That was what Beverly wanted. She knew there was no fighting it.

Nikki, her father, had children with multiple women. Sergey had paid attention to her. She had no idea why. He had offered her a job and she politely declined, as she had already gotten a job.

There was a lot she had done differently.

Sergey had been there for her birthday, Christmases, and even her graduation, when no one else had, but they didn't have any special bond.

Whenever they were together, all Faith could remember asking was if he was okay. She'd been a little girl when he paid a visit. Beverly was sobbing and begging, and asking for something, anything. Sergey had been about to leave and Faith had been sitting on the stairs.

"Are you okay?" Faith asked.

Sergey had looked toward her, and almost did a double take when he saw her. "You must be Faith."

"Yeah, Faith Dawson." She climbed off the step and walked toward him, shaking his hand. "Mommy screams and cries a lot, but she doesn't mean nothing by it. She will be friends with you again. You look sad."

"I'm not sad, sweetheart. You remind me of someone I used to know."

Faith had smiled. "A nice someone?"

"Yes, unfortunately, she is gone now."

"Where did she go? Did she take a ride and go on an adventure?"

"Yes, that she did."

Faith later heard that it was his daughter. She didn't take an adventure and go on any ride. She died. Faith, from what she could tell, looked like his daughter.

Sergey didn't stop coming around, and every time he did, her mother attempted some kind of new trick to seduce him. It was rather embarrassing. She tried to stay out of it, but again, that was also hard to do.

"If I'm so invaluable to you, let me go."

“But that is the point. You’re nothing but the daughter of a whore, but Sergey doesn’t see you as that. You’re important to him, and that makes you valuable to me.” Brute got to his feet and left the cell.

She hated the quiet, it unnerved her so much more.

Rat Boy Pete hadn’t returned. It had been three days since Faith had entered Brute’s clubhouse, and two whole days since he sent Rat Boy Pete out to deliver a message. Brute wasn’t a fool. His man was dead. It was just a matter of time before they found the body.

Sarge, Vlad, and Hail stepped into his office.

“Have you found him?”

“No, nothing. No one has seen or heard from Rat Boy Pete since he entered Beverly Dawson’s house,” Hail said.

“What about the mother?” Brute looked toward Vlad.

“She hasn’t been seen either.”

Brute sat back. Sergey didn’t give a shit about Beverly, so why wasn’t the mother free?

“You know he’ll kill her,” Road said.

He looked toward Road who had sat silently in the corner until that moment.

“Who?” Brute asked.

“Sergey will kill Beverly if he believes she’s responsible for Faith getting kidnapped, but first he will make sure she suffers.”

Brute gritted his teeth.

He’d gotten Krill to look into any connections that would place Sergey in Faith’s life.

He’d been dealing with this man now for over twenty years. They all had experience with the Golubev Bratva, and

they knew when it came to Faith, something didn't quite add up.

Nikki, his son, had been with plenty of women, and from what they were able to find, he had another five children spread across the country. This didn't even include the ones he had with his wife. Sergey showed no real interest in any of Nikki's children.

His grandsons, yes, but granddaughters, he didn't pay special attention to any of them. What made Faith so important?

Brute looked toward Road. "Then what makes Faith so special?"

Road shrugged. "Beats me, but this isn't like Sergey. If he was into young women, I'd say he was getting ready to fuck her, and Sergey is many things, but he's not into incest. Everything we've seen suggests love and affection, nothing weird."

One by one, Sarge, Vlad, and Hail left his office. He expected Road to leave, but when he got to the door, he closed it and turned back to face him.

"There's something not a lot of people know about," Road said.

Brute stared at the man opposite him. "What?"

"Sergey had a daughter. He called her Angelina, and he doted on that girl. When she was younger, she had gotten sick. I can't remember, I think it was cancer or something like that. He spent a lot of time at the hospital. Not many people know about his little girl. He kept it quiet as he didn't want to appear weak."

Brute was aware of Golubev's sick daughter. He'd never seen her. Angelina had died at a drive-by shooting outside of a hospital. He knew the streets had run red for days as Sergey made all those responsible pay for what they did.

"What if Faith looked like her?" Road asked.

“I don’t believe Golubev would get sentimental about a child that looked like his daughter,” Brute said.

“Then you don’t know Golubev as well as you think you do. Trust me, from someone who was on their inner fold, he loved that daughter of his. He considered her the most precious thing in the world, and she was.”

Brute pulled out his cell phone.

Krill had sent him the file he’d compiled together regarding Faith Dawson. Once he found a picture of her as a young girl, he held his cell phone up for Road to look.

Road stepped closer, squinting, and then nodded. “She looks exactly like Angelina, and with how he’s treated her, I’d say she has a similar temperament as well.”

“What was Angelina like?” he asked.

“Sweet, charming, she didn’t carry a single evil bone in her body. Even when she was sick all the time, she always found a way to make her father smile, to make *anyone* smile. She was a good person. Even Sergey knew she didn’t have what it took to survive in the Bratva for long. Sergey will call and if we hurt his granddaughter, then it will be all-out war.”

“Good.” Brute put his cell phone away.

Road nodded and then left.

Brute sat back. He wanted war. He wouldn’t be satisfied until he had completely removed everything that was Golubev. That evil fucker was going to pay for everything he had done.

Brute pulled out his cell phone again and brought up the pictures of Faith Dawson. There were not many. Most of them were taken at graduation when she was eighteen years old. There was one with Sergey, and one with her mother who looked bored.

Faith was a bit of a mystery.

Getting to his feet, he made his way out of the clubhouse. On his way toward the basement, several women

tried to gain his attention, but he wasn't interested. None of them could hold his interest.

He made his way slowly down the steps, keeping his movement as light as possible so as not to alert Faith that he was there.

When he looked at her through the small hole, he saw her pacing around the bed. The chain around her ankle would only extend so far, and she still wore the skirt and top she had chosen to go on a date.

He wasn't going to lie, Faith hadn't been what he expected. When she walked through the door, at first he thought Rat Boy Pete had fucked up. This girl was not some Bratva princess. She looked so out of place, it was almost laughable. He'd met women who were involved in the Golubev Bratva and they knew what was expected of them and how they were meant to look. The women were constantly looking for male attention. Faith didn't.

"Have you heard from my mom yet?" Faith asked.

Brute didn't say anything.

"Or my grandfather? Or does it matter?" Faith looked toward him. She had pulled her hair out of the pins and now it fanned around her body. There was a lot of length and curl to it.

He was tempted to just ignore her and watch, but instead, he pulled the bolt out of the door, opened it, and stepped inside.

"Rat Boy Pete is dead," he said.

"He is? How do you know?"

"A hunch."

"So, you don't know for certain if he is or not."

"Your mother hasn't been seen," he said.

"My mom goes missing from time to time. That's not news." She shrugged. "When are you going to let me go?"

“You’re not leaving.”

Her shoulders slumped. “So, can I at least have a shower? A change of clothes? Anything?”

“Do you think you’re in a position to make demands?” he asked.

“Yeah, I do.” She held her hands out. “I’ve not done anything to you. I’ve not made waves. I’ve been a perfectly reasonable prisoner. I’ve not screamed or shouted. I’ve eaten the food you’ve given me. Took toilet breaks in front of you, and trust me, I’ve never used the toilet in front of a man before. I’ve never harmed anyone before.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

“Why?”

“You’re Bratva.”

“No, you know what it means to be Bratva, and I’m not it. I’m nothing more than a bastard offspring and I mean nothing to my family. You know that.”

“Would your mother be worried about you?” he asked, knowing bringing her mother into this was the last thing he should be doing.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve had no phone call. Nothing in the way of contact. Do you spend a lot of time away from your mother?”

“I don’t live with my mother anymore. Other than her attempting to set me up on dates, I don’t see her all that much.”

“She set you up with Rat Boy Pete?” he asked, already knowing the answer.

“Yes.”

“Tell me, does your grandfather have an affection for her?”

“I don’t know.” He saw the panic in her eyes. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing.” The lie slipped easily from his lips.

“No, nothing is not the answer. You don’t lie if it’s nothing.” She pressed her lips together. “So it has to be something.”

“No one has called about you. No one has inquired or asked what my demands are.”

“I did warn you. I don’t mean anything to anyone.”

He didn’t believe that was true for a second.

Chapter Three

Faith had lost count of the number of days she'd been kept in Brute's basement. The food came three times a day. Brute came a couple of times to take her to the bathroom, which were still the most mortifying.

What she hated most was the lack of being able to wash. She wasn't allowed to wash and she knew the stench she smelled came from herself.

Sliding off the bed, she drew her knees together, pressed her palms flat against each other, and closed her eyes. She hadn't prayed in a long time. She had no idea what Brute wanted from her. But as the days wore on and the boredom had long since kicked in, she couldn't help but start to feel hopeless. No one was coming for her. Not a single person.

Fear had started to build in her body, and it didn't help with the smell because it made her sweat. She wasn't used to being this helpless before. Yes, her mother had told her on numerous occasions how pathetic and useless she was, but this was the first time in her life she had ever felt close to being so.

There was nothing she could do or say to get out of this situation and as the days started to wear on, so had her ability to focus on the end, when she'd finally be free.

She'd never been trapped, never been held in place for so long, and she struggled with the uncertainty of it. She missed the sun, feeling the air on her face and body. She pressed her face against her hands and preyed hard for an end.

All her life, she'd been good. Faith had known from a young age she'd been nothing more than a disappointment to her mother. This was before Beverly had even dared to speak of her annoyance with her daughter. She took a deep breath, held it for a second, and then let it out. Knowing her mother hated her so much, she tried to be a good girl. To always do the right thing, to never make waves. She tried to be good for her, to make her mother proud.

Right now, she didn't feel great.

"What are you doing?" Brute asked.

She'd been so focused on praying she hadn't heard him come in. "I'm praying."

"Who to?"

"Anyone who would make my life easier and listen to me." She kept her eyes closed and her back to him.

"And you think that's going to do you any good?"

"There's no harm in trying. Nothing else has worked. I've tried to plead with you. I've tried to understand what I could do to make both our lives easier and you seem more and more determined to make my life as difficult as possible." She moved her hands up to her forehead.

She tried to calm her temper but the smell was getting to her. There was a lot she could say about her mother, her cruelty, but she'd always kept her clean. Never once had she been starved of food nor of cleanliness.

Getting to her feet, she spun around and glared at him. She didn't see a point in trying to be threatening. Even if she attempted to advance toward him, the cuff around her ankle would stop her.

"Do you feel good? Does it make you feel like a man, keeping me here?" she asked.

He folded his arms across his chest.

"Why do I even try? You're a Fallen Bratva. That's the point of the club, right? You were one of them. So, I guess to you it doesn't matter who I am, I'm one of them. I've never hurt anyone in my life. I've never done anything to hurt or make waves, and yet you think I'm going to get you what you want?" she asked. "What do you want? Money? The Bratva? If you wanted real power, then you should have taken someone who was important. Now get out."

Brute raised his brow.

She had enough. There was nothing more she could take. She needed him to leave immediately.

“Get out! Get out! Get out!” She couldn’t stop saying the words. They spilled from her mouth in a constant scream.

When hands grabbed her arms, she lashed out, trying to get them off her. In the commotion, she ended up on the bed, Brute holding her arms above her head, restraining her.

“Enough!”

His voice was loud, guttural, dominating, and a slice of fear worked its way up her spine, freezing her to the spot.

Faith still tried to struggle, but Brute was too strong for her. There was nothing she could do to stop him holding her in place. She was at his mercy.

She gritted her teeth, and the only thing she could do to vent her frustration was to scream. Tilting her head back, she took a deep breath, opened her mouth, and screamed, letting everything out. She had a feeling this wasn’t just her kidnapping, but years upon years of anger and pain that had built. She didn’t tell anyone anything. There was no reason to. No one cared. No one listened. They just wanted her to shut up. That was all anyone wanted her to do.

The hands pinning her down to the bed lifted, and then she couldn’t scream anymore as lips were on hers, kissing her, taking away her ability to scream. Startled, she stopped.

Brute was kissing her. It wasn’t a nice kiss either. His lips were hard, there was nothing tender about this kiss. He wanted her to shut up, and so he clearly had done the only thing he knew to shut her up. Brute traced his tongue across her bottom lip then up to her top.

She was so shocked at being kissed, because she never had been, that she didn’t respond. The screams had stopped. Then he plundered her mouth, kissing her. At first, she did nothing, but there was a quake in the pit of her stomach, and she couldn’t quite ignore the need that was building. She wanted to kiss him back, so she did. Wrapping her arms

around his neck, she pulled him down, holding him close, which took her even more by surprise.

Nothing made any sense to her.

All too soon, the kiss came to an end, and Brute didn't stay in the room with her. Without another word, he left her cell, closed the door, and bolted it as he went.

Brute knew the waiting game. He already had it on good authority that Sergey was losing his mind. Deals had been delayed because he'd taken Faith. No one within the Bratva gave a fuck about Faith, certainly not his son, her own father.

He opened the mail this morning to find Rat Boy Pete's head in the box. Brute hadn't liked the guy all that much, because he was a rat. The man only cared about getting what he wanted, and he wasn't afraid to manipulate or change sides. Brute never trusted him completely.

To get what he wanted, he always dangled carrots and then it was up to Rat Boy Pete which one he was going to take. It just so happened that he got Faith when the Golubev Bratva had fucked him over one time too many. If Pete had lived, then there was a chance he'd have fucked with the club, and then Brute would have had no choice but to kill him.

Beverly Dawson also hadn't been seen. He had no doubt Sergey had killed her for putting Faith in jeopardy.

"We should take this fight to him," Road said. "Take him while he is still weak."

Sitting in their weekly church, Brute was at the head of the table. His men were waiting for him to give them a plan for their next move. Faith was still in the basement. He hadn't cleaned her, and she was close to losing her mind. It was strange, but he didn't want her to get fucked up by this experience.

"I don't like that look on his face," Vlad said.

"What are you doing to do?" Krill asked.

Brute looked up. "Sergey clearly doesn't care about his granddaughter. Pete's gone and we have no idea what happened to her mother."

"We know what happened to her," Road said. "The woman's dead, which is why we need to act."

"And where is Sergey?" Brute asked.

Road opened his mouth and then closed it.

Brute was ready.

All the men were in the club on high alert, ready for whatever came at them. He was willing to die in his battle with the Golubev Bratva, as were his men. They were all sworn enemies of the Golubev. Their one mission was to remove them, completely wipe them off the face of the earth.

The Golubev was a strong Bratva, deadly, but he was much worse.

"You and I both know that if she meant anything to him, he'd be here right now. He would fight me. Nothing would stand in his way, which means as much as he loves Faith and she reminds him of his daughter, that doesn't make her as important." Brute sat back. "At least not in the eyes of his enemies." He ran a finger back and forth across his bottom lip.

"What are you thinking?" Road asked.

"Faith stinks. She's not had a shower in the two weeks she has been here. I think it's only fair I allow her some ... liberties."

"You're going to allow her to wash. Are you going to play her knight in shining armor?" Hail asked.

Brute raised his brow as he looked at his men. One by one, he saw the shock on their faces.

"You're going to make her fall in love with you," Road said.

"Sergey had his chance," Brute said. "He has put his position above saving her, and now I'm going to make sure

there is no way she can be saved. I'm going to fuck her up good and proper, so she is nothing like the girl he left."

He slapped his hands on top of the table, dismissing everyone.

One by one, the men left. Some of the club members had smiles on their faces, others didn't look impressed with Brute's decision.

Road, like always, was the last one in the main church room. Only club members were allowed in the room.

"This is a bad idea," Road said.

"It's the perfect idea."

"What are you going to do, get her addicted to drugs? Leave her at your mercy? You become no better than Golubev himself."

Brute smiled. "Are you concerned for the young woman?"

"I don't give a fuck about her, but I know this path you're on. You don't think I've felt it before? There's a fine line between us turning into our enemies."

"Road, I hate to break this to you, but we're not good people. To get what we want, we have to fight dirty, and that means casualties. Faith is one of them, and she is going to suffer like one of them."

Road smiled. "You and I both know that lumping them all together doesn't work."

"Where is this coming from? I thought you wanted to get at her, to hurt her, to make her scream?" Brute asked. "Don't worry, I'm going to make her scream."

Road shook his head. "No, I wanted to hurt her in the beginning when I believed her to be the enemy we've been fighting our whole lives. I want to take down the Golubev, not an innocent woman. If we do that, we're no better than them."

Brute chuckled. “And you think we have a moral high ground to stand on?” He took a step toward Road, then another one, closing the distance between them. “Have you forgotten where we came from?”

“I have forgotten nothing.”

“We have no moral high ground. We have absolutely nothing.”

“But isn’t that why you broke away? Why you started this club?” Road asked. “To be better than what we once were?”

Brute looked Road in the eye. He knew the kind of man he was. He wasn’t a good man. He never claimed to be a good man. There was a time when he would have been on Golubev’s side and even then, saving the bastard granddaughter was not worth the hit to his reputation. Even one that looked like his little girl.

Glaring at Road, he waited for the other man to back down.

“We’re not good men, Road. We are never going to be the voice of the righteous. Faith is going to suffer for the sins of men around her.”

“You’re going to hurt her.”

“I’m going to break her and then toss her to Golubev to pick up the pieces.”

Road shook his head but took a step back. “My way would be kindness.” With that, he turned on his heel and left.

Brute turned toward the table, and there at the center was the engraving he had made for the main table. It had the same ink that was on his chest—dead doves, one by one, fallen on the ground, and above them, tiny human skulls rising up.

The Evil Fallen Bratva had come from the Golubev. Their enemy was the Golubev Bratva, and he intended to watch them fall.

Faith was a means to an end. She was Golubev scum and she would fall as well.

Chapter Four

Faith took a deep breath and then released it. She felt so close to tears and she hated that feeling more than anything else in the world. The last thing she wanted to do was to cry. It would show more weakness than she ever had before.

It had been a long time since she had cried in front of anyone. The last time she had, she remembered the sharp sting of her mother's slap. Faith couldn't even remember what she'd been crying for, but Beverly hadn't wanted to hear it, so she told her to shut up with a slap, and that if she didn't stop, there would be more.

Faith remembered stopping, going to her room, and from that day forward, whenever she cried, she did so silently and without anyone to bear witness.

There was no time for tears. She didn't know when Brute or someone else would come to drop off food. The times for meals were never the same.

She took another deep breath.

Once again, she knelt at the side of her bed, hands clasped together, praying. She never normally prayed. This was a first for her.

The sound of the bolt sliding back made her jerk up. She sat on the edge of the bed and looked over at Brute. There was something different about him today. In his hand he held a key. He had never come to her cell with a key in his hand before.

Her heart started to race. Did this mean her grandfather had been in touch? Was she about to be free?

"I thought you and I could come to some kind of truce."

"A truce?"

"Yes. You stink. This room smells and not because it's the basement. I take care of my buildings. The stench is coming from you."

She hated that her face started to heat. There was no way she should be embarrassed by this and she hated him a little more for pointing out the smell was her. She had told him days ago that she needed to wash, and he hadn't graced her with it. Annoyance rushed through her as well as anger.

"Do you want me to apologize?" she asked.

He smirked. "No, I know the problem is my own. I should have allowed you to wash but in all honesty, I didn't expect you to be here this long."

She felt the jibe in his words. He expected her grandfather or someone to have come and claimed her.

"You're ex-Bratva. That is what this club is about, right? You know as well as I that I mean nothing in the scheme of things." She didn't know what hurt most—the fact she had to say that, or that she no longer cared that she didn't mean anything to any of them. Her grandfather had always said that no matter what, he'd be there for her, but she knew that was a lie. He was never going to be there for her. They were all empty words. Her mother had told her that. She meant nothing. She was nothing. No one loved or cared for her.

"And you and I both know Golubev is not predictable."

"About this, he is." She wasn't even going to pretend. There was no point. "Does this mean you're going to let me leave?"

"I can't do that but I thought if you promised not to sucker punch me, I'd let you use my shower."

Something was going on here, Faith didn't know what exactly, but she wasn't going to turn down a good shower. She stunk, really bad.

Glancing down at her body, she couldn't help but wince. "Do I get a change of clothes?"

"It is all arranged."

"Do I get to have some privacy?" she asked.

“No.”

“Right.” There was the catch. “Can it at least be a woman?”

“No.”

It was on the tip of her tongue to tell him no, but she couldn't do it. It didn't matter how long it took for the shower, she wasn't willing to wait another day to enjoy the feel of getting clean.

Sliding off the bed, she pointed down at her ankle. “I won't try to sucker punch you or run.” All she wanted was a nice, hot shower.

Brute stepped into the room, and this time he didn't close it behind him. He surprised her even more by lowering down on one knee and gripping her ankle. Only one was secure to the bed, and she shouldn't care what it meant or how it felt, but there was a spark when he touched her. A sudden bolt of heat traveled up her leg and spread throughout her whole body.

She gritted her teeth and took a long, deep breath.

It was fine. Perfectly fine. This meant nothing.

She couldn't help but think about the kiss and then she felt like even more of a fool. The kiss had meant nothing. He had only done it to silence her. She knew that, as did he. He wasn't pining for her. The kiss was a means to an end.

Don't trust him.

She took a deep breath as the lock releasing seemed to echo around the room.

The chain around her ankle slid down and she was finally free. She had a few seconds where she thought about making a run for it, but she had told him she wouldn't. She'd never break her word.

Brute stood up and he was so close. She had no choice but to take a step back. She tilted her head and looked up into

his blue eyes. They looked so beautiful and yet, she knew the man behind them was nothing like his eyes. He was the Devil. There was no doubt about it. She couldn't trust him, or this newfound kindness, if it was even that.

He held out his hand. "You're going to have to take it."

Looking at his hand, she wanted to tell him no, but what was wrong with touching him? She was never going to forget he was the enemy, so she placed her hand within his and ignored the bolt of heat that traveled up her body.

It didn't matter. None of this mattered.

She took another deep breath, one she hoped he didn't hear, and then followed him out of the cell.

This would be the first time she had stepped foot out of it—apart from using the bathroom, but that didn't count—since he placed her inside. She didn't have on any shoes or socks and the ground felt different. It was slightly smoother out of the cell.

He moved to the set of steps and Brute went up first. He didn't let go of her hand, but she didn't see anything romantic in his grip. She was still his prisoner, at his mercy.

He opened the door and there was noise as they entered the main house again. The door had opened into a section of the kitchen.

Stepping through but staying behind Brute, she couldn't help but glance up, and she saw a couple of people. None of them she recognized. They all looked disgusted and placed hands over their noses and mouths. She smelled really bad.

Brute didn't linger, he was already walking her out of the kitchen.

Her face heated at the reaction of the people they passed. This wasn't good or fun or nice. This was horrible. She didn't know if she'd rather be kept in her cell in the basement and just have buckets of warm water thrown on her. That might be

better than having to deal with this humiliation. She hated it. They were all cruel.

She bowed her head so she didn't have to witness their reactions and only looked up when the floor changed and she was standing on linoleum. Never in her life had she felt so pleased to be standing on a different kind of floor.

She was an idiot. How dare they? It wasn't like the clubhouse was in any good working order. With nothing to protect her feet, she felt how sticky the floor was, how unkept it was, and yet they treated her that way. *I stink really bad.*

The door to the bathroom closed and she heard another lock, which made her look up to see that Brute had locked them both inside the bathroom.

“You're going to watch me?” she asked.

“I've got to make sure you don't try anything stupid. Now, you choose—shower or bath?”

Faith wanted to kiss him all over again. A shower or bath. Both did the same job, but just having the choice was a dream come true.

She really needed to get out more. If she ever got out of this alive, that's what she would do.

Brute was used to a lot of selfish women. The trinkets they wanted cost a fortune, fine wine, jewels, the best money could buy, and yet, all he'd done was present Faith with either a shower or bath, and she looked so grateful. He didn't know if he would ever forget the way she looked at him.

She looked between the bath and shower like she struggled to make the choice. He couldn't get enough of her responses, they were so natural. He waited patiently, just watching her.

With her focused on the bath and the shower, he took a second to admire the length of her body. When she walked into his clubhouse, he had noticed her. The full tits, the

rounded hips. The skirt hid the size of her thighs, but as she'd moved around with his gaze on her, he knew she was juicy all over.

Brute was a sucker for a woman with curves, and Faith possessed them in all the right places. At forty years old, he had long grown bored with young women and young pussy. They were too ... demanding. Too vulnerable. They expected something from the men who fucked them. He preferred women who knew the score. Women who only wanted a good fuck, and then were quite happy for the man to leave.

Faith was twenty-five years old, way too young for him, and he didn't want her hanging around.

Watching her now, he saw the smile on her lips and the way her teeth nibbled on the corner. He shouldn't be interested in how she fucking looked. She was off limits, but then, he couldn't help but think about how pissed off Sergey would be if he played with his granddaughter.

Sergey had a history of fucking with him, of taking shit that didn't belong to him. Maybe it was time for him to get a taste of his own medicine. Taking Faith, using her, tossing her back, and making Sergey pick up the pieces. He did like that idea. If the fucker wasn't willing to make a call to save her, then Brute couldn't be held responsible for giving in to temptation.

“Can I at least undress?”

“You chose?” he asked.

“Yes, I'd like a bath, if that is okay?”

He noticed the way she played with her hands, looking so fucking tempting and sweet. This shouldn't be entertaining him.

“Of course. There's bath salts and muscle relaxants, but I'm not leaving this room.”

Faith looked around. “Seriously? There is nowhere for me to go.” The bathroom only had a tiny window, which was

open to allow steam to escape.

“So.”

“How am I supposed to get in the bath?”

“Babe, I know my way around women. I’ve seen tits, pussy, and ass, plenty of times. You don’t have anything I’ve not seen before.”

She shot him a glare. Did she not realize her attitude turned him on?

He watched her as she bent over the bath, putting in the plug and then turning on the hot water tap. She used some of the bath soap, pouring it into the water. The scent of lavender filled the air, but he couldn’t take his gaze away from her. She looked stunning.

Faith glanced back at him and then at the bath.

She filled the bath half full and then she did surprise him. The bubbles had thickened in the water and she stepped inside, sinking down, and then removed her skirt. He couldn’t help but chuckle as she wriggled out of it and then tossed it to the floor. Brute found her actions utterly adorable. He picked up the skirt, took it to the sink, and rung it out.

The clothes were filthy, but then, the basement wasn’t the cleanest of environments.

She did the same with her panties, shirt, and bra. He took each item, wrung it out, and threw it in the laundry basket. They stunk. After her clothes were dealt with, he took the laundry basket out, called for someone to come and take it, and then slammed the door.

He took his seat back on the toilet and waited.

“You’re going to sit there and watch me?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you have anything better to do?”

“No.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

He chuckled. “You can find it hard to believe all you want, Princess, but I don’t. I’m quite happy to watch you.”

And that was what he did. Faith’s cheeks went a beautiful shade of red. He loved the look on her.

“I ... you’re ... whatever.”

She reached for the soap and a sponge.

“Not used to a man watching you?” he asked.

“I’m not used to a man anything.” She pressed her lips together.

“Anything?” He frowned. “Are you trying to make me believe you’re a virgin?”

“I’m not trying to make you believe anything.” She shook her head, and then started to wash her body. The bubbles covered her tits, which was such a shame.

A virgin. He found that hard to believe.

“Are you a virgin?” he asked.

“That is none of your business.”

“Does Sergey know?”

She let out a growl of frustration. “Why would I tell my grandfather something like that?”

“A virgin can go for a high price. Sergey has always been about trying to make money.” Brute smiled at her. “I don’t imagine him allowing you to go without using you for your value.”

“You think virgins are valuable? It’s like a one-time thing,” Faith said.

“Exactly, and men are quite willing to pay for just a pop at a cherry.”

“You’re disgusting.”

Brute laughed. "I'm not the man who has a market for it."

He watched as she hesitated.

Her left arm was outstretched and that was when he finally saw it. The dove that made her part of the Golubev.

"So, you *are* part of your grandfather's world."

Faith frowned and then looked toward her wrist.

She pulled her wrist in close. "No, I'm not."

"You're lying," he said.

"My dad," she said, taking a deep breath. "On my eighteenth birthday, I don't know why, but he decided to show up. I thought he wanted to see me, but instead he held me down while this guy who I had never seen before, inked my wrist. He told me I was to keep it, otherwise I'd suffer the consequences. Mom was so happy when it happened. I hate it. I try to hide it, so no, I'm not part of that world. I don't even know if my grandfather has seen it."

"He would have given the order," Brute said.

"I ... I don't believe that."

Tilting his head to the side, he looked at her and smiled. "You don't have a clue about your grandfather?"

"Mom always told me not to ask questions, so I didn't. Granddad has never ... he's always been kind to me."

"Sergey is a monster."

"This coming from a man who has had me chained up in the basement for..."

"Two weeks," he said.

"Two weeks!"

"And your precious grandfather has not made contact. Trust me, this has been a disappointing exercise."

"I told you I wasn't valuable."

“I think you are, I’ve just got to hold out a little longer. So, you love your grandfather?”

“I guess,” she said.

“What would you think of him if you knew he had killed your mother?” Brute asked. Maybe he could destroy her love of her grandfather. That wouldn’t be perfect but it would be ideal to hurt Golubev.

“He wouldn’t do that.”

“Do you think he’s a good man?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I don’t know anything.”

“I believe your mother is already dead. Sergey has a temper.”

“You’re wrong.”

Brute smiled. “We’ll see, won’t we?”

Faith ignored him and finished washing her body and then her hair. The bubbles were fading fast, and then, when it came to the end of the bath, she looked around.

He couldn’t wipe the smile off his face.

“Would you please hand me the towel?” Faith asked.

“No can do. My ass is glued to the toilet.”

“You’re lying.”

“Still not going to help you.”

“You ... ugh!”

And then, he got to see Faith in all her beautiful, naked glory, and was so pleased he was patient. She looked absolutely stunning.

Chapter Five

Faith didn't know what to believe.

She wasn't a fool and knew Sergey Golubev was not a good man. Her mother had said that whenever he came around, she was to be on her best behavior and not to embarrass her. He rarely came around, but when he did, Faith loved to see him.

Could he really kill her mother? Why?

Beverly had no control over Faith being kidnapped, apart from her greed in trying to get close to the Bratva, which had pushed her toward Rat Boy Pete.

Faith paced across her cell. Brute had released the chain, giving her a little more space. He'd also given her a pair of sweatpants and a shirt, and even though they were way too big, she loved being in something more refreshing.

She didn't want to be thinking about her grandfather right now. Why hadn't he come for her? He had always promised to be there when she needed him, and that was now.

At the sound of the bolt sliding back, she turned to see Brute entering her cell. He didn't have food with him, but he did hold the key to her chain. Faith stopped.

"Has he called?" Faith asked.

"No, he hasn't called, but I was wondering if you'd like to get out of this cell for a few hours."

It was on the tip of her tongue to say "Hell, yes," but then she hesitated. What if this was a trick and he was attempting to lure her out so he could kill her? She wasn't ready to die.

"Where?"

"I figured we could go and watch a movie."

She frowned. "A movie?"

“Yeah, you know, a square box, it has moving images in it, but it’s modern so doesn’t have puppets.”

“I know what a movie is.”

“You asked,” he said.

“What’s the catch?”

“No catch.”

Faith folded her arms across her chest and looked at Brute, not trusting him. “No catch?”

Brute laughed and held his hands up. “I’m offering you a chance to watch a movie and get out of this cell, but if it bothers you that much—”

“Wait!” She yelled the word as it looked like he was going to leave.

Even though she didn’t trust him to simply watch a movie, that didn’t mean she wanted to be left alone in her cell.

“What kind of movie?”

“What kind would you like?” he asked.

“I don’t like horror. I love romance or action. I can handle action.” She didn’t like the violence, but would rather watch a whole lot of blood than something that would make her crap her pants.

Her mother loved horror movies and over the years had forced her to watch them with her. To this day, as a twenty-five-year-old woman, she was afraid of the dark and hated anything in the shadows. She avoided all things horror.

“I can make that work, if you’re willing to come with me.”

“Yes,” Faith said.

She didn’t want to have the chain wrapped around her ankle anymore. There was no way she was going to trust Brute, but right now, he was the better of the options available.

Sitting in her cell for another night, waiting, would drive her crazy.

Brute entered the room and moved down toward her ankle. His fingers wrapped around her, holding her in place as he slid the key into the lock.

She was not going to think about how good his touch was against her skin.

He was just a guy. Her kidnapper. He meant nothing.

The chain loosened around her ankle and Brute let her go. She was able to get her composure back before he stood up. She didn't make a run for it.

Brute held out his hand.

"What?" she asked.

"Do you think I'm going to allow you to escape? I won't be made a fool of."

She looked at his hand and it took her several seconds of hesitation before she placed her hand within his, and then he was walking her out of the cell.

For a short second, Faith didn't know if she had just made the biggest mistake of her life. Brute wasn't a good man. The cell, in a horrible way, offered a sense of comfort that going with him didn't.

What was Brute's agenda in taking her? What did he hope to achieve? Did it even matter? No one had come to claim her. No one cared.

She tried not to look up as they made their way out of the basement. Faith was aware of people watching them, but she ignored them, keeping her gaze on the floor, rather than looking up.

Without watching where they were going, she knew there was less chance of her being able to make an escape, but she didn't want to get caught up in all that trouble from escaping. The only thing she wanted was to be able to get out

of this clubhouse alive. She knew she wasn't going to do that if she made them angry.

All too soon, she was in another room. This was a bedroom. There was a large, imposing bed, and it made her pause as she looked at it. The sound of the door closing made her heart race, and she spun to see Brute, flicking a lock into place.

"I don't like to be disturbed."

"Do you get disturbed often?" she asked.

"Yes."

She couldn't help but imagine lots of women swarming into his room, naked, begging him to fuck them. She didn't even know where the image came from, but it was there, and she quickly tried to shove it out of her mind.

Brute removed his leather cut, and she watched him as he sat on the edge of the bed, untied the laces of his boots, and then kicked them to one side. He seemed so much larger than life, up close. In her cell, where there was always distance, he didn't seem quite so terrifying.

"Do you live here?" she asked.

He didn't answer.

Glancing around the room, she saw several pictures, most of them club, but then she saw one that surprised her. It was of Brute and Sergey, but what did surprise her was the happiness on both men's faces.

She took a step toward it, then another. "You knew my grandfather." She reached out and placed a finger on the picture. "But ... you ... I ... this makes no sense."

"I do know your grandfather. It's why I know what I'm dealing with."

"But you look like you're friends in this picture. If you're friends with him, why are you ... why did you ... none of this makes any sense."

She rubbed at her temple, a little confused.

Brute and the whole Evil Fallen Bratva were supposed to be the enemies of the Golubev Bratva.

He looked at her then at the picture, before he reached down and pulled up his shirt. At first Faith looked away, a little unsure as to why he was removing his clothing. She hadn't been around many naked men before.

"Look at me," he said.

She forced herself to turn to look and she tried to keep her gaze on him, but the image on his chest struck her hard. Dead doves, one by one, falling on the ground, and above them, tiny human skulls rising up like a graveyard. Like the dove she had.

"You were a Golubev."

"Yes. I was making my way up the ranks. Men and women feared me, and my name was used to instill fear. To terrify. People knew I would be great. My family were proud."

"What happened?"

"One day, a shipment of cocaine was meant to be docked. I was to oversee it, handle the distribution. Something didn't feel right to me, so I held my men back, and sure enough, there was a delivery of cocaine, but there was also a whole crew of law enforcement ready to take hold of that delivery. They held back, waiting for me, and I knew Golubev had set me up." He ran a hand down his face. "When I returned home, I found what Sergey had also done. He'd killed my family."

She gasped. "What?"

"My mom, dad, two little sisters, and brother. All of them, dead. The dove torn off my parents' skin. Golubev betrayed me and took everything I cared about. From that day forward, he made an enemy out of me."

She looked back at the picture. Her grandfather had told her often that he wasn't a good man, but in her eyes, he

wanted to be so. How could he be a good man if he was willing to do that?

“Why did he do it?” Faith asked.

“Fear,” Brute said.

To Faith, that made it even worse.

Brute hadn't intended to tell Faith about her grandfather quite yet. He'd been waiting for the right time. His men didn't agree with him coming here with her. They didn't think he should be giving her the time of day. Road was already prepared to start sending body parts to Sergey. Igor was chomping at the bit to get to them.

Tonight, he should have been balls-deep inside a woman, enjoying the peace and freedom he knew was only sparing right now.

Instead, he glanced down at Faith's head. She had already fallen asleep. The romantic movie she put on had been a little boring. He'd watched the movie but hadn't quite taken it in, still reeling from going down memory lane.

He remembered the anger, the rage, and staring at the death around him, which was where he made the vow. He would end everything to do with the Golubev.

Brute had wanted to go there and then to end him, to create a war, but he'd also known it would be certain death for him. Golubev surrounded himself with loyal soldiers, and there was a time he'd been loyal as well. No more.

Now all he wanted was Golubev at his mercy, to beg.

And so, in retaliation, he had gone to one of Golubev's brothels, where at least two of the women he loved to go and visit had been. Brute had been sure to burn it to the ground, with both women inside. Actually, he'd done it with several soldiers and women who were enjoying some fun time.

Brute knew anyone associated with the Golubev were not innocent. They were enemies.

Faith was on that line between being innocent and also the enemy. She carried the Golubev symbol, but he did believe she was forced to have it. He knew of men, fathers, and husbands, who were members of the Golubev and had no choice but to force them to bear the mark.

It was how Golubev thrived. He took away free will. Brute gave it back.

Faith was fast asleep and he couldn't help but lean down and gently inhale the scent of her. This was a big mistake, having her close to him. She didn't belong to him.

He pulled back but didn't push her away, or force her to wake up. Clenching his hands into fists, he took a deep breath, and then, as he was about to expel it, his cell phone rang.

Brute reached out and knew he didn't recognize the caller. Rat Boy Pete had his cell phone number, and that meant there was only one person this could be—Sergey.

"It's about time you called," he said, answering.

"Where is she?"

"Safe and sound in my bed."

"You little shit. You better not have touched her."

"Does it matter?" Brute asked. "She could be full of my child." He tutted. "Does that mean you're not willing to take her back?"

He didn't want to give her back.

"I want to make a trade."

"A trade?"

"I've got Tank," he said.

Brute glanced down at Faith. He wanted Tank back.

Tank was one of his men who'd been taken a month ago. The guys wanted him back. They had wanted to go guns

blazing through the city, taking on the Golubev, but Brute had known it was what Sergey wanted, so he had gone out of his way to find out what Golubev cared about.

“Is he in one piece?” Brute asked.

“Yes, I expect Faith to be as well.”

“You come alone,” Brute said.

“That is never going to happen.”

“Then you’re not getting Faith back. She is a beautiful woman, isn’t she? I bet she would make a fine wife to one of your men. A good fuck as well, I imagine. I must admit, I’m a little surprised her mother hasn’t called for an update.”

Sergey was quiet.

“Oh, that’s right, we both know where she is, don’t we?”

“One hour, you know where,” Sergey said.

The call ended and Brute looked down at the phone.

He didn’t want to disturb Faith, but happy times were over. Brute moved off the bed and as he did, Faith woke up.

“What’s going on?”

“Stay here. You’re heading home.”

“What?”

“Your grandfather finally called. You’ll be heading home,” he said, making his way to the door. He slipped on his boots and grabbed his leather cut.

“He did?”

Brute stayed silent. He opened the door, slammed it closed, and locked it. He didn’t like the feeling he was having. It wasn’t a good feeling.

Running fingers through his hair, he gritted his teeth and thought about the image he had seen over ten years ago. The sight of his family, dead, butchered, for no good reason.

Once he was back in control, he turned on his heel and made his way down to the main clubhouse.

He nodded at Road to gather everyone up and meet him in church. Stepping inside, he took his place at the head of the table. Placing his palms flat on the table, he stared at the club's insignia.

Golubev was going down.

He was going to kill every last one of them, but he knew tonight wouldn't be that night. Once all his men were there, he couldn't help but zero in on the place that had been left vacant for the past month.

"What's going on?" Hail asked.

"I got a call from Sergey Golubev," he said.

He saw his men tense up, ready and prepared to fight. None of them were cowards. They were all willing to kill, to end that piece of shit once and for all. Brute would love to do it, but he wasn't willing to do it in a way that would sacrifice his men. There would be a time for everything. And when it came to Sergey, that time was getting close.

"He has Tank," he said. "In one piece, and he's willing to make the trade. Faith for Tank."

"When?" Igor asked.

"Tonight, in fifty minutes. We depart for no-man's-land," Brute said.

He didn't need to give any more orders, they all knew how important this was.

"Who will have Faith?" Hail asked.

"She'll ride on the back of my bike." And that wasn't because he didn't trust anyone else. He just wasn't going to allow Faith to be on the back of anyone else's bike.

The men stared at him and he ignored their questioning looks, and instead walked past them, going back to his bedroom.

No woman had ever ridden on the back of his bike.

The brothers hadn't taken any of the women with them.

Faith was sitting on the edge of the bed. Her hands were clenched together. She didn't look like a woman who was excited about going back to her family. She looked even more terrified than usual.

"What ... what is happening?" she asked.

"You're going home."

"What if I don't want to go back to him?" She nibbled her lip and looked down at her lap. "What if I want to stay here?"

"You don't have a choice. You're a means to an end, Faith. I needed you to get me someone else, and I'm so close to having him. I'm not going to trade him for you."

She nodded her head. "Of course."

Faith got to her feet. Brute grabbed her arm. This time, she wasn't willing. She was tense, holding her arm close to her body.

He ignored her and pulled her behind him, taking her out of the main clubhouse and to the parking lot where his bikes were. Faith didn't fight him, she did everything he asked her to do, and then when she had no choice but to climb on the back of his bike, she did so reluctantly.

His men were ready and waiting.

Golubev wouldn't come alone, but there was a code in no-man's-land. He doubted Golubev would stick to it, but it didn't matter. He had Faith, and he knew that would guarantee him a certain amount of safety.

Chapter Six

Faith had wanted this day to come for so long. She had wanted to be free, but now that it was close, she wasn't quite sure she wanted it anymore. How insane was that? Brute was her kidnapper and he hadn't shown her much in the way of kindness. She knew he could have been a complete monster to her, but he'd also not done that either.

She didn't know why she was so confused.

The journey was long and she hated that it was raining. There was a slight chill in the air and she held onto Brute like her life depended on it, and in a way, it did.

She had come to learn so much in the last few days. It was going to be impossible for her to forget it.

Fear raced through her body as she caught sight of multiple headlights up ahead. Brute didn't stop, nor did he slow down. He only stopped when they were several feet away from the cars.

Her grandfather had become clearer to her as they got closer. He stood behind a man who was bound and gagged, kneeling on the floor. Faith had never seen a beaten man before, but the man at his feet was covered in dried blood, bruises, and at least one of his eyes wouldn't open. Grandfather Sergey had caused that.

"Get off," Brute said.

Faith climbed off his bike, and she felt how wobbly her legs were.

Brute hadn't been cruel to her, not since that first night, but now he grabbed her arm and all but dragged her closer to her grandfather.

"Close your eyes," Sergey said.

"No, Faith, keep them open," Brute said. "Look at your grandfather's work."

“Brute?” the man asked.

“I’m here, Tank. You’re coming home.”

Faith wanted to go to the man, hug him, and tell him it was all going to be okay. Was this what Brute hoped to do? To get his man back?

She had no idea what this Tank had done, but he looked awful. Worse than awful. If Brute had to use her to trade for his man, then she was more than happy to do so. Looking at her grandfather, she couldn’t quite believe it. Sergey had always seemed like a kind man, a good man, and now she didn’t know what to believe. He’d hurt this man. Why? Did it even matter the reason? Was there ever a good reason to hurt anyone?

Even though the ink of the dove had been forced on her seven years ago, her wrist felt like it was burning. She didn’t want the ink.

“You broke the rules,” Brute said. “She’s in one piece.”

“Is she now? You seem to have implied that she wasn’t quite whole.”

Faith looked at Brute then toward her grandfather. What?

“I haven’t touched her,” Brute said.

“I find that hard to believe.”

“I’m still a virgin,” Faith said, cringing inside as she spoke aloud. There were no other women around, just men, and it was mortifying to be talking about herself like that. She looked at her grandfather. “Brute fed me, allowed me to wash, and he ... took care of me,” she said, hoping her unspoken words were hinted at. Brute had done that for her, and she knew he could have done anything to her. She could have been beaten. One of the men had wanted to beat her.

She didn’t know what to think in that moment. Faith had known her grandfather was a bad man, but this was quite

different for her to actually see it. Even if he hadn't hurt this man, the fact remained that he was hurt.

She wanted to scream at him, but then she thought about all the accusations Brute had told her about. The death, the lies.

"Where's my mom?" she asked.

The only person she wanted to see in that moment was her mother.

She looked at Sergey, hopeful that this was all just one big confused nightmare.

Brute laughed. "Your mother isn't coming, is she, Sergey?"

"Let us be done with this," Sergey said.

"Where is she?" Faith asked, feeling the panic rise. Beverly Dawson hadn't been a good woman or a mother, but she was still her mom. She still wanted her.

But no one was listening to her. They wanted this to be over. They didn't care what she had to say and think.

Brute and Sergey moved closer together. Sergey dragged his captive, while Brute held her arm tightly.

The two men were close, less than a foot away, and they closed that distance by half. No one said a word, and then Tank was in Brute's arms and her grandfather had her, but she didn't feel safe.

"This isn't over," Sergey said.

"This has only just begun," Brute said.

Both men then started to step back.

She expected one of them to pull a gun and to finally end this, but neither did. Faith couldn't help but watch as Brute took his men back to his group. He didn't look back. Sergey moved her toward the back of a large black car. She slid inside and there was no one else in the car. Sergey climbed

into the car behind her and she knew within minutes they were moving.

“Where is my mom?” she asked.

“Faith, don’t ask questions you’re not willing to know the answers to.”

She paused, allowing his words to sink in. “You killed her?”

Sergey sighed.

In all the years she had known her grandfather, he’d never been short-tempered with her, but that was changing as he turned his glare toward her.

“Your mother put me in a precarious situation, Faith. Do you realize what they could have done to you?”

“I ... it was just a date.”

“And you won’t be going on any more dates.”

“I won’t?”

“No, I’m already arranging a husband for you. Your father and I are going to deal with this and then you won’t ever have to worry again.”

Faith was tempted to look out the back window to see if she could appeal to Brute. She didn’t want to get married, not to someone of her grandfather’s choosing. He had killed her mother. There was nothing good that could come from any union he organized.

Fear sliced down her back.

It was strange. She was safer with the Evil Fallen Bratva MC, under Brute’s care, than she was with her own grandfather.

Back at the clubhouse, the doctor had already been called. Brute had Tank on the back of his bike, holding onto him, and going as slowly as possible so as not to hurt him.

There was no point in asking if Tank was all right. Just looking at him, he knew he wasn't right. The guy didn't have any back teeth, and his fingernails and toenails had been ripped out. There were cuts, some of them looked infected, and he stunk worse than Faith did when he didn't allow her to wash.

"We've got you, man, you don't need to panic."

"Not panicking, but we need a plan," Tank said.

"Did you talk?" Road asked.

Brute glared at Road. Now was not the time to be questioning Tank. The guy clearly had been to hell and back.

"No, I didn't talk."

"How do we know?" Road asked.

"The state of me," Tank said, laughing. "Trust me, I like a good torture as much as the next weird asshole, but this ... yeah, Road, you wouldn't want this."

There were burn marks over his body as well.

"They had you for a month," Road said.

"Yeah, and Sergey wanted to start removing body parts, but as he was about to, he got the news about his granddaughter." Tank burst out laughing and it changed to that of a whimper. "Strange, isn't it, I have a feeling that woman saved my life. They were about to slice off my cock and send it to you when he got the call. Sergey told them to stop."

Brute didn't find it funny.

Sergey had a weakness and now that he knew what it was, there was no chance of him ever getting to Faith again.

"You're here now, brother," Igor said.

The brothers put a hand on Tank, so their club brother knew they were there. The doctor gave them all an annoyed look and Brute knew not to piss off their own doctor.

Stepping out of the room, the brothers headed toward the bar for much-needed drinks.

Brute knew he could do with something strong. Stepping away from the door, he made his way to the bar, where Shirley sat on a stool. She was giving him the eye. Shirley had been trying to bed him for months, but he wouldn't have anything to do with the easy pussy.

He had nothing against easy pussy, but Shirley enjoyed working her way through the club brothers, and rumor had it she wasn't always fussy about a condom. He wasn't about to make it a habit of sleeping with a woman who could have multiple diseases.

“Hey, baby, it is a night for celebration,” Shirley said.

“It's not.”

She tutted and picked up her drink, thrusting her tits out and stepping toward him. “We've all missed Tank, and now that he's back, we should be throwing a party.”

Brute shoved her away. “Are you fucking insane?”

Shirley smiled at him. “I'm anything you need me to be.”

“Tank could die. He's on that table with rotting flesh and shit torn off him. There is no way this is cause for celebration. Get the fuck away from me before I decide you've insulted me and the club and fucking end you.”

Brute didn't make idle threats and she quickly rushed away, but he didn't put her off from finding another target. He watched as she approached Hail and Vlad. Spinning toward the main bar, a bottle of good, strong whiskey had been placed in front of him. He didn't even bother to pour it into a glass. There was no point. All he needed to do was swig from the bottle. He tipped the bottle back and took a nice, long gulp of the dark liquid.

It felt good to be drinking. After several long slugs of the drink, he felt the warmth but not the burn.

“What’s the plan?” Igor asked, coming to take the seat Shirley had vacated.

“The plan?”

“To fuck Sergey up? I know you were toying with the idea of using that girl.” Igor clicked his fingers and Brute waited. “Faith, that’s it. You were going to use her to get to him, but now that she’s gone, we’ve got to come up with another plan.”

“I have one.”

“Yeah?”

“We’re going to wait for Tank to be ready.”

“You want to wait?”

“I don’t think we should be taking out any kind of revenge until we have Tank by our side, ready to dish out his own certain brand of revenge, don’t you?”

Igor smiled. “You got that right.” He held his bottle out and Brute clinked his to Igor’s and took a long drink.

It was going to be a long night.

The brothers wanted to know when they were going to attack, if he had a plan, and if so, how long until they were able to execute it. The brothers wanted blood and he got it.

Sergey had gotten away with shit for far too long. This time, it wasn’t going to be acceptable just handing over a club brother. The Golubev Bratva was going to burn.

He took another long drink of whiskey and couldn’t help but think about her long brown hair. The depth of brown in her eyes. Brute had never considered himself having a type, but Faith, with her luscious body, was definitely his type.

He rubbed at his temple. She didn’t mean anything and he knew without a doubt the only reason he was thinking about her was because he didn’t get to feel the tightness of that pretty cunt wrapped around his dick. In life, you won some and you lost some.

Faith was a loss. She was free now and he was never going to see her again.

Chapter Seven

Two Weeks Later

Faith had never been a rebel in her life. She knew her mother had been irritated by her and often blamed her for how shitty her own life was, so she spent a great deal of time trying to be the good girl—a person her mother could be proud of. Sadly, though, it didn't matter if she excelled in school or was a good girl, her mother always found reasons to complain. She was never happy, so Faith learned to just accept her position in life.

Which was why, two weeks later, her heart raced as she was able to sneak away from the guard who'd been assigned to watch her. It wasn't hard. She was the bastard daughter, and no one cared what happened to her, other than Sergey, and perhaps her dad.

Nikki Golubev, her father, had been visiting her a lot more lately. She'd seen more of her biological dad in the last two weeks than she had in her whole twenty-five years. But that didn't come as a surprise, not when she knew they had found her a man to marry. Now all they were doing was making the arrangements for the wedding. She had nothing to do with it. In two weeks, she had a fiancé and had tried on three wedding dresses.

Nikki's wife had been there to assist. Her snooty nose stuck up in the air, clearly not happy with the idea of helping her husband's unwanted daughter.

That was what she was—unwanted.

They were only following orders by Sergey. He wanted her married and protected.

And she now lived with him. Sergey killed her mother, removed all of Beverly's belongings from the house she grew up in as well as the apartment she rented, and had been forced to live with him. This was new to her.

Sergey had a lot of enemies, and with that many enemies; there were soldiers surrounding him at all times.

Faith had also come to realize the screams she heard at night were not from ghosts.

No matter the time, day or night, Sergey's business never stopped. The screams were those of his enemies. Faith had always tried to find whoever it was, and didn't know if she should try and set them free, or help them in some way. She was never able to find them.

Wherever he tortured them was either very well-hidden, or he had removed them by the morning. She never saw anyone coming or going.

And now, she had snuck out a couple of days before her wedding. She wore the diamond ring that was so heavy on her finger. The man she was due to marry wasn't a Brigadier or anyone of high standing within the Bratva. Sergey couldn't allow that. He was an associate—someone with money and wealth. She had heard her grandfather and her fiancé, Paul, talking.

There was a shipment of women coming into the docks. They were going to be set to work as soon as possible. They had even talked about a few fatalities on the journey. They were talking about women as a commodity. Cattle.

The cab driver pulled up several feet from the main gate.

“Sorry, sweetheart, but there's no way I'm going too close. It's not good for ... you know, business, to be seen so close.”

Faith pulled out of her thoughts and looked at the driver. “Oh. It's fine. I'll walk.”

“Do you really need to go there? Not a lot of good comes from women who enter that place.”

Every part of her was screaming to turn around and leave. It was stupid of her to even try and care. There was no way Tank would want to see her, but since they had made the

trade, she couldn't get him out of her mind, and she needed to know he was okay.

Also, there was also a tiny little detail—she felt compelled to see Brute again. He'd not been cruel to her, so she didn't understand why it mattered to her to see him again.

“Yes, I ... it is important. Do you mind waiting?”

“I'll wait twenty minutes, but if you're not out by then, I've got to leave.”

Faith didn't like that, but she didn't see why twenty minutes would be a problem. “Thank you.”

She slid out of the car, grabbing the care package, and then walked quite hurriedly toward the main gate. The first night she'd been taken and thrown in the cell, she had seen the main gates were wide open. Not today. Everything was locked. The gates were sealed shut.

Past the gates, near the main door, she saw a couple of women outside, leaning against the brick wall, smoking cigarettes.

She looked for a buzzer for anything, but then a guy she didn't recognize who wore the leather cut, came to the gate.

“Hi,” she said. “Is, uh, Brute around?”

This guy had several scars on his face. She couldn't remember his name, but she stared into his eyes. He tilted his head to the side.

“Why are you here?”

“I came to see Brute and ... Tank.” She hated how warm her face felt.

“Ah, you've come to see the guy your grandfather's fucked with. You want to rub it in his face that you're free and he's still fighting for his life.”

Faith felt sick to her stomach. “No, no, I-I-I-I wanted to m-m-make sure he was o-o-okay.” She hated stumbling over

her words, and it had been a long time since she had last done so.

The man looked at her with hatred.

“Do you think I don’t know what this shit is? It’s a trap. Where’s Sergey?”

“I don’t know. He’s dealing with business. He doesn’t know I’m here.” She didn’t know why she felt such shame. Faith didn’t want to look him in the eye, he looked so angry with her.

“Ah, so you’re willing to start a war, is that it? That’s what you want to do? Start a war. You want all of us to bleed for your fucked-up pussy.”

“Road, back the fuck off,” Brute said.

Faith lifted her head and there was Brute coming toward her. She didn’t feel relief in the slightest.

Road sneered at her but then gave her the space she needed, as he spun on his heel and left her alone. She felt a huge wave of relief.

“What do you want?” Brute asked.

“I-I-I know it’s not much, and it won’t help what my grandfather did to him, but I have a care package for ... Tank,” she said.

“I don’t deal with shit like this. You want to give him a care package, then you come in and you give him the care package.”

Brute grabbed the gate, pressed a code, and then pulled the side door open, giving her space to slide through.

Faith didn’t know how much time had been wasted in talking with Road, but she glanced back at the cab. She had a feeling, even though she hadn’t paid the cab, he was going to drive off.

“Are you coming or not?”

She couldn't believe that she had been trying to get out of these gates for so long. She had spent many useless hours imagining escaping, hoping to taste the freedom, and now she was willingly stepping back inside. It was totally and completely insane.

She stepped over the threshold, putting her back at Brute's mercy, and this time, she walked side by side. There was no sudden attack. No one to throw her in a cell.

They walked past the women and even they had sneers on their faces. There was no love for her. Faith knew she was still the enemy.

She wished she'd taken the wedding ring off her finger, but there was no time for that now, and the last thing she wanted to do was draw attention to the horrible thing. She hated wearing it, but she hated her grandfather's annoyance with her when she didn't. He was always angry these days. Faith couldn't recall a time he'd ever raised his voice to her, but he'd more than made up for it the past couple of weeks. She knew she had caused him untold stress.

Sergey was also incredibly angry with her for going on a date in the first place. He didn't seem to understand how desperate her mother had been and what she would have done to rise within the ranks of the Bratva.

As for her father, he kept telling her to follow orders. She should not embarrass him, and now that she had been recognized as a daughter, she had to follow the rules. These were not the right rules.

Faith didn't even know if she should go back home. Everything was wrong and everything scared her.

The only thing that made sense to her was coming back here. This was the last place she had felt safe, and that was so messed up because Brute and the MC had their own agenda.

Nowhere was safe for her.

Brute was surprised and this was a new feeling for him, as he wasn't used to being taken off guard, but Faith had done it by merely showing up.

She stood at the main gate of his clubhouse with a fucking care package. Did she not realize they were enemies? She was Golubev Bratva, he stood against everything the Bratva was. He could kill her and send body parts back to Sergey as a warning. It would serve him right.

Tank had been talking about her for the past couple of days. He wanted to know who this woman was who'd shown mercy on him by simply being taken.

Brute had a feeling whatever power she had over Sergey was coming to an end. Being taken against your will is one thing, but stepping out willingly and coming back to the devil's den is another thing entirely.

He didn't know what was in the care package, but he saw the diamond ring on her finger, and he already knew who she was marrying. An old man in his fifties, Paul Butterworth. A slimy old fucker.

Brute knew he dealt in women and drugs. He was willing to sell anyone to make money. There were even rumors that Paul took orders. Men of great wealth told him what they wanted, and Paul made it his mission to find women who matched those descriptions.

He had to wonder if Faith had any idea of the monster she was about to marry. Brute led her to the back corridor near the main staircases, to the bedrooms.

Tank was on the bottom floor. He pushed open the door on the floor, and then waited for Faith to pass.

Vanilla. She had never smelled so good before.

That wasn't quite correct. She did smell good, on the first night he'd taken her, but day by day, when he didn't allow her to wash, that smell had gotten bad.

At the first door, he stopped and looked at her. “Be warned, Tank’s ... not predictable now. I don’t know if he’s going to scream and shout at you, or invite you in.”

“That’s fine. He has been through a lot.” She nodded her head. “I accept that. I just ... I saw him and I couldn’t stop thinking about him, and I needed to do something.”

“You did do something,” Brute said.

“No, I didn’t.”

“By being taken, you did something. Trust me.” He didn’t know why he was trying to make her feel good. It wasn’t his job to help her.

Faith smiled at him, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes.

He opened the door and then stepped through.

Tank was sitting up in bed. This was much of an improvement. Part of his torture under Sergey’s care was sleep deprivation. He tried to get their brother to lose his mind but they didn’t succeed.

“You’ve got a visitor,” Brute said, moving in close.

Tank held out his hand and he took it, placing his other hand over Brute’s and just gripping, not too tightly. All his fingers were bandaged up. Sergey had fucked him up badly.

Brute stepped out of the way but kept an eye on Tank to see how he reacted. The doctor had warned them all that it might not be an easy fix for Tank. His body would heal, but there might be times his mind was back to when he was taken.

“My angel,” Tank said.

Faith took a step forward, then another. “I’m not an angel. I’m Faith,” she said, holding her hand out.

Tank took her hand, pulling it up toward his lips.

It was the first real smile he had on his face and as he did so, Brute saw the gaps at the back of his mouth from the

teeth that had been pulled. They already had a dentist trip lined up to get them sorted.

Tank seemed to be handling everything well so far. Some of the bruising had already faded, but he had bruises on top of bruises.

“Faith.”

She smiled at him. “I know this doesn’t make up for anything and it doesn’t take back what happened, but I got you a few things.” She put the care package down.

Brute watched as she removed the piece of fabric that had covered the basket. There was food. Lots of food.

“Muffins, savory and sweet, a couple of each. Chocolate is a good flavor. The cheese ones are okay, but don’t eat them after the chocolate, they don’t taste as nice. There’s some banana bread and corn bread. I also packed some chips and dips. No avocado dip because that doesn’t store quite as well. I don’t know if you like spicy food, but I did pack a bottle of hot sauce.” She held up a bottle to show him. “There are a couple of books to pass the time.” The box was quite deep. He didn’t even realize how deep until Faith began to unload it. Paper plates wrapped in plastic wrap, filled with food, were spread out on the side of Tank’s bed. “Lotion, this is supposed to help soothe your bruises. Some cloths, again for your body, and then there are a few soaps and shampoos.”

“You thought of everything.”

“I ... I ... wanted to try and make you as comfortable as possible.”

Tank smiled. “I know the brothers are going to be in here to try and steal some of this. Did you make the food yourself?”

“Some of it.”

“I’ll enjoy it.”

“I hope you feel better soon,” Faith said.

“Faith, you and I both know you shouldn’t be here,” Tank said. “Sergey finds out, you’re going to bring a whole heap of trouble to the club.”

He watched her go pale. “I better go, I don’t want to do that.”

“I’ll see you out.” Brute glanced at Tank, who looked mighty happy with his bounty.

They made their way through the main clubhouse and the men were not happy to see her. Brute kept her close but he wasn’t willing to hurt her, not today. He knew the club wanted to, and to find any reason to start a war, but Tank had already said no one harmed Faith. They couldn’t use her, and Tank was the brother who was going to decide how they would deal with Faith.

“My cab is gone,” Faith said.

Brute didn’t even need to look in that direction to know the cab was going to leave. Everyone knew coming into the Evil Fallen Bratva MC was a risk. There were not many men or women willing to risk it. Those that did were always happy to take the fight to the Golubev Bratva.

“Come on,” he said. “I’ll call you a cab.”

He knew a company who’d come no matter what. They were all about the money and didn’t care about the war between the MC and the Golubev. If you were a paying customer, they’d come.

Entering the clubhouse again, he placed his hand at the base of Faith’s back, guiding her to his office. He didn’t take her to the room where they conducted church, but to his private office. Stepping inside, he closed and locked the door so they were not disturbed, and walked toward his desk.

Brute pressed in the number and waited. He gave the instructions to the lady on the other end, and then hung up. “Your cab will be here in ten minutes,” Brute said.

“Thank you for organizing it, and, you know, for letting me come and see your club brother. I know that couldn’t have been easy.”

Brute looked at her. “Who’s the lucky guy?” He nodded at the ring.

She looked down at the ring and he saw her pale quite a bit.

“I ... he’s someone my grandfather knows.”

“And you don’t?”

“No, I’ve met him twice, and the wedding is in two weeks, I think.” She nibbled her lip.

“You don’t even know when your own wedding is?”

“It’s ... he ... I ... it’s confusing.”

“You like him?”

“I don’t know him.”

“But you can’t say no, can you?”

She pressed her lips together and shook her head from side to side. Something was different about her.

“He won’t give her a ... burial,” Faith said.

“Your mother.” He didn’t need to question it. He knew.

She nodded. “He told me I was supposed to forget her. That she wasn’t important. All I have to do now is exactly as I’m told.”

“And you’re not happy?” he asked.

He took a step toward her. He couldn’t stand to see the tears in her eyes. No one should make Faith cry. No one, not even him.

He didn’t even know why he fucking felt this way. Brute closed the distance and then banded an arm around her waist.

“It’s going to be okay,” he said.

“You don’t need to lie to me. We both know it’s not going to be okay. I ... he ... everything is a mess.”

He saw the panic in her eyes and he hated it, but he didn’t get to do this when she was last in his company. Then, he pressed his lips against her, silencing all kinds of protest as he kissed her, hard.

Chapter Eight

One Week Later

The bruising hadn't faded.

Faith sat in front of the bedroom mirror, staring at her reflection. It had been one week since Brute had kissed her. She's played the kiss over and over in her mind, until she couldn't stop thinking about it.

His kiss had been hard, and yet she had loved every second of it. His hands had moved from her back, sliding up, sinking in her hair, and then he'd pressed her up against the wall, but all too soon it had been over. There was a knock and someone had called through the door, stating that her cab was there.

The kiss had come to an end, and Brute had walked her out to the cab. As he did so, he warned her. "Faith, you don't belong here. You're not welcome here, and the next time you step foot into my clubhouse, you're going to be sorry. You will never make it back to your grandfather's." And with that, he'd slammed the door.

She knew she was the enemy.

When she arrived home, it was to discover the man who had been charged with keeping an eye on her had been killed. Sergey had told her straight that his death was on her hands, and then he had proceeded to slap her across the face, remove his belt, and whip her ten times. She still had the welts on her body. No one had stopped him. No one had cared.

That had been a week ago.

He had told her that she made a fool out of him by going into enemy territory. Now, she would do as she was told. She would be marrying Paul. She would make a good wife. She would bear children, and never would she step out of line again.

Faith felt fear creep up her spine as she tensed up at the steps outside her bedroom. She had been confined to her room. This is where she took meals, and she wasn't allowed to leave. Only her father and grandfather stepped into her room.

The footsteps walked straight past her room. She kept thinking about Brute. He'd never laid a hand on her, not once.

She felt the tears well up in her eyes and got to her feet, stepping toward her window to look out over the night. It was dark, but the moon was full, casting a beautiful gothic glow over the yard.

In two days' time, she was going to get married. She couldn't recall ever being so afraid.

There was a knock at her door, and before she even had a chance to answer, someone stepped through.

Her grandfather never knocked, but her father did. The first time he stepped into her room, she hadn't been decent, in the process of getting dressed.

Nikki closed the door behind him. He wore a pair of black, pinstripe pants, a crisp white shirt, and shoes that seemed so shiny. There was a plate of food in his hand, and he moved to the bed, to put it on top.

"You've got to start eating something," he said. "Dad is not happy."

Faith looked over at him and then down at the food. She didn't have an appetite. It was kind of hard to want to eat food when fear played a heavy role in her life. Her mother had spent a lot of her childhood complaining about what a waste she was. How disappointed she was, how important it was to be part of the Golubev Bratva. But after the past week, Faith struggled to see the charm.

There was nothing good about being part of this Bratva. This was a nightmare. She thought about Tank.

She had no idea of the family she was connected to. There were moments she found herself thinking about the

shipment of women.

“Did you ever ... care about my mother?” Faith asked.

She and Nikki had never had a long conversation.

“No,” Nikki said. “She was an easy fuck. That was all. I should have known she’d try to get pregnant. I wasn’t the first man she’d tried to manipulate, but I was the first man she caught.”

“You hated her.”

“The bitch pierced the condoms. She wanted to get pregnant. That woman was a whore who wanted a title,” Nikki said.

“And what am I?” she asked, feeling the tears fill her eyes.

Nikki shrugged. “I know you’re a good woman. I’ve watched you grow up.”

“How?”

“I wasn’t there, Faith, but regardless of what people say and think, I was aware of you. I knew your achievements. How you got your head down at school and focused on your studies. You weren’t interested in boys. You’re a hard worker. You don’t make waves, and then you got taken.”

Faith frowned. “You expect me to believe that you care?”

“I care about all my kids. They just don’t know it. Like, I know that Paul is not a good man for you, but it will be good for the Golubev Bratva,” Nikki said. “Everything we do is good for business.”

“And what about this?” Faith asked, holding out her wrist. “I didn’t have to be part of this world. You made me.”

Nikki smiled. “I did what I was told to do. I followed orders.”

“Orders?” Faith asked.

“Yes. Do you really think I’m the one who controls who bears the mark of the Golubev?”

“Sergey?” Faith asked, pulling her wrist in close and glancing down at the marks.

Nikki didn’t deny nor confirm it. There was no need. She had been lied to.

“We all have our roles to play and my advice to you is find something that makes you happy. Something where you escape while you’re in this. There is no getting away from it.”

“Is it true?” Faith asked. “That I look like your sister?”

Nikki had gone to the door, about to leave. “Yes. You looked like her when you were a kid, and even as a teenager. You’re exactly how I imagine she would have looked.”

With that, he was gone. The door closed.

She didn’t have enough answers. There was no way she was going to believe her father cared. It was all just a trick. That’s what this family did. She had come to see that now. They liked to play tricks, manipulate to get what they wanted.

She walked over to the bed and stared down at the food. It was a beautiful-looking pasta dish, one of her favorites, but she didn’t have the stomach for it.

Perching her ass on the edge of the bed, Faith didn’t know if she could do this. She had no idea how her life had gone wrong so quickly.

“Fuck you, man. I can walk,” Tank said.

Brute had forced Tank to remain in bed. It was on doctor’s orders. The only way to make sure he recovered, and fast, was to give him as much bed rest as possible. Tank was a pain-in-the-ass patient.

No one else would work with him. Road had called it quits after the first ten minutes. Igor had threatened to start removing body parts by the end of the hour. Hail, Vlad,

Maxim, and Nikolai hadn't lasted an hour each. Sarge had done a day, Stan two days, and Krill had threatened to drive a car over him.

The women couldn't handle him either. He just shouted and it turned them all into crying messes. The other men were happy with Tank's anger and aggression. According to them, it made for an easier fuck.

With all the brothers tapping out, it left Brute. As it happened, he didn't mind Tank's charming personality. In fact, he found it rather humorous, the constant insults and badgering tone.

In the beginning, he cleaned up the mess from Tank, when he'd throw shit, but now that Tank was on the road to recovery, he forced the brother to clean up his own shit. If he threw a bowl of soup, that was all fine and dandy, but he was cleaning that shit up. He wouldn't have it any other way. It had taken three cleanups—one of soup, another of cheese sauce, and finally one of porridge—but Tank had stopped throwing shit, which was a miracle.

Brute was happy but Tank's bad mouth had gotten worse.

"I don't need all this coddling. For fuck's sake, I can do this."

The doctor had warned Brute that Tank's injuries were quite severe. This meant he might not be able to walk. On the night they had picked him up, he'd struggled to walk to the bike. From what the doctor could see, he'd been suspended, or bound, for a long period of time.

He knew Tank was growing tired, and Brute needed answers. When Tank tried to get up, he placed his hands on top of his arms and stopped him.

"Brute, I don't know what the fuck this is about, but I'm getting tired of it. I can do this shit."

"Will you shut the fuck up and listen to me?" Brute said.

Tank's jaw clenched, and he knew the brother was having a hard time keeping his mouth shut.

He told him everything. Up until now, he had kept the doctor's warnings and concerns to himself.

"He thinks I might not be able to walk?" Tank asked.

"Or ride," Brute said. "He advised we take this slowly."

Tank had been so distracted with shit, he'd not even realized he and the brothers were helping him to and from the toilet.

"They didn't paralyze me," Tank said.

"The doctor didn't say paralyze," Brute said.

"This is horseshit, Brute. You and I both know I've got to have my legs."

Brute grabbed Tank's face and held it still. "You will."

"They haven't taken my legs?"

It was a question Brute refused to answer.

"I guess we'll find out."

Brute let him go and placed the locks on the wheelchair. With the wheels now still, he reached out and grabbed Tank's hands, feeling the slight tremble in his body. He held him tightly, and Tank tensed up but didn't move.

"I've got you, Tank."

"What if they've taken my legs?" Tank asked.

"Then we deal with it. You and I both know we can deal with all this shit. You and me, brother."

"You can't have me in the club."

"I can and I will, but we don't know until you try."

He took hold of Tank's hands, and Brute looked into his brother's eyes and waited. He'd been through so much. Starvation, torture, mind play, all that shit had been done to

him, and more. There was no part of his body that wasn't broken in some way.

It didn't matter. None of it mattered. Tank was alive and they would deal with it.

They were a club united in their hatred and thirst for vengeance of the Golubev Bratva, but they had become what the Bratva never could be—a brotherhood. They had each other's back. They all had their own goals and were bound by their loyalty to one another. It was that loyalty that had seen them survive multiple attacks.

Ever since he had started this club and the brothers had joined, Sergey had tried to destroy them, but he had never succeeded. No one had.

Holding onto Tank's hands, he tensed up and waited. Tank gripped him tightly, and then he stood up. It wasn't much, he was able to take only a couple of steps, then he nearly collapsed to the ground, but Brute took the full weight of him, which wasn't easy.

"I'll still be able to ride," Tank said. "They haven't taken jack shit from me, Brute."

Brute nodded, but he knew as did Tank that it wasn't true. They had fucked with Tank's mind. The brother woke the whole club up almost every night, screaming. It was a sound Brute had never heard before. He would never forget it and it would be permanently etched in his mind.

There were moments Tank would go back. He'd been in the clubhouse or the room, surrounded by everyone, and still he'd fall back down that well and end up back there. The doctor had said only time and patience would heal him.

Brute had a feeling this wasn't going to be an easy fix. He was willing to take the time. Helping Tank back into the wheelchair, he sat down opposite him.

Shirley was already on her way, a couple of bottles of beer in hand. He took one from her, and Tank gave her ass a little slap as she left. She turned and blew him a kiss.

“You know that piece of pussy has eyes for you,” Tank said.

“Not interested.”

“I hear the brothers talk. You haven’t been interested since a certain brunette came into your world.”

He thought about Faith.

“Why don’t you shut the fuck up and drink your beer?” Brute asked.

Tank chuckled. “Did that hit a little too close to home?”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Tank tutted. “True. I don’t know a lot of shit but before I ... left, I know you were all happy with random pussy like Shirley’s.”

Brute snorted. “Yeah, I liked pussy, but we both know Shirley is not a clean pussy.”

“Clean pussy? Are you wanting a virgin or something? Is that what Faith has done to you? Made you crave innocent cunt?” Tank asked.

“Drink your beer,” Brute said. He didn’t want to think about Faith. She was gone, and unless he was willing to risk the club’s life, he wasn’t going to get her back.

He didn’t want her back. She was the enemy.

“I heard she’s getting married,” Tank said.

“Do you not comprehend shutting the fuck up?” Brute asked.

“I’m just saying, you want virgin pussy, she is pretty much the only one we know.” Tank shrugged. “Unless you use her fiancé. He can attempt to get you what you crave, for a price.”

Brute glared at Tank. “I don’t like this conversation.”

“None of us like it. I know I’ve been a hard fucker to deal with.”

“Hard fucker? I’m the only one that’ll deal with you. No one else will. I’m all you’ve got.”

Tank laughed. “You think I’ve got a problem with that? You’re easy on the eyes, Brute.”

He had missed this. With all the shit going on, with Tank’s recovery, he had missed the brother’s humor. They all had.

“You know, she saved my life,” Tank said.

“She didn’t save shit. I saved your life by taking her. It was all part of my plan.”

“I know, but she still saved my life by being the good little girl she was raised to be. You think I didn’t hear them arguing? Sergey was pissed. Nikki wanted a quick resolve.”

Brute frowned. “Her dad. I thought he didn’t give a shit about her.”

“It was Nikki that wanted to trade. He said the only way to get her back was to give me up, but Sergey wouldn’t hear of it. I heard them take out Rat Boy Pete. He was willing to tell club secrets, but Nikki killed Pete quickly.”

“I got his head,” Brute said. “There was nothing quick about it.”

Tank shrugged. “It was still quick. I heard Beverly. Nikki didn’t stop her torture. Sergey was pissed off that she would allow one of them into enemy territory. He allowed men to rape her.” Tank stopped, taking a long drink of beer. “At least fifty men, his soldiers. One by one, they raped her. It lasted hours. He wouldn’t let them stop, and then once that was done, he made her lick the floor. Told her she would get to live if she licked the floor, and it was as she was doing that shit, he slit her throat.”

Brute looked at Tank. “They did that in front of you, didn’t they?”

“I knew Sergey was an evil fucker, Brute. I heard tales and rumors of the shit he’d done, but ... seeing it, she begged,

she pleaded, and Sergey, he watched it all like he was bored.”

Brute ran a hand over his face.

“Death was a kindness he wasn’t willing to give,” Tank said. “And Faith is near that asshole. She will be at his mercy.”

“The club won’t accept her.”

“They will, if you lay claim to her.”

Chapter Nine

Faith tested her door.

She did this every single hour and each time after she had a visitor. Her grandfather had just come to her room to make sure she was dressed and ready for her wedding, which was in a few hours. He wouldn't leave until she was changed.

The hairstylist had already been in to do her hair and makeup. The dress required her to step into it. There were no straps. It had a corset-style bodice and she hated it. She was afraid her tits were going to fall out, but each time she had a fitting the dressmaker had promised her everything would be perfect. That was all she was told. She'd look perfect. She would look beautiful.

Testing the door, she let out a whimper as it was locked. Faith had hoped her grandfather had been distracted by his phone call and forget to lock the door, but he hadn't.

Today was the big day. She was getting married to a horrible man, and she felt that fear travel up her spine. Clenching her hands into fists, she tried not to panic, but with every passing second, that was hard to do.

“Fuck!” She hated to curse.

All she wanted to do was punch and kick the door, but she wasn't even allowed to do that. The first time she had done that, her grandfather had come and slapped her. She'd been so shocked, she had fallen to the ground, and then he'd kicked her. He had told her that if she broke his things, he would make sure she paid for them.

It was hard for her to believe he was acting like this. In all the years she had known her grandfather, never had she seen this side of him. She had thought Brute lied, but in the last few weeks, she had seen that the only liar in her life was Sergey Golubev. He'd manipulated her.

She didn't know why he had lied about who he was, but now she was more afraid of him than ever before. Nikki, her own father, was a nicer man than him, and she thought her dad was the monster.

Stepping away from the door, she moved to the bed and caught sight of her reflection in the mirror. Her stomach felt so tight. She felt sick.

This is not what she wanted.

Paul was a disgusting man, as was her grandfather. She hated the ink on the inside of her wrist. She always thought he'd given the order, but it was Sergey. She should have known.

Faith didn't know why she would have believed Brute. He did try to warn her, and she thought he was lying.

Her mother was gone. Everything she had known was all lies.

And now, she was about to be married to a man who was just as horrible. He stole women, traded them, used them.

She walked toward the windows. They had been sealed shut even before she had been sent to her room. How had her life grown into a nightmare?

Tears filled her eyes, but she couldn't cry. If she cried, it would mess up the hard work it had taken for her to look right.

"I can't do this," she said.

How was she going to be able to walk down the aisle to a man she didn't like and be expected to say "I do"? This was the life her mother had always wanted for her, and yet she didn't want it. What was wrong with her?

She couldn't stop thinking about that kiss. Faith placed the tips of her fingers against her lips, and it was like she could still feel him there, kissing her.

This was insane. Brute was not hers. He was never going to belong to her. He was more than happy to trade her for

someone else.

Taking a deep breath, she clenched her fingers together, locking them in place, and then took multiple deep breaths. In and out. She could do this. This would be how she survived. It wouldn't be so bad.

Then her bedroom door opened. On the inside, she was screaming. She felt her own soul clawing to get out, hoping to find an escape route.

She looked up into the cold eyes of her cold father.

Nikki looked her up and down, nodded his head, then stepped out the door. "Come on."

There was no time to waste. She got to her feet and slid them into the heels she had yet to put on. Once they were on, she did feel a little unsteady on her feet, but no one offered to help.

Her father, along with two additional soldiers, was waiting for her.

She kept her hands clenched and hoped the time would pass. Walking out of the room, down the corridor, toward the stairs, out of the main door to the waiting limousine felt like the longest journey she'd ever taken.

Climbing into the back of the car, she expected her father to join her, but all he did was slam the door closed. The two men climbed into the front seat. None of them said a word.

Her father wasn't even going to escort her to the church. She glanced out the window, looking back at him, and then spun around to the front. With both soldiers distracted, she couldn't help trying the door to see if it would open. Maybe there would be a chance of an escape. They had thought of everything, though, because she pulled on the door handle and nothing worked.

She wanted to scream in frustration.

They cleared the gates and were out in the open, sending them closer and closer to ... her fiancé.

To marriage.

To a life of misery.

What was she going to do?

Her driver picked up speed and she tried not to panic, but then she heard the rumble of bikes, and Faith looked behind her. She spotted the sign for the Evil Fallen Bratva MC. What were they doing?

“Fuck!”

She spun back around to see the two soldiers in a sense of panic. Gunshots rang out and Faith covered her ears.

The fear she had felt at going to church returned. What if this was payback? Were they sent here to kill her? Was this Brute’s final cruelty?

She had no idea what to expect. She screamed as the car swerved and then suddenly she didn’t know how it happened or what caused it, the car tipped over. Faith hadn’t put on a seat belt and had hit her head through the collision. More gunshots rang out and her head started to hurt.

The car had come to a stop, and now she was on the roof, and there wasn’t a lot of room. The door she’d been leaning against only seconds earlier was torn open, and there, crouching down, was Brute.

“You have two choices. Stay here and get married to that fucker, or come with me.”

Faith didn’t even hesitate. She crawled over broken glass to get to him, and Brute reached out to help her. The moment she was clear of the car, he picked her up in his arms, running with her until they got to his bike.

The dress she wore was too long, and he placed her on the ground. She had already lost her heels. She gasped as he

pulled out a long knife and with one swoop, he tore through the skirt of the fabric, then tossed it.

He also made a split so she was able to climb on the back of the bike. This was only her second time riding a bike, but she slid her leg over, wrapped her arms around Brute, and held on for dear life. She wasn't going to let him go.

The scent of leather and Brute filled her senses. She had no idea what the future held, but she knew that as long as she was with Brute, nothing else mattered.

Brute had already given the order for them to seal the gates. Men were on standby waiting.

War was coming. There was no way Sergey would allow this to slide. Brute was very much aware of what was at stake. Faith's fiancé was not a man to be trifled with, and he was wealthy. A fortune that rivaled Sergey's, with multiple connections, that would help to continue the expansion of the Golubev Bratva. Brute had just taken their peace offering—a virgin bride. Faith was that virgin.

His men knew what to do. This was for all the Evil Fallen Bratva MC. This was for Tank, and for those men who hadn't made it. He'd lost good men through his quest to take on Golubev. None of them would be forgotten.

Carrying Faith up to his bedroom, he kicked the door closed and then flicked the lock into place. He placed her on the bed, making sure she was okay before he stepped back.

She reached out, grabbed his face, and pulled him in close. "You came for me," Faith said.

He wasn't about to tell her that it was all for the destruction of the Golubev. She looked so freaking happy. Faith was the prize, and it had been one of the reasons he'd decided to destroy that wedding. With no bride, Golubev was fucked. He only had Faith to offer up.

“I couldn’t let you go,” Brute said, and that wasn’t technically a lie.

Faith’s gaze fell to his lips and he knew what she was thinking.

“They wanted your virginity, Faith. That was what your grandfather hoped to trade.”

“Don’t talk about him. He’s evil, exactly like you said. He never cared about me. After you took me, he changed, and when I came to give you that care package, he ... it was awful.”

He saw the tears in her eyes. “He won’t hurt you anymore.”

“Then take it,” Faith said. “If you want it.”

“Take what?”

“My virginity. What he holds dear. He was going to take that decision out of my hands, and I don’t want him to. He doesn’t have the right and he doesn’t get to decide who I sleep with.”

“Faith?”

“Please,” she said.

“No woman should have to beg,” he said. Then he slammed his lips down on hers, silencing any protest she might have.

There was no way he was going to allow her to beg him to do anything. She was offering her virginity, and that was what he wanted. Ever since he met Faith, he hadn’t been with another woman. He knew the guys were worried about that, but he didn’t give a shit.

Once he had his fill of Faith, everything would go back to normal. Reaching behind her, he grabbed the zipper that was helping to keep her wedding dress up, which was beautiful. He couldn’t deny that. Faith looked like a beautiful virgin bride. The white suited her.

Everything she wore suited her. She looked stunning.

The dress came away easily and he gripped her ass, pulled her off the bed, and removed the rest of the dress. However, he didn't toss it to the side. He picked it up and threw it onto the bed.

She didn't have any bra on, and the panties she wore were nothing more than a sheer thong. Her curves were on display and he'd seen in the short time she'd been away from him that she'd already started to lose weight, and he didn't like that. He'd fix that.

Brute put the tips of his fingers on the outside of her thigh and then slowly began to slide them up, getting to the small string of fabric of her thong. He gripped it tightly, and then with a tug, he snapped it right off her body. She gave a little gasp, but with his other hand, he grabbed the back of her neck, tilted her head back, and took possession of her mouth, silencing all protest.

Another moan. Another whimper.

He did toss the thong to the floor. It would come in handy later, but for now, he wanted it out of his way. Putting his hand back on her soft skin, he stroked around the curve of her hip, going toward her ass. He gripped the flesh and she whimpered.

It was a small sound. Letting go of her neck, he broke the kiss. As he trailed his fingers down her body, going toward her ass to grip the flesh, he kissed down her neck, right to her pulse. Sliding his tongue back and forth across the spot, he heard her sudden intake of breath.

She was a sensitive woman. He filed that information away for later.

Brute loved her body so much and he planned on playing with her a lot. This body was designed to be played with, and he was going to enjoy exploring her, pushing her boundaries, seeing how far he could take her.

Pushing her to the bed, Faith sat down, and he moved her into position, making sure the wedding dress was beneath her.

“I want you to trust me, but if I take this too far and you can’t handle it, tell me to stop,” he said.

She nodded her head and that was all the acknowledgement he needed to then take another kiss. It was a quick brush of lips, and then he started to work his way down her body. He licked at her pulse, then kissed down her body, going toward her tits.

These tits had been plaguing his dreams. They were constantly covered because he’d not been able to see her completely naked, and for whatever fucking reason, his imagination had not been able to fill in the blanks. Now, he could. She looked stunning. Full tits and large nipples. They were designed to have a man sucking on them, and his mouth watered for a taste. He just couldn’t get enough of her. She made his dick ache and it was already a tight fit in his pants.

Pressing those tits together, he took one nipple into his mouth before moving onto the other. He went back and forth, sliding his tongue over each rounded bud, and then he couldn’t resist biting down just a little. Not too much because he didn’t want to hurt her.

She writhed beneath him. The pleased sounds spilled from her lips, driving him crazy.

He wanted to fuck her so badly, but before he did that, he wanted to give her pleasure. Fucking her for the first time was going to cause her pain. There was no way to avoid it. All he could do was prepare her pussy, get her nice and slick. He didn’t want to use any lubrication. He wanted to feel her soaking-wet pussy sliding across his dick as he took her inch by inch.

Brute had never seen the enthrallment of a virgin. He knew men paid a lot of money for virgins, but he was only

ever interested in women who knew what they were doing. Why would men care for an inexperienced woman?

Knowing there was no other man before him, that Faith could be one hundred percent his, was indeed a little ... enthralling. No man had touched Faith. No man had tasted her. No man had been inside her. She was pure.

And after he was done with her, she'd be all his. He didn't know why he even liked the thought of it. He was no hypocrite. He was more than happy for women to enjoy their time with men. They deserved to spread their wild oats, or whatever the fuck the saying was.

All those other women were not Faith. She belonged to him. And he wasn't going to give her up.

He trailed down, giving her stomach kisses and he moved her legs, spreading them wider to accommodate him. The scent of her pussy was intoxicating and he found himself getting harder. He was going to have to take his pants off soon, before his dick tore a hole in them.

Stroking her thighs, he went to the lips of her pussy. She had a small thatch of hair on either side of her lips, and just above. Good. He didn't like to think he was licking a girl. He wanted a woman. A full, ripe woman, ready to take his cock.

He had a feeling if he treated Faith right, she would be his own personal walking, talking, sex dream.

Spreading the lips of her sex open, he stared down at her swollen clit.

He had to keep reminding himself that she was a virgin. He wouldn't forget it, not as he pressed his tongue to her clit. Faith gasped and he knew she was going to be super sensitive, especially if just the lightest touch had her squirming beneath him.

Moving his hands underneath her ass, he cupped her butt, holding her in place, and then pressed his tongue against her clit. Her moans echoed off the walls.

Brute made sure his touch was light to start, to allow her time to get accustomed to the feel of him. Then, little by little, he got a little harder, making her take more. He stayed focused on her clit, knowing she wouldn't be able to handle his tongue inside her tight cunt.

He also wanted his dick to be the first to penetrate her tight hole.

Sliding his tongue back and forth, then circling her clit. When she began to gyrate her hips and press close against him, he started to use his teeth, causing just a little pain.

With every second that passed, she grew wetter and he sensed her orgasm getting closer. Wave upon wave, and then she came hard, shocking him with the force of her orgasm, and certainly with how quickly she came.

He brought her down, slowly, only stopping when he knew she couldn't take another second of his touch. Drawing out her release, he kissed up her body, sucking on her tits, and then pushed himself completely off her body.

Faith was naked. He was still fully dressed, but he was about to rectify that.

Chapter Ten

Faith had never experienced an orgasm with a man before. She'd only given herself orgasms.

Nothing could have prepared her for the feel of Brute licking her pussy. She moved up to her elbows and watched as he slowly peeled off his shirt, showcasing his fully inked chest. He kicked off his boots, and then took care of his pants. He wore a pair of black boxer briefs, and he peeled them all the way down, exposing his full, hard cock.

This was the first time she had seen a naked cock in person. He was long and thick.

She had no idea if he was going to fit inside her, which was crazy. Of course he was going to fit. Men and women were designed to fit together. They would be fine.

Brute wrapped his fingers around the base, then slowly moved all the way up to the tip, then back down again. For some reason, him touching his cock made it look so much bigger. He was ... shockingly big.

He let go of his cock and stepped toward the bed. He placed his knee on the bed, and then slowly crawled up toward her. She'd be lying if she said she wasn't nervous. Faith didn't know why she was, but there were butterflies in her stomach.

"There is no going back after this," Brute said.

"I made my choice." She wasn't going to back down. Brute coming to her today was a sign for her, that she was finally able to taste her freedom once again and she wasn't going to let it go, not for a second. Her freedom had already been taken from her.

There was no going back now. Once Brute took her virginity, her grandfather couldn't use her. She'd become useless to him again.

This was her decision. She wasn't going to allow another man to take her choices away.

“I want you,” she said.

Brute closed the distance between them. His nose pressed against hers. “This is going to hurt.”

“I know.” She had read enough books to know that a woman’s first time was rarely sunshine and roses. Everyone always wrote about pain and it being impossible to stand, but she was ready.

At twenty-five years old, on the verge of marrying a man she couldn’t stand, she wanted to have this choice. The person she wanted should be her choice, no one else’s. Certainly not her grandfather’s.

Faith put her hand on his arm and then slowly slid them up, going toward the base of his neck. She didn’t even know if she was supposed to be touching him, but she gave herself the chance to find out.

“Is this okay?” she asked.

“Baby, you can touch me all you want.”

She teased the hair at the back of his neck. He didn’t have long hair, but she couldn’t help but touch him. Sinking her fingers into his hair, she pulled back just a little as he reached down between them. He nudged her thigh open, and she gasped.

The tip of his cock slid between her slit, moving up and nudging her clit. That single touch made her pause as it felt so good. She didn’t want him to stop.

“Fuck me, we’re going to have a lot of fun with you.” He leaned down and then kissed her.

At the same time she felt his cock move, then, as Brute deepened the kiss, he thrust forward, taking her by surprise as he tore through her virginity.

Her screams were swallowed by him. The pain was instant and took her completely by surprise, which was insane, considering she already knew there was going to be slight discomfort, but nothing like this.

Faith realized a few seconds later that Brute wasn't even moving. He'd slammed deep inside her, and then stopped. He continued to kiss her. At first, she couldn't kiss him back because the pain was so acute, and then she realized she didn't want to not kiss him.

Brute broke the kiss first, but his lips didn't leave her body. He trailed his lips down her neck, making her moan.

"I've got you," he said.

His tongue traced across her neck, sliding over her pulse, but then his teeth bit down. It wasn't painful at all, but so much pleasure seemed to spread through her body. She didn't want Brute to stop.

Wrapping her arms around him, she held on tightly, running her hands up and down, marveling at the feel of him. She didn't want to let him go, not for a second.

"Your pussy feels so fucking good, so right, wrapped around my cock."

He whispered those dirty words against her ear and it made her ache even more.

"You're so fucking wet, baby."

"Please," she said.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't want you to stop." The pain had already lessened and now all she wanted him to do was fuck her and do it hard.

"Are you ready to be fucked?" he asked.

"Yes." She felt the heat rise in her cheeks. She didn't even know why she was embarrassed. They were having sex.

She had a guy balls-deep inside her pussy. Faith had only ever read about experiences like this and she figured her imagination would always fill in the blanks, not that she'd be living it.

Yet here she was, living it, feeling it, *loving* it. And she didn't want it to stop.

Brute pulled back, and then slowly, achingly slowly, began to thrust back inside her. She felt every inch of his dick as he filled her up.

He pulled all the way out until only the tip remained, and then he slammed forward, this time being a little more forceful. Another moan, a whimper, she couldn't keep the pleasure locked up inside her. She didn't want him to stop.

Brute grabbed her hands, pressed them to the bed, lifted, and then began to thrust hard and deep within her. She met him, pressing her pelvis up. She didn't have the slightest idea of what she was doing, but she couldn't bring herself to stop. It felt so good. Better than good. As she watched Brute go over the edge, she felt his release as he filled her.

It was shocking to feel and to watch, but she didn't regret a thing.

"Are you sure about this?" Road asked.

Brute looked up from the box to Road, a little surprised he would even question him. "Send it."

The wedding dress had been removed from Faith, and now it was covered in her virgin blood as well as his semen. He was sending it right back to Sergey, so he knew there was no way she could be used again.

"You don't want to keep that wedding dress for yourself?" Road asked.

"No."

"Brute?"

"What the fuck, Road? Are you working for Sergey now? What are you doing, questioning me?" he asked, but yelled as he did.

Road's jaw clenched and he held his hands up. "You ... this is new." He pointed at the box. "You've got a woman upstairs and you said yourself you'd never bring a woman into this, yet you have. This changes shit."

"It changes nothing. Faith made her choice. She is sticking around for a while."

"A while? Is she going to be damage control?" Road asked.

"I thought you wanted to get rid of her, to start sending messages to Sergey? Why do you care now?" Brute asked.

Road shrugged. "I don't care. Not about her, but I do care about you, and what this means. Faith is a woman."

"So?"

"You think the pussy in this club don't talk?"

Brute gritted his teeth.

"They already know they don't compare to this new girl. What's the plan, Brute? You're going to wait until you've had your fill and then pass her around?"

"No one is going to touch her."

"So is she just yours?"

He grabbed Road by his leather cut and threw him up against the wall, getting in his face. "I suggest that if the pussy in this club are talking, you come straight back to me and you don't give them fucking time to even moan, do you understand me? Last time I checked, I was the fucking leader of this club. I run it and what I say goes."

They all had their place, but Brute was the one who ran everything. He'd set it all up. He didn't give a shit if it was like an actual MC. He didn't follow any rules but his own. The brothers never had an issue, and no one had ever tried to take his place.

"Now, mail it."

He'd included a tiny little postcard stating, "*Whoops, she asked me to.*" Brute didn't give a shit if Sergey liked it or not. There was no fucking way he was going to let Faith go back.

Road and the other club brothers didn't know that he'd been warned about what Faith's fate was going to be, and he couldn't allow that.

He didn't love her. He didn't fucking care for her, but there was no way he would allow her to be with that piece of shit. All he was doing was stopping Sergey from expanding his business. He was making sure the Golubev Bratva was affected. This had nothing to do with Faith. She was just there. She was nothing special.

"You better tell the club pussy to keep their fucking mouths closed from now on, unless it's filled with cock, do you understand?"

He let Road go, and then slammed his office door open. Anger rushed down his spine. Road was fucking wrong.

Several of the guys were sitting around drinking, but Brute ignored them and went straight back to his bedroom. Faith was curled up in his bed. One of her legs had come out and was curled over the bed sheet. It had turned into a warm night.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, at first he didn't look at her. Kicking off his shoes and pulling off his shirt, he rested his elbows on his thighs, running his fingers through his hair, as he took a deep breath. He glanced behind him and Faith was still fast asleep.

After he had pulled out of her and seen the evidence of her virginity, he'd been swept over by the need to protect her. It was a fucking strange feeling to have. He'd never been with a virgin before. Brute had never seen the charm of them, but now as he looked at Faith, he saw the charm. She wasn't a virgin anymore, but the only cock she'd ever been with was his.

Reaching out, he couldn't resist moving a curl out of the way. She let out a sigh and opened her eyes.

"Hey," she said.

"Hey, yourself. Sleep well?"

"What time is it?"

"Still late, or way too early, whichever way you look at it. Three in the morning."

She let out a moan. "I don't think anyone should be up this late or this early," she said, giggling. "Did I steal the blanket or ... I've never slept with anyone before."

He cupped her cheek. "I got that with the whole virgin thing."

"Well, you never know. Sleeping with someone doesn't have to be mean having sex."

"Nah, if a guy is with a girl, sex is going to happen."

Faith giggled. "You don't believe men and women can be friends."

"Didn't say that. I think men and women can be whatever the fuck they want to be, but if they truly want to fuck, they'll find a way to." He stroked a finger down her back. Her naked thigh and ass cheek looked so tempting.

He reached out and grabbed the full, ripe flesh of her ass, then gave it a little swat. She gave out a gasp but didn't pull away. "How are you feeling?"

"Fine."

"Just fine?" He leaned over the bed, kissing her cheek. "Are you feeling sore?"

She shook her head.

"Tired?"

"No. I'm wide awake."

He chuckled as he traced a finger down her back, going over the curve of her ass, then her thigh.

“Wide awake. So does that mean you’d like to do something?” he asked.

“What do you have in mind?”

He moved in a little closer and slid his palm up the inside of her thigh, cupping her pussy. “I was wondering if you’d like to go for round two?” Pressing a finger inside her pussy, he pulled out then pushed back inside. She moaned but he felt her start to respond. She was already wet, but as he thrust two fingers inside her and placed his thumb over her clit, he felt her cunt start to pulse around him.

He couldn’t get enough of her reaction. She was so responsive and he knew it wasn’t fake. There was no way a woman could get this wet, this quickly.

Faith still didn’t have any control over him. He was the one with all the control. Faith was just going to be his personal toy until he got bored. No one else could have her, not yet.

“Please,” she said.

“Do you want to come?”

She sunk her teeth into her lip and nodded her head.

“Then come, baby, come for me.”

He stroked her clit and watched as she did as he commanded. She rode his hand as he drew out her orgasm wanting her to scream and pant, loving the pleased sounds she made, and knowing there was going to be a lot more where that came from.

Chapter Eleven

It had been two days since Brute had saved her from the wedding from hell. Two whole days of being locked inside his room, enjoying him. Faith giggled as she tried to wriggle out of his hold.

“Food can be sent up to us. You don’t need to do anything.”

“I know. You’ve been going and fetching food whenever we needed it, but now it’s my turn.” Faith pulled on a pair of sweatpants. She still didn’t have any clothes and she didn’t feel comfortable asking him to go back to her place to pick up her things. She had no way of knowing if she even had a place. She’d been trapped inside a room at her grandfather’s doing. “You know, we still haven’t talked about what I’m supposed to do now.”

Brute groaned.

She had tried on more than one occasion to find out what she had to do. Faith wasn’t a fool. There was no way she could leave the clubhouse, and probably not even the gates. Brute had set her free, but there was no real freedom. The Bratva and her grandfather would come after her. She had betrayed him and the club.

“Let’s not spoil the moment,” Brute said.

“By letting reality sink in?” she asked.

“We don’t need to talk about what you have to do, or any of that shit.” He climbed off the bed and was completely naked.

She was addicted to his body. He was covered in ink but that didn’t hide his muscles nor his thick arousal. His cock was long and thick. Even though they had already had sex three times today, he was ready to go again.

Brute cupped her face, tilting her head back. One of his thumbs traced across her bottom lip. The pants she’d been

trying to wriggle on were forgotten and on the floor.

“I don’t think we need to worry about any of that shit, not until we’re damn well good and ready.” He kissed her lips and then pressed her up against the door.

Sliding his hands down her body, he stroked over her nipples but didn’t stop until his hands were on her ass. She felt the hard ridge of his cock pressing against her stomach.

He let out a groan.

“And I think the food can wait. I’m not starving yet.”

She was going to argue but then stopped herself as he kissed her, hard. Brute didn’t linger on her lips, though, as he kissed down her neck, going straight toward her tits.

He sucked one nipple into his mouth, then moved to the other. He pushed her tits together, flicking his tongue back and forth, until he finally began to kiss down her body. Brute grabbed her hips and began to walk her back toward the bed, where he dropped her down.

“Brute?”

“Do you want me to stop?” he asked.

“No.”

“Then shut the fuck up.”

She gasped as his tongue slid across her clit. Faith couldn’t deny how good it felt having him touch her. She loved his hands and his mouth, but her personal favorite was his mouth. He knew what to do with it, and she couldn’t get enough.

“Please!”

He growled against her skin, his teeth sinking into the flesh of her thigh, but then he spread open the lips of her pussy, and his tongue danced across the tender nub.

She didn’t think it was possible to orgasm again, but Brute worked his magic. He always made sure she had some

release. Faith came within minutes of him touching her pussy. She hated how fast she came, but then Brute moved, and he was getting her onto her knees.

This was new.

Her knees were perched on the bed, but the rest of her was off. He spread her thighs wide, and then his hand cupped her between the legs. His fingers working her clit, then sliding back to push inside her.

One finger, then two, and finally three, he stretched her open, and she released a whimper. She couldn't help herself. His cock was a lot bigger than his fingers, but she felt stretched, full.

Brute pulled his fingers out, and then the tip of his cock replaced them. Inch by inch, he pressed inside her. She loved it when he went slowly, going in deep.

Both of his hands returned to her hips and on the final few inches, he thrust hard within her, making her cry out. From this angle, he felt bigger and deeper than ever.

"Oh, fuck, baby, you feel good. So fucking good." He growled out the word, running his hands over her back, then cupping her ass.

He let her ass go but then gave it a slap. She loved the slight sting and burn from his touch. It was like he just couldn't help himself, and he had to find some reason to touch her. She didn't mind at all. She loved his touch and didn't want him to stop.

"Please," she said, moaning.

"You want me to fuck you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then how about we make a deal?"

"A deal?"

Why did he want to talk at a time like this? Why couldn't they just enjoy each other and then later handle

whatever business or deals he wanted to? She struggled to even think or understand her own name right now.

Brute wasn't in a rush. He traced across her back, then reached around, cupping her tits, playing with the nipples. She wanted to growl at him, to tell him he shouldn't be trying to talk business.

“Brute!”

“Ah, are you growing impatient?”

“Please, can we talk later?”

He tutted as she moaned because he stroked across her nipple. Sinking her teeth into her lip, she tried to contain the sounds but it was impossible.

She had no idea what Brute was doing to her body, but she couldn't stop it. Her body belonged to him, or at least that's what it felt like.

“You don't want to talk about it now?”

“Brute, come on, please.”

He sighed. “But I am ready to talk about it, and you've got a better chance of talking to me about it now than you do tomorrow, or the day after.”

She gritted her teeth as he began to pull out of her, just slowly, and then he held himself so that only the tip of his cock was inside her. This wasn't funny, nor was it fair.

“Brute!”

“You see, Faith, I see two things. One, you really, really, really want to be fucked and I get it. I want to fuck you. Trust me, there is nothing my dick wants more than to be inside you, but you want to talk about what happens afterward.”

“Brute, please.”

“I love it when you beg, baby, but you see, I love it when you beg for my cock, not for me to stop. Do you want me to stop?”

“No!”

“Then why don’t we make a deal? You stop asking what is going to happen after, and we just focus on you getting used to the feel of my cock?”

It was pointless arguing with him, but then she knew there were going to be plenty more times to ask.

“Deal,” she said.

Brute knew he couldn’t keep her locked up in his bedroom. What he didn’t expect was her ability to become a maid. Faith had been with them now for two weeks. For five days of those two weeks, he was able to keep her in his room and just enjoy her. Duty had called, so he had no choice but to learn to share her, which hadn’t been easy. He didn’t want to share his woman. And that was even more crazy. Faith wasn’t *his woman*. She was his virgin, that was true, but she didn’t belong to him.

Once he had his fill of her, anyone could have her, but until then, that wasn’t going to happen.

Seeing as he couldn’t keep Faith locked in his bedroom waiting for him, he had no choice but to tell the boys she was hands off. If he caught anyone trying to bed her, he’d consider it a personal insult to him, and there would be hell to pay.

He didn’t want to start a fight over a woman, but when it came to Faith, it was like he couldn’t fucking think straight. She had gotten into his head, and he knew that was a bad feeling to have, but he also knew the feeling would soon pass.

That was all it was—a feeling. Nothing important. It would last for a short time, and then he’d go back to being normal and Faith could end up being like any other pussy in the clubhouse.

At first, the boys hadn’t liked her. They clearly didn’t like being threatened with their dicks cut off if they touched her.

There was just something about Faith, though. She had broken down their walls, and he had a feeling it had to do with that innocent, charming, butter-wouldn't-melt smile. Did she even realize what she was doing? He doubted it. If she did, she had fooled them all.

Little by little, Faith had stopped them all from hating her just because of her family bloodline. She cooked for them, cleaned, and helped them when they were drunk while she waited for him. Not once had Faith complained.

The clubhouse had never looked so clean before, and he hired heavily vetted cleaners to come around twice a week to clean the place up. None of them had done as good a job as Faith. He no longer stuck to the floor. There were no shards of glass from broken beer bottles and glasses. Condoms were cleared away. The bathrooms no longer stunk either.

Running fingers through his hair, he stood at his office window, taking a long drink of beer as he watched her.

She'd refused some of the clothes the other women had worn. Faith wore a pair of jeans and one of his old shirts that she'd tied at the waist. She looked cute and in control. He knew the women were not impressed by her. They didn't like the competition, but they didn't seem to know there was no competition. Faith was ahead of them in every sense of the word.

For two weeks, he'd been able to avoid the topic she wanted to talk about. Her life. The danger she was in.

He knew Sergey had gotten the bloodied dress and his note. Brute took another long swig of his drink. So far, there hadn't been any retaliation, but he knew stealing Faith away had cost Sergey some business. Rumor had it, Paul Butterworth had closed the docks to Sergey and he didn't have anything else Paul wanted.

Paul had wanted a virgin, a woman close to Sergey that would tie him in with the Golubev Bratva and create an even stronger tie. Nikki had a daughter, but there was only one

detail missing—she'd already lost her virginity. Faith's purity had been the draw.

He took another long sip of his beer, and he knew all about that draw. Faith had enraptured him. Brute couldn't remember a time he'd spent this long with a single woman. The point of the club, of breaking all the rules, was not to bed the same woman more than twice, otherwise they started to get ideas. They started to think about marriage, and he didn't want to think about any of that shit. Not for a single second.

He wasn't going to marry Faith. She was a means to an end, and he figured the draw had been denying himself the pleasure of her. He wanted what all men wanted, what he couldn't have. It was fucked up and insane.

"I got a call. Golubev is going to make his move," Road said.

"Make sure all the guys are ready," Brute said, without looking behind him.

"You know they're going to kill her the first chance they get."

"They're not going to get that chance," he said, gripping his bottle tighter. It didn't mean anything that he couldn't stand the thought of something bad happening to her. None of it made sense to him, but it also didn't matter. She was a human being, that was why he cared. Faith was an innocent in all of this. She had no way of knowing that he intentionally sought her out and planned to take her virginity, the second time.

"Brute, you and I both know they won't forget this. Sergey will keep coming until she's dead."

He turned to look at Road.

"And? You think we can't protect her?"

"I think you don't even know why you want to."

"Road, get the fuck out before I forget we're friends." He pointed toward the door, not the least bit interested in

whatever conversation Road wanted or insightful bullshit he thought he had to share. None of it would be good.

Road didn't get it. He didn't understand.

"Does she know you sent the dress to her grandfather?" Road asked.

"Get the fuck out, Road, now. We'll handle whatever comes at us. We always have. For now, we celebrate this fucking victory."

Road snorted. "Yeah, a victory. All we did was make a woman's life a mess. There is no getting out of this place, so you better hope that all she wants to do is serve all fucking day." With that, Road left.

Brute wasn't interested in hearing his bullshit, moral fucking speech. Road didn't play the moral road and neither did he. They had killed plenty of people in their time who didn't deserve it. They were not going to kill Faith. He wasn't going to have his fun and send her out in the cold. He'd protect her, and the club would. Her ass was owned by the club.

There was a knock at the door and he called, "Come in!" before taking a long drink of his beer. It was no longer cold, and the taste was not for him. He wrinkled his nose and leaned forward, putting the bottle on the table.

Faith stepped into his office.

"I haven't seen you all day," she said.

"I've been busy," Brute said.

He turned toward her. Brute had every intention of sending her off and telling her to get the fuck out of his office, but seeing that cute little tie at her waist, and her long brown hair coming around her in curled waves, made him pause. Even though he had fucked her every single way he could think of, seeing her looking so cute and fucking edible, he needed more.

"Come here," he said, holding his hand out.

Faith didn't make him weak. It had just been a long time since he enjoyed the pleasure of a woman.

She didn't say a word and slid her hand into his as she came closer. Brute pulled her down onto his lap, and then she let out a giggle but moved to straddle him. He gripped her waist and then ran his hands down her ass, cupping the full ripe flesh. "I've got to say I love these jeans, but they're in the way."

Faith kissed his lips, wriggled off his lap, but she didn't go far as she pushed them down her thighs. She wore a pair of sheer lace white panties and moved back into position with her legs either side of his waist.

"Is this much better, sir?" she asked.

He put his hands back on her ass and gave a little groan. "Sir ... I like that."

"Well, I have it on good authority that you're the boss around here and if I want anything in life, then I've got to be a good girl and ask you for it."

He groaned. "You're going to be a good girl?" he asked.

"Yes, for you." She ran her hands up his chest, taking the shirt with her, and he helped her pull it off over his head. Faith stroked across his ink.

"You know, if you're wanting some ink of your own, you can have it."

She placed her finger against the doves with the skulls coming out of it. "How do I get one of these?" she asked.

Brute took position of her hand, the one that had the dove, which had been forced upon her.

"You pledge your loyalty to me, to the club, and promise you won't ever go back. Going back is a death sentence."

"Then I'll do it," Faith said.

"Faith, it will mean you're one of us."

“You and I both know I can’t go back. Not with what I’ve done. Not with what has happened. They’re going to kill me anyway.”

“This is your last choice?” he asked.

“No, this was my choice before everything was taken away,” Faith said. “I didn’t want to go back, but I ... you had a man you needed to bargain for.”

“Tank.” He’d been keeping himself to the basement, training, and practicing, trying to get back all Sergey had tried to take. He often said he was fucked in the head after what he had seen.

Brute kissed the inside of her wrist and pushed some of her hair out of the way. “You didn’t mind?”

“He didn’t deserve to be hurt. I could see that. They had hurt him really bad and I haven’t seen him ... is he okay?”

“He’s fine.”

“You know, a lot of people wouldn’t accept being traded.”

She shrugged. “I guess I’m not like a lot of people. My mother wasn’t the best one in the world, but I still loved her and mourned her after she was gone. I still miss her. It’s crazy, I know, because she was so cruel and she had her own agenda as well. She wanted to be better placed with my grandfather, but they would never let her.”

He had a feeling Nikki had something to do with that, but he wasn’t about to tell her that her father was the reason.

“If you will have me, Brute, I’d like to stay.”

She had nowhere else to go and even though he would never admit it, he didn’t want her to leave.

Chapter Twelve

The ink on the inside of her wrist was a little itchy. It was covered and the tattooist had been clear about keeping it clean and putting on lotion. Brute had promised to help her and he'd been there while she got it done.

Faith had no choice but to wait for the guys to vote on it. She didn't know exactly what it meant. All Brute said was that she was now one of them. The club would demand her loyalty. Nothing had changed, not really. Some of the women were not happy with her, and most often glared at her. She didn't mind. It had always been quite hard for her to make friends. Again, she never understood or knew why. She didn't repel anyone, or cause any waves, but she always figured it was because of her mother and who her mother enjoyed as company. The Bratva were always a scary bunch. Now at the clubhouse, one of the guys, Igor, had told her it was because she had the full attention of Brute—the one they all wanted.

She placed one of the bed sheets on the washing line, and placed several pegs over it. The weather was set to change, but until it did, she was hopeful of enjoying some fresh sheets.

“So, we meet again.”

She spun around to see Tank.

“Tank,” she said. On instinct, she went to him and hugged him.

He had lost a lot of weight since she last saw him. The bruises were gone and Brute had told her Tank was healing. There didn't seem to be any sign of broken bones or indication of pain.

Tank gave her a hug and then she pulled away. Brute had told her if she didn't want to make waves, then she wasn't to flirt with any of the men.

Faith hadn't told him she didn't know how to flirt, and besides, she considered herself Brute's. She didn't want any other man, and that was probably an insane feeling to have, but she had it.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm doing better."

"You look great," she said.

"I look like shit. You and I both know that. It wouldn't be ideal for you to start lying, Faith."

"Oh, I didn't mean—"

Tank held up his hand and she went silent.

"You don't need to talk," Tank said. "I was just giving you some advice. I know I look like shit. I have your grandfather to thank for that."

"I'm so sorry."

"Don't do that shit. Don't apologize for him. You didn't fucking do it, so don't keep taking the blame for stuff you didn't do."

She felt like her cheeks were on fire.

"You know your life is in danger, don't you?" Tank said.

"I know."

"Is that why you joined?"

Brute had told her that a couple of the brothers had doubts about her. They didn't want a Golubev in the club. Faith didn't believe herself to be a Golubev. She was a Dawson. Her mother raised her as a Dawson, but she had never craved her father's affection or attention. She used to love her grandfather, but that was the funny thing about being hit and beaten—that kind of love had a way of turning to hate very fucking quickly.

Faith hated her grandfather. She hated everything to do with Golubev and told him as such.

Tank looked at her.

“You can believe me or not. I know it’s hard for you all to believe, but at one time, you were all part of the Golubev. You all have your own story and now I have mine.” She shrugged. “I won’t betray the club and I know my life now has limits. There’s nothing I can do about that.”

There was a long pause and she went back to the washing.

“We’ll protect you, Faith,” Tank said. “All the brothers will.”

She didn’t get a chance to ask him what that meant as he turned on his heel and walked away. She was tempted to call him back, to understand what he meant, but Tank unnerved her.

“Tank hasn’t been the same since he came back.”

She gasped as Brute was suddenly on the opposite side of the laundry line.

“Brute, you scared me.”

He winked at her. “What are you doing?”

“It would seem you and your boys have a penchant for clean, sun-dried sheets on your beds.”

“You also make their beds as well, don’t you?” he asked.

“I have to keep busy and earn my keep.” She picked up the basket and Brute pulled her in close, pressing his lips against her neck.

“You earn your keep with me.”

She rolled her eyes. “Not in that way, I don’t. That is all for fun and I don’t do it because I have to. I do it because I want to.”

Brute took the basket from her, letting it drop to the ground, and then pulled her in close.

“You want to?”

“Yes.”

She felt her cheeks starting to heat as he smirked at her. For some reason, Brute was able to take her words and make them sound so dirty, without that being her intention.

“You need to get your head out of the gutter,” she said.

“Or, I could be thinking of how perfect your pussy is, and that you were too busy this morning to wake up beside me.”

“I had promised everyone some pancakes,” she said. “So I had to get up early to make a whole batch of them. Did you not like my pancakes?”

“I loved your pancakes. They were delicious, but now, baby, I want something more. Something just for me.”

Faith giggled as he pulled her beside a shed. She had already explored every part of the grounds, or at least every part that Brute said she could.

The shed had a few bottles of weed killer, a couple of cans of paint, and some tools to help keep the yard clear. She could only imagine there was a small yard at some point, but most of it had been tarmacked over. There was a small selection of grass, and she had seen most of the women sunbathing, in the nude. They didn't seem to care who was walking by.

Brute had been able to find a place for his clubhouse that was secluded.

Cars passed all the time and she had taken note of them going by with a great deal of speed as well, which was quite funny.

She gave a little chuckle as Brute pulled her into the shed. It was damp and stunk of old wood. He pressed her up against the door. During her one and only visit to the shed, she had taken a duster. Yep, she and spiders and cobwebs didn't mix well, so she cleaned the shed. She liked to clean. It wasn't

a hobby, but it was something she got into the habit of a long time ago.

“I’m starting to think I need to buy you some dresses or skirts, because these jeans are a pain in the ass,” Brute said.

He spun her around, putting her hands flat against the door.

“But I’ve never let a bit of denim get in the way of what I want.”

“And what do you want?” she asked, playing along.

“I want your soaking-wet pussy wrapped around my dick. I want to hear you scream.”

“What makes you think I’m wet?” She tried for coy.

He released the button of her jeans, followed by the zipper, and he tugged it down. She let out a little moan as he gave her ass a slap the moment he had pushed the jeans down her hips.

He gave a tut. “I don’t think I like a tease, Faith.” He slid a hand between her thighs. A single finger glided between her slit, touching her clit, and then moving back, going toward her entrance.

She sunk her teeth into her bottom lip, trying to contain the sounds, but it was next to impossible. Brute worked magic with his fingers, and she was no match for him.

“Let me hear it,” he said.

She gasped and then moaned as he twisted two fingers inside her, to press his thumb against her clit. Faith felt her arousal deepen. She was so wet, almost soaking wet, and he continued to play with her, working her body.

“You’re so fucking beautiful,” he said. “I love how much your pussy wants me.”

Faith clenched her hands into fists, trying to keep control, but she was so close.

“When you come, you’re going to do so all over my dick,” he said.

He pulled his fingers from her pussy, but she let out a whimper, not wanting him to stop. Brute didn’t make her wait long as his cock started to slide inside her, going in hard and fast, fucking her. His hands went to her hips, holding on as he took her, over and over again. The sound of their flesh connecting filled the air.

Suddenly, Brute slammed balls-deep inside her, but then he didn’t move. He stayed perfectly still and delved between her thighs, working her clit. She whimpered.

With his length inside her, each touch against her clit was like a pulse, and she felt so full. Faith didn’t think it was going to be possible to come, but he thrust her over the edge with just a few light touches.

It was impossible to deny him and she didn’t want to. There was no holding back, and she came hard for him.

Brute continued to play with her pussy, drawing her to that edge, and much to her surprise, he pushed her into a second orgasm. His name spilled from her lips like a mantra. She couldn’t help herself. She loved the touch and feel of him.

After he’d given her the second orgasm, he removed his fingers from her clit, grabbed her hips, and then drove in hard and deep, fucking her harder than he had before. He was brutal, hard, and she loved every second of it. She didn’t want it to end, but all too soon, he came, filling her up. She felt wave upon wave of his orgasm as it flooded her pussy.

Faith didn’t know what the future held, not for her, not for them, and that was the only thing that terrified her right now.

Brute didn’t like this.

He wasn’t used to waiting for an attack. He’d never been the kind of guy who sat on his ass waiting for shit to happen,

but right now, that felt very much like what he was doing, and he was pissed off with waiting.

Golubev hadn't attacked. He had it on good authority an attack was imminent, but so far, nothing.

Running a hand down his face, he walked through the clubhouse. Some of the guys were drinking. Music played, but it was on softly, as no one wanted to piss him off.

Some of the men and women were outside. It was a quiet night. Still.

He was about to head for the door when Faith came back in carrying a bunch of empty bottles.

She had a smile on her lips, which grew wider when she saw him. "Hey, Brute," she said.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Getting the guys some beer." She walked past him, but stopped, went onto her toes, and kissed him. Faith didn't wear heels. She was more of a flats kind of girl, and he didn't mind that about her. She walked around the bar, and he saw her put the bottles in the recycle bin, and then grab several more from the fridge.

The ink she had gotten on her wrist was all cleaned up. It matched his ink. He had told the tattooist what to do. All the brothers had their own ink, and they all knew what he'd done with Faith's matching his. Everyone but Faith knew what he'd done. It was why the women didn't like her.

There were no "owned" ladies in the club. There was not a single woman who was married or taken exclusively by any of the guys. The pussy was free for all. By making Faith take the same ink as him, he had staked his claim. She had no idea that everyone saw it. With it being on her wrist, no one would be able to deny ignorance. Faith was his and belonged to him.

It was only supposed to be some fun, but as the days wore on and turned into weeks and months, he knew Faith

would be a pain in his ass. The guys respected her, because he demanded it. They all knew what it meant.

Faith hummed as she came back from behind the bar and stopped in front of him. “Oh, I’ve been meaning to ask you something,” Faith said.

He looked into her eyes and waited.

“What happened to my wedding dress?” she asked.

“Your wedding dress?”

“Yeah, we had it that night, you know, and, uh, I haven’t seen it since.”

He loved it when she went all innocent and red-faced. She looked so cute and sweet. He’d fucked her and knew there was no longer an innocent bone in her body, apart from her ass. He’d not claimed her ripe, juicy ass, but he’d been toying with her, preparing her.

“Why do you want to know?” he asked.

“I wanted to burn it. I think it could be a lot of fun.”

“I destroyed it,” he said.

Well, he assumed Golubev destroyed it.

“Ah, no worries. Was it fun?” Faith asked.

“Yes.”

He couldn’t help but look past Faith’s shoulder to see Road sitting in the corner, enjoying a beer. Road knew not to say shit to her. Faith would never know what he did.

“Cool. I better go and get them their beer.”

Brute watched her go. The door closed and then he heard it, the sound of tires squeaking and the unimaginable sound of gunshots. Brute had already drawn his weapon and run out of the clubhouse. He didn’t give a shit who it was, he took aim and fired, running straight toward the gate.

Years of experience told him not to go for the windows, but for the tires, and that’s exactly what he did.

They weren't prepared for his men waiting. While Brute took out the two tires facing him, his men had taken out the back two. He owned the building across the street and he made sure three men were there at all times. They saw what was coming.

Brute heard screams, along with his name being called, but he didn't stop. He walked into the street where the car was stopped. The driver had hit a lamp. With no tires and no driver, the car had literally come to a stop. They must have slowed down to take the hit.

Hail, Krill, and Igor came out of the opposite building.

One of the men were trying to climb out of the car. The moment he saw Brute, he began to scream and clearly scramble for his weapon, but he was no match for him. Brute yanked him out of the car and he saw the sign on the back of his neck—a single dove.

“Please don't shoot. Don't shoot!” he said, shaking.

This was a first for Brute. He looked at the soldier. “How old are you?”

“Eighteen.”

Brute paused and looked into the car to see all the men within the car looked young.

“Who sent you?” he asked.

“Golubev. He promised us ten grand each to get some chick. All we had to do was put a bullet in her. Please don't shoot. Please.” He was already crying and the scent of urine became strong.

“You swore your loyalty to the Golubev. You knew what your actions were causing.”

And then, he shot him straight through the head. The body dropped to the ground, and Road came over.

“What is it?” Road asked.

“Since when did Golubev hire teenage boys to do his bidding?” Brute asked.

He didn’t like the feeling that swept over him.

“He never has,” Road said.

“Find out who they are. I want all the details,” he said.

“Faith’s hit!” Tank said, calling out to him.

Brute swung toward the clubhouse and it was like his life went in slow motion. He had been so focused on the hit, on Golubev, he hadn’t thought about Faith, but she had walked out of the clubhouse. It had been seconds. That was all it had taken.

He ran back to the clubhouse and Faith had been taken inside. The brothers had put the tables together and Faith was on them. Her shirt had been ripped open, and he saw the blood.

“The doctor is already on the way,” Sarge said. “I’m doing what I can to stop the bleeding.”

Brute looked at her stomach, blood was coming from her side and from her chest as well. Faith looked so pale. They had no choice but to get her to the hospital.

Brute picked her up in his arms, and the brothers already knew what he was doing. Road had pulled out the car. There was no way he’d have been able to safely take her to the hospital on his bike. She was limp in his arms.

“I’ve got you, Faith. Don’t let go. Do you hear me? Don’t fucking let go.” He gritted his teeth, climbed into the back of the car, and did something he’d not done in a long time. He begged.

He fucking begged, for whoever was listening to him, to make sure she fucking lived.

Chapter Thirteen

Brute hated hospitals.

Nothing good ever came from a hospital. Not in his experience. His hands were covered in dried blood. He paced the waiting room, not giving a shit that he scared the other customers.

The doctors and nurses had dealt with all the other patients, keeping the waiting room clear. No one had stopped them.

Brute wasn't alone. Road, Igor, Hail, Sarge, Nikolai, as well as a couple of the women had come to the hospital. Faith had been taken into surgery. She'd been unresponsive when they arrived at the hospital.

He was angry. Golubev had paid children—teenagers. He'd never fucking done that before. Brute knew he had done it on purpose. Golubev thought he wouldn't take on kids. They made their choice and they had fired at them. He would do whatever was necessary to protect his men, to protect his club. What Golubev was doing was fucking cowardly.

With his hand clenched into a fist, he needed to hit something, so he slammed his fist through the wall. In doing so, he heard the screams. He turned toward the receptionist, who looked terrified.

“Add it to my bill,” he said. “I'll pay for it.” He began to pace.

“You need to get your shit together,” Road said.

“Shut the fuck up. Do you realize that she could be dead! She could be fucking bleeding out.”

“She's in the best place,” Road said. “You know that.”

He shook his head. “This is fucked up.”

“This is what Golubev wants. He wants to get inside your head. Don't let him.”

Brute knew he wasn't in his head, but what he was thinking about was a way to make that son of a bitch pay. He didn't give a shit about anything else. Golubev needed to pay.

The door that Faith had disappeared through opened, but it wasn't the doctor. Brute had warned the man that had taken her, that if she died, he'd be next.

He needed to know what was going on.

Road stood close to him, clearly waiting for him to explode again.

Brute paced up and down and as he did, he saw Faith's beautiful smile, the way she looked holding a care package, and he'd known her life was going to be different after that. The way she walked around the clubhouse, handing out food, cooking, cleaning, looking every single part the woman he had wanted.

Fuck. Nothing could happen to her. He didn't like feeling this helpless. Brute was used to hurting, torturing, killing, not helping people. What the fuck had Faith done? She had gotten into his head.

"What the fuck?"

At the sound of the club brother's words, Brute turned in their direction. The last person he expected to see walking into the hospital was Nikki Golubev. Brute didn't think, he reacted.

"Kids!" He yelled the word and drew back his fist, hitting Nikki hard.

The other man went down to the floor and Brute pulled him back to his feet. His punch had only stunned Nikki for a moment. When he went to hit him again, Nikki was prepared and blocked him. Anger surged through him, but Nikki grabbed his face.

"Focus, Brute. Fucking focus right now. Do you think I wouldn't have warned you if I had the chance? Think. Who told you about the wedding day. The journey. Remember!"

Seconds passed.

Brute knew that Nikki was a fucking traitor. He was a man not to be trusted but when Nikki had requested a meeting at no-man's-land, a private one-on-one meeting, Brute had taken it. He had arrived at no-man's-land, he'd been packing, and was shocked to see that Nikki had kept to his word. No one else was there. It had just been the two of them.

Nikki had told him about Paul Butterworth, what this marriage meant to Sergey. Faith's role, the day, the journey, and that Nikki wouldn't be in the limousine, and would make sure his men were not present that day.

It was up to Brute what he did. Brute had been warned, it would be the one and only chance he would have to get Faith.

He'd been given the warning a couple of days in advance. He hadn't known what he was going to do until that morning, when he decided he didn't have a choice. He couldn't let her go. There was no way he was going to allow Faith to turn into Sergey and Paul's puppet. She would be married to Paul, but he had no doubt she'd be used for whatever means possible. So he'd taken her.

And now, Faith was in the hospital.

"Do you know he's using kids?" Brute asked.

"How is she?"

He noticed Nikki wasn't answering the question.

"Answer me!"

"I want to know how my daughter is doing," Nikki said.

"You think you've got the right to request that shit? You've never done anything for her."

"I kept her out of this life for the longest fucking time!" Nikki yelled.

In all the years Brute had known this bastard, Nikki had always seemed a little dumb, a little slow. Like a puppet his

father could play with. Yes, he was a bastard that had fathered a lot of children, but now Brute looked at him.

“She was meant to stay fucking clear of it! I did everything I could to keep her away from him. Away from all of this and you...” Nikki stopped and clenched his jaw. “You had to take her. You had to use her!”

“You know why.”

“Sergey cared that she looked like my sister until she became a teenager. Until she became a woman in her own right. Then, after she passed that age, like with everything else, she became a commodity. Something for him to use at the right time!”

Brute looked at Nikki. “You want me to believe you care about your daughter? A girl you ignored. A woman you were willing to see married off.”

“Do you think I wanted her married off?” Nikki shook his head. “I didn’t love her mother. I thought she was a slut and a piece of work, but Faith ... I knew she was different, and like any father would, I did what I could to help protect her, but like always a fucking asshole gets in the way.”

Brute slammed his fist against Nikki’s face, and that was it. He didn’t know exactly what happened, but Nikki hit back.

Faith was out of surgery, but she hadn’t woken up yet.

Brute placed the ice pack against his face. He sat at one end of Faith’s room, Nikki at the other end.

“I’m going to have to get back,” Nikki said.

Road was in the room, keeping an eye on the situation.

The club had torn him and Nikki apart, held them still. He’d been too busy fighting Nikki to see that the doctor had come out.

Faith had lost a lot of blood, but the bullets hadn’t hit any major arteries and they were able to fix the damage. Brute

had also learned some news he wasn't expecting. Faith was pregnant.

He'd not asked her to get on the pill, and he hadn't used any condoms.

After finding out his daughter was pregnant, Nikki had gotten in another punch. Brute hadn't retaliated. He was in a state of shock.

Faith was pregnant.

He was going to be a father.

Golubev was going to keep coming.

"I've got to kill your father," he said.

"I know," Nikki said.

"It has to be at the right time," Brute said.

"If you take out my dad now, chaos will erupt."

"You'll take over."

"Brute," Road said. "It doesn't work that way. Not when you take out the dad, and if Nikki is found to be working with you, they'll turn on him."

He couldn't help it. Brute knew all of this, and he burst out laughing. It was just so fucking funny.

"Shit, do you realize you're going to have a grandchild and that makes you and me related?"

"I had nothing to do with your family," Nikki said. "I didn't make that decision, I tried to stop it."

"You know, you could join us," Brute said. "You may as fucking well. We've got a bunch of Fallen. It's all in the title. You'll fit right in."

"You can't kill my dad yet, but there will come a time when you can," Nikki said, standing up. "And when that time comes, we'll deal with the consequences." He looked toward his daughter. "Please take care of her."

And with that, Nikki left the hospital room.

“If Golubev finds out his son is helping you, he’ll kill him.”

Brute took a deep breath and released it. “Not my problem.”

“He’s your inside man, isn’t he?” Road asked.

“In all honesty, I didn’t have a fucking clue who he was until he requested the meet.” He shrugged. “There are some men and women on the inside. They don’t like Golubev, and I’ve kept contact with them. With him expanding into teenagers as soldiers, his control is slipping.”

“You and I both know that isn’t the case. We were all kids, teenagers. We would have all done whatever it took to work for Golubev, to do as he asked,” Road said, moving to take the empty seat.

The rest of the guys had gone to get some food.

Brute felt a headache coming on. The beeping of the machines was not helping. He felt close to losing his shit again. The doctor had said she was out of the woods, now they were waiting for her to wake up.

Faith didn’t know she was pregnant.

“Do you think she should keep the baby?” Brute asked.

“Do you not want kids?”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“It’s not my question to answer. I’m not the one about to be a father. It’s up to you and whether you think you can take care of Faith and a small child. This is on you, Brute.” Road got to his feet. “You know it’s not going to stop. While every Golubev Bratva lives, our lives will never be easy, but that doesn’t mean we can’t live. The club will always have your back.”

Road patted his shoulder before leaving the room.

Brute didn't know what he wanted.

"A baby?" Faith asked.

He'd been so focused on Nikki and then on Road, he'd not seen Faith open her eyes. He got to his feet and walked toward her.

"You're awake."

"What happened?" she asked, frowning.

"There was a drive-by."

"I got shot?"

"Yes."

"Why am I in the hospital?" she asked, and then tried to sit up. She let out a wince.

Brute helped her as best he could. The nurses came in, trying to talk to her, take her blood pressure, look at the machines. He saw it was exhausting Faith, and very firmly he told them to leave, to give her a minute.

Once they were gone, he expected twenty questions, but Faith lifted her arm and pressed her fingers to her temple. It was the arm that hadn't been shot at.

"A baby? You were talking about a baby."

He sat on the edge of the bed, being careful not to jar her or cause her any more pain. Taking her hand within his, he pressed a kiss to the inside of her wrist.

"You're pregnant, Faith."

"Oh," she said.

She opened and closed her mouth, glancing down at where he held her hands.

"And you don't want the baby?" Faith asked.

"I..." He'd never been at a loss for words.

"Is it because of me?"

He saw the tears in her eyes and he hated them.

“No, it’s not because of you.” He cupped her face, stroking her cheek. “It’s not. A baby complicates things.”

“But, what do we do, because if you don’t want a baby...?”

“We’ll deal with it.”

She gasped. “I ... I don’t want to ... kill it. I can’t do that. I know our situation is messed up and that you don’t love me, and this is all just a bit of fun to you. I will take care of it.”

“Faith, stop,” he said.

“I know I’m not good enough.”

He pressed his head toward her, leaning over her. All he wanted to do was get her to stop, to calm down, to not worry. The panic was making the machines beep faster and the nurses were waiting outside.

“I’m not going to let you get rid of our baby,” he said. “There is a lot we need to talk about, but you’ve got to heal. We’re going to let the nurses do what they need to do, and then we can talk about this, can’t we? Everything else can wait.”

He needed her to calm down, and he needed some time to think. A baby changed everything.

Chapter Fourteen

Faith knew Brute was avoiding her.

She'd stayed at the hospital for a few days and then she'd been given the all-clear. The club had a doctor willing to keep an eye on her bandages, so Road and Tank had been there to pick her up at the hospital. The nurses had given her a bunch of leaflets about pregnancy and what to do and how to handle it. Faith had read them all at the hospital.

She wasn't suffering with morning sickness. One of the nurses had told her to count herself lucky. Pregnancy was different for every woman, she might get cravings, she might get the sickness. The journey would be hers to take.

And she still hadn't seen Brute.

Arriving at the clubhouse, several of the guys welcomed her, as did a few of the women. They had visited her in the hospital as well. She had enjoyed their company, but none of them would tell her what Brute was doing. She missed him.

Tank didn't allow her to get too friendly as he urged her away from their hugs and their concerns.

He led the way, taking her toward the main rooms, but he didn't lead her to Brute's room. He took her to one of the bedrooms on the top floor. Entering the room, she saw it had been decorated pink and purple—two of her favorite colors—and it surprised her. The main clubhouse was quite dark and the rooms she'd been inside were all a mixture of dark colors.

Whenever she asked the guys about a spot of color, they complained, told her they had their domains and she was to keep her womanness out of the equation.

She hadn't changed a thing. All she did was wash and clean for them, and kept everything else looking the same. This room was all feminine.

“Wow,” she said, stepping into the room. “This is ... did you guys do this?”

“We figured you would need a place to relax, to call your own. Seeing as you’re part of us now, there is no other place for you to be.”

“Not while my grandfather is alive.”

“Not while the Golubev is alive,” he said.

Faith frowned. “But you’re able to live. They don’t come after you all the time.”

Tank threw his head back and laughed. “Sweetheart, you’ve got no fucking clue, have you?” He took her bags from her, placing them in the corner of the room. “We all live with a target on our backs. That’s how I was taken. I let down my guard for just a second and they got me. The club, this part of the city, is our only safe haven. They can’t get us while we’re in here. Only when we go out there, and if we’re not together, we’re at risk.”

Faith frowned. “But if you are enemies, why did they let you go? I don’t mean to be insulting, but why did they let you live?”

Tank snorted. “As you know, I only lived because of you. You were taken and we now know why you meant so much to Golubev alive. You’d have made him a fortune. He wanted something else from Brute before you were taken. Golubev is cocky. He’s an asshole and he’s ignorant. He believes he’s the only one powerful enough here, but he’s not. We all defied him by living. Some of us, he did leave for dead, not expecting us to rise. We all have a story to tell, as do you. Golubev will pay for his sins in the end.”

“Are you sure about that?” she asked. “I’ve heard you all talking before, and he seems to find ways of getting out of everything. Doesn’t that scare you?”

He shook his head. “No. One day, I’ll kill him.”

“What did he do to you?” Faith asked. She stopped, opened, and closed her mouth. “I don’t mean ... this time, but what sent you on the path to...?” She couldn’t bring herself to finish.

“That is a story for another time. Until then, just relax. Brute will come by.”

She felt an overwhelming sadness sweep over her. “He won’t.” She had a feeling finding out about her pregnancy had sent him away.

He didn’t want to be a father, at least not to her child. She wanted to put her hands on her stomach, but with Tank still in the room, she couldn’t do it.

“It will get better,” Tank said.

Faith didn’t say anything, and seconds later she heard the door close. No, it wouldn’t get better. She knew that. Brute had left her. He was done with her.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, she couldn’t help but notice how comfortable it was. What was his intention now? Wait until she gave birth?

She and Brute hadn’t talked about the consequences of her going against her grandfather. Faith knew her life was in danger. He’d tried to have her killed while she was inside the clubhouse grounds. She had no doubt if he could, he’d kill her.

The baby complicated everything.

Faith tried not to cry, but it was next to impossible. The stupid hormones were wreaking havoc with everything.

She had no idea what to do anymore.

Brute took a long draw of the cigarette before throwing it to the ground, stamping out the end, and then blowing out. He did it slowly, methodically, waiting.

Staring down the binoculars, he watched as Golubev climbed off his little yacht. Several men surrounded him, all of them wearing the dove that marked them as his.

There was a time in his life when Brute had loved the dove, he’d been proud of it. Now, he was only interested in taking out everything Golubev held precious.

Pulling out his cell phone, he dialed the number he'd been given and watched Sergey. It rang twice and through the binoculars, he watched as the old man looked irritated at being interrupted.

It had been a long time since Brute had seen a young woman hanging off Sergey's every word, but the man had caved to young pussy.

"Who is this?" Sergey asked.

"Attempting to keep the accent in place for the cunt beside you?" Brute asked.

Sergey stopped and gave the signal for his men to swarm in close. Brute laughed as the young woman was left out in the cold. Brute was tempted to kill her right now, a bullet straight between the eyes, but there would come a time for that.

"Brute, how did you get this number?"

"Same as I get all things. I take it. You and I, we've got some unfinished business."

"The way I see it, you've taken my precious granddaughter and I have taken nothing from you."

"You killed my whole family. You tried to kill me, but like everything in life, you failed. Faith is alive and well. Not those boys you sent." He tsked down the line. "You must be losing your touch. Real men don't want to work for you anymore?"

"You talk about real men but refuse to show yourself. Why don't you be a man and show yourself?" Sergey spun around, clearly knowing he was being watched.

Brute clicked a button and behind the old man, his precious yacht with Paul Butterworth went up in smoke.

Sergey didn't have time to make arrangements to improve business with Paul.

He saw the panic that Sergey tried to hide and he smiled.

“Do you have any idea what you’ve done?” Sergey asked. “I am going to fucking kill you.”

“No, Golubev, I’m going to kill you. Not today, not tomorrow, but someday soon, you and I are going to have this meet. I am going to destroy everything Golubev, and when I do, I’m going to make you watch your own empire fall. It’s game on. You shouldn’t have come after Faith, and I warn you, if you do, all your associates will end up like Butterworth.”

With that, he hung up his cell phone and turned away. Road, Igor, and Vlad joined him.

Sergey had gotten cocky. He’d docked his yacht which had given Brute the perfect opportunity to place the bombs and detonators to blow it up. He had no idea that Paul Butterworth would still be on the yacht. His sources had said Sergey was keeping Paul happy, trying to figure out a way to maintain a close business relationship without the use of his granddaughter. Paul was a sucker for being wanted, so he’d not put up much of a fight when it came to following Sergey around.

Their greed had been their undoing.

He walked back to his bike. He didn’t have to worry about the cleanup. Sergey would handle it.

“Do you think this is about to create a war?” Igor asked, looking way too excited.

“Don’t you worry about a thing. You’re going to get your fun.” And with that, he straddled his bike, turned over the ignition, and listened to it purr.

His and the club’s life would forever be in danger. On the road, on his way back to his part of the city where his club was, he couldn’t help but think about Faith. She was back from the hospital. Tank had texted him that she seemed upset. Brute had a feeling he knew why she was upset and it was all his fault. He had no idea how he was going to make this fucking work, but he knew he had to do it.

Picking up speed, he wanted to get back to the clubhouse. This was not an ideal life for anyone. There was no room for women, no room for a family, but he had no choice.

Once he arrived at the clubhouse, he gave the order for Road to make everyone aware of a church meeting.

Brute wanted to see Faith, but instead, he walked straight into the church room and took his seat at the head of the table. Staring down at the imprint of the club patch on the table, the skulls rising out of the doves, he took a deep breath.

One by one, the brothers filtered in. No cell phones. No devices. There was nothing in the room that could have them recorded. It was a plain room, with just a single light that hung over the table. Pictures of the club were around. Their leather cuts, shit like that.

Brute didn't like to keep things plain. Loyalty to the club was always important to him.

Road was the last one to enter and he closed and locked the door.

"We took out Golubev's yacht. Paul Butterworth and a few staff were still inside." There was a chorus of cheers.

"He's going to be so pissed."

"There will be payback," Tank said, leaning forward.

"No, this was payback and he knows it. Sergey is going to have to deal with the fallout. It will give us some time to hit a few more spots," Brute said. There would be associates who would learn the news of Paul's death and know it was the Evil Fallen Bratva MC that had done it. They knew of the war with the Bratva. They run the risk of being caught in the middle and for some men, facing death, they couldn't do it. "The Golubev Bratva will fall."

Again, another chorus of cheers. All the brothers wanted the Golubev Bratva to crumble. That was their main goal in life. They each had a fight to pick and Brute made sure to

promise all the men that they would get what they hoped to find.

He wouldn't allow any of them to be out in the cold. He would see that they would all get their revenge.

“What about Faith?” Tank asked, when the cheers had quieted down. “We all know she's pregnant with your child.”

Brute ran a hand down his face and got to his feet. “I never planned to have children. From the moment I swore I would make Sergey Golubev pay, never in my wildest dreams did I see Faith, or imagine she would enter my world and fuck it up.” He'd always been honest with the men. It was how he'd gained their respect, their trust, and he wasn't going to start lying to them now. He took a deep breath and looked them in the eye.

“I am in love with Faith. I know her life is in danger. I can't send her away. She is one of us. She's mine, and there's a lot of shit I'm willing to give up, but I'm not giving her up. She's ... mine.” He had no choice but to repeat the same words.

“You might want to let Faith know that,” Tank said. “She's under the impression that you've grown bored with her.”

“Wait, does this mean you're going to be a dad?” Igor asked.

“What part of ‘she is pregnant with my child’ didn't you get?” Brute asked.

“I guess all of it. Didn't you think to bag your dick?”

He wanted to pull his gun out and shoot Igor, but instead he shook his head at the man and ignored him, and whatever other bullshit he was talking about.

“I know she's Golubev, and I know this is a lot to ask of you, but I need to know that you'll have her back and you'll have my kid's back. I don't know if it's going to be a boy or a girl, but I don't care. That child will be Bratva MC. It will be

one of us, and Faith is one of us now.” He looked at his men.
“And I will fight for her.”

“Why?” Road asked with a smirk on his face.

Brute glared at him. “Because I love her.”

Chapter Fifteen

The newly pink and purple bedroom came with an en suite, and Faith stepped out of the bathroom, wrapped in a fluffy pink towel, feeling a little better. She had placed two wraps over her wounds, with tape around them, so she could take a shower without running the risk of getting them wet. She didn't want to go back to the hospital, but she also didn't want to keep smelling either.

Faith was pretty sure she smelled worse than the garbage before it was taken away. She made a note that she would have to clean those trash cans soon. They did have a stink to them, and the last time she went out there, she was pretty sure she saw a couple of maggots as well. Totally gross.

She kept trying to think of everything other than the fact she'd been placed in a room far away from Brute. He'd not come to collect her or to see her. She tried not to think about how alone she felt. Drying her hair, she moved over to the mirror and picked up a hairbrush.

"I must make a list of all my chores. That will make my life easier. Once that is done, I can categorize them into days, and the most important job, down to the not-so-important job. Yes, I like the sound of that. Great, I'm now talking to myself, but that's fine. It's helping me to not think about anything or anyone else." She took a deep breath, then expelled it, followed by another. "See, I can handle this."

She tried not to cry, but all she kept thinking about was Brute's rejection. He hadn't even bothered to come and reject her in person. Did she mean so little to him now that he'd gotten what he wanted?

Faith hated this. She was going insane thinking about what all of this meant, and it might not mean anything at all.

After brushing her hair, she walked to the closet, expecting to see only some sweatpants and large shirts. All the clothes she'd been wearing were Brute's. This wardrobe had it

all—skirts, dresses, blouses, pants, slacks, jeans, and even some sweatpants.

“I thought you might like some clothes your own size,” Brute said, making her gasp and quickly spin around. She hadn’t heard him enter.

Had he been standing there when she was talking to herself? She hoped not. That would have been so embarrassing.

“Brute,” she said.

“Do you like it?”

“Do I like what?” she asked.

He nodded at the wardrobe. She glanced behind her a little confused and then realized he was talking about the clothes.

“Oh, yeah, right, ugh, thank you. Yes, it’s lovely.” Is this where he was going to reject her in person? Faith didn’t know what to think about that. “You ... didn’t come to pick me up.”

“I had ... errands to run,” he said.

She wondered why he hesitated. “Did you do everything you set out to do?”

“Faith, I’m not here for small talk about errands and wardrobe and shit. Sit down,” he said.

She wanted to tell him no, to stand her ground and force him to reject her while she was still standing. Instead, she didn’t know if she had the energy to fight him right now, to give him a piece of her mind.

Without arguing, she sat on the edge of the bed. Brute paced up and down in front of her. She watched him for several steps and frowned as he stopped in front of her, and then began pacing again.

There was a knock on the door, and he held his finger up. He’d not been talking. She tried to see what he was doing, but then Road and Krill walked into the room, carrying a baby

crib. They didn't linger, nor did they look at her, and left just as quickly as they arrived. She had no idea what was going on, and glanced over at the crib, before looking at Brute.

"What is this?" she asked.

"It's a crib for our baby."

"Is this some kind of peace offering?"

Brute frowned. "Peace offering? No, I ... I bought this and it was delivered an hour ago. The guys and I, we put it together. You're having my kid, Faith, and I know I can't offer you a lot. This place is not the home for a child or a woman. I'm not going to lie to you, some days you're going to fucking hate this place, but ... you're mine. You carry my ink. You carry my child, and..." He stopped and moved closer, taking her hand, and he went down on one knee. "And I don't know what the fuck you've done to me, but you carry my heart in the palm of your fucking hand."

"Brute?"

"I love you," he said.

She was so taken aback that at first she had no idea what to say. "What?"

"I love you. I don't know how it happened or when it happened but I know I can't and won't give you up." He reached out and tucked a curl behind her ear. "I love you and I don't expect you to love me."

"I do," Faith said. "It kind of scares me how I feel about you."

"You do?"

"Yeah, I do. Kind of weird, though, right? I mean, this did start out as a kidnapping. Then you traded me, and then you kind of saved me."

"Yeah, about that, your wedding dress, I didn't trash it. I kind of mailed it to your grandfather with a card that read

‘Oops’ on it. It was covered in your virgin blood and my semen.”

Faith’s mouth dropped open. “Oh. How did he take that?” she asked.

“Not well, he kind of sent a couple of teenagers to kill you.”

“They shot me.”

“Yeah, they’re dead, and also, Paul Butterworth, your ex-fiancé, is dead as well.”

“Wow,” Faith said.

“Yeah, did I ever mention that I’m not a good guy?”

“You did.”

“I should warn you as well, I intend to kill every single member of the Golubev Bratva. Sergey and Nikki and everyone who stands by them, they will all fall.”

She cupped his face. “Does that mean you’re going to kill me?”

Brute grabbed her hand. “No, because you are mine. You carry my mark on your body.” He took hold of the wrist that carried the dove. “This is us. This is you and me, and soon, we’re going to have a baby. I can’t promise you a sunshine and roses life, but I can promise you a life where I am devoted only to you. There will never be any other women. Just you. You’re all I want.”

“Brute, I’m not going anywhere.” She cupped his face and kissed him. “But I do have to wonder, why did you send me to this bedroom?”

Epilogue

Six Months Later

“I should have known you wouldn’t do anything by the book,” Road said. “You never have.”

Brute looked across the yard at his heavily pregnant wife. She was dressed all in white because today was their wedding day, and he’d insisted on her wearing a white dress. The priest hadn’t been too pleased about it, but Brute didn’t give a fuck. The moment he paid the priest, he’d shut up and married them.

Faith now belonged to him. In body, in mind, in spirit, in name. She was his and he had also, much to the shock of the club brothers, opted to wear a ring, for Faith.

In the beginning, the women had tried to steal him away, tried to prove that Faith was no different than them, but none of them could ever hold a match to his woman. They were nothing like her and for that, he was glad. Never in his wildest dreams could he imagine this year panning out the way it had. Kidnapping a woman, the bastard granddaughter of his greatest enemy, falling in love, trading her, then hoping for a time to take her back.

He had found it and now he wasn’t ever going to let her go, not for a second. Brute knew this wasn’t going to be an easy life for her. Club life was hard, even for men, so he had tried to make it as easy as possible for his woman.

Six months ago, Faith had asked him why he’d sent her to that bedroom.

“Because you’re going to need a place to call your own. This is your space to do whatever the hell you want. The brothers agreed it can be yours. You can have whatever your heart desires. I want you to be mine. That is all I ask.”

Brute had never asked, nor had he begged for anything in his life, but he knew when it came to Faith and his unborn

child, he would do everything in his power to keep them safe.

So far, Golubev hadn't retaliated. Brute wasn't going to give them the chance. One day soon, Faith would walk free. She'd walk safely, and he would make sure she had everything.

Handing his beer to Road, he walked over to his wife. He didn't care that she was talking to Tank, he pulled her into his arms and kissed her. The club brothers knew he had their backs. They knew the club was part of his heart, that he was loyal to them. They knew he had Faith. She owned his heart and fucking soul.

"I love you," he said.

"And I love you."

And that was all that mattered to him right now.

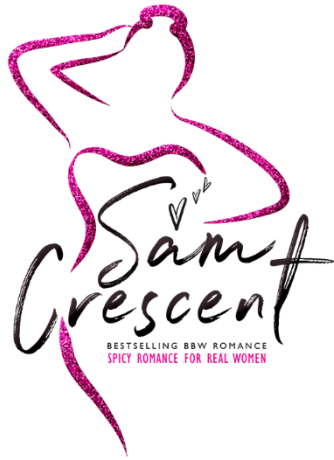
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BONUS SAMPLE CHAPTER

TO KEEP

The Circle of Monsters, 1

Sam Crescent and Stacey Espino

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Sample Chapter

Galen King looked through his binoculars and caught sight of his target through the hotel window. She was a small thing, at least compared to him. To some she might have been considered fat, but he liked his women on the plump side. Her flaming red hair called to him first. It was a deep red, not something out of a bottle.

Looking away, he pulled out his cell phone with the necessary details. The moment this hit was completed, he'd destroy all evidence. That was part of his job. He was one of the exclusive members of the Circle of Monsters. Known assassins who weren't afraid to get their hands dirty, unlike their counterparts, Killer of Kings.

For this hit, all he'd been sent was the woman's basic details, the location, and when he was to end her life. Skye Lewis never had a chance, not when the Monsters got involved. He didn't care that she was female. Some men might, but he knew women could be just as vile and disgusting as men.

The curtain twitched and her head appeared, looking left and right. Even from where he stood, he saw the fear in her eyes.

It was a shame she had to die. He could imagine spending a great deal of private time with her. That body was made to be fucked. And only twenty-five years old. He didn't care what she'd done. The bounty on her head was quite extensive. Someone wanted her dead, and fast, because they were willing to part with three million cash. All the better for Galen.

All he had to do now was make the decision. Did he make the shot here or go to her hotel room? Would she answer the door? Would she scream? As he was making the decision, lining up his rifle to see if he could get a nice crisp shot, his cell phone vibrated.

"Yes," he said, putting the cell to his ear.

"The terms have changed," Viko Fedorov said.

Galen didn't look away from his target. This never happened. Details of a hit never changed once he got the all clear. What if he'd already pulled the fucking trigger?

"Not good enough," Galen said. "I can take the hit right now."

"Then you'll be doing it for nothing," Viko said. "The money is fake. I have it in my office right now. She will be worth more to us alive."

He didn't like this. Killing her now would be ideal.

"I can take the shot."

“Listen to me carefully. Take the shot, and you won’t get paid. Something’s going down.” He heard rustling on the line. “Petrov already has guys on the way to kill her.”

Galen frowned. “That makes no sense. Why hire us?”

“He’s playing us. There’s no money, and believe me, I’m fucking pissed about it.”

If Viko was pissed, then Petrov would soon be wishing for a quick death. No one got away with manipulating their boss. There was a reason Viko was the head of the Circle of Monsters. The bastard had more kills under his belt than anyone Galen had ever known—real or fictional.

There was so much about Viko they didn’t know. The only solid piece of information to go on was that money talked—a lot of it. They all had a price and Viko’s had to have a lot of ones and zeros before he lifted a finger.

“So what now?”

“Extraction. Bring her to me, and be warned, the people on the way to kill her might attempt to take you out.”

Galen couldn’t help but scoff.

“If that was a laugh, I recommend you not do it again,” Viko said, and hung up.

Well, it went from being the clean-cut kill that he loved, to one that was dirty and pissed him off.

He quickly disassembled his rifle, put all the necessary pieces away, stashed it in his bag, and threw it over his shoulder. Making his way out of the abandoned building, he hummed to himself as he joined the flood of people on the street below, mingling in.

A few people chanced a glance at him, but one look at his face, with the gnarly scar down his right cheek, and they soon turned away. Some women were not upset by his looks. The ink on his thick arms, not to mention the expensive watch covering his wrist, always had a magic way with the bitches.

Money talked.

He had a lot of it.

Galen liked nice things.

And he was prepared to do whatever it took to get those nice things. He'd been killing since he was fourteen years old. It was an easy profession. His parents had died when he was young, and he'd ended up in the foster care system. Maybe that was where his conscience died.

His first kill had been a foster mom who had been too handsy and liked to use her belt. One of the girls in the home with him had to entertain the male guests, and if she caused a scene while they were filming the rape, the woman would beat her to within an inch of her life.

That death had been a lot of fun.

So had the men who'd been using the poor girl.

Galen made sure she was taken care of. She had wanted for nothing. The only person in the world who he believed was a saint. She spent a lot of time praying. That foster mom had fucked up her head, or maybe it had been him. He hadn't exactly killed in private. She'd witnessed their deaths.

He came to a stop when the hairs on the back of his neck seemed to rise up. Something was happening.

Turning left and right, he assessed the men and women going about their business. Within seconds, he spotted two men that were out of place. Their suits gave them away and then the way they carried themselves. They didn't even attempt to blend in. They were sloppy in their approach, and their too-tight suit jackets highlighted that they carried weapons. Fucking amateurs.

Seeing them there, ready to take his kill from him, only made him angry. They'd been double-crossed somehow and he'd been up before sunrise planning this shit for nothing.

He beat them into the cheap hotel and closed the distance to his target's door, slamming his fist against it.

“Room service.”

“I didn’t order room service. Go away.”

Galen shook his head. Who the fuck was this woman?

He slammed his hand against the door, attempting not to attract any kind of attention. No one knew what he looked like, only Viko would have been able to spot him in the crowd.

The lock of the door flicked open, and he wanted to throttle the little bitch. Didn’t she know anything about safety? She knew her life was on the line and yet she opened the door to him anyway.

The moment the knob twisted, he forced his way inside. She opened her mouth as if to scream and he covered it with his hand, pushing the door shut. He twisted Skye around so that her back was pressed against his body. “If you so much as whisper, I’ll slit your throat.”

It wasn’t exactly the best way to get the woman on his team. This was fucked.

“Keep quiet and stay still.”

To help him think, he covered her nose and mouth and listened.

Skye wanted to breathe, though, so she fought him, but he heard what he needed to. Releasing her mouth, he threw Skye and himself across the room, pushing her out of the way and using the bed as some coverage. Pulling out his Glock, where he had it stuffed in his pants, he was ready as the door crashed open.

Guns at the ready, the two men charged inside.

Galen shot the first one between the eyes. A nice clean shot, and he fell to the floor within seconds. The next guy panicked. Firing off his weapon, with two shots this time, Galen killed him.

It was an insult with how damn sloppy they were. None of this contract made any sense.

He grabbed a whimpering Skye, wrapped his fingers tight around her arm, and hauled her up off the floor. Tears fell down her face and she looked a nervous wreck. He thought about tiny Adele from so long ago, how shaken she'd been, but she hadn't been afraid of him. He'd been her savior. To this woman, he was a monster.

“Shut the fuck up before I give you a reason to cry. Let's get one thing straight. Until my boss says otherwise, you're alive and staying that way. We've got to make it out of here without causing a fuss. Do you think you can handle that?” he asked. “Or do I need to knock you out?”

What was with these people?

Skye didn't understand how anyone could be so ... mean, so cruel. Death wasn't easy or normal to live with. It was painful and scary. There were two men dead on the hotel room floor, blood pooling around them, and she knew they'd come from her employer by the way they were dressed. He had a code of dress that every single person had to abide by.

Memories from last night played in her head, coming back in a rush. All the blood, the adrenaline, the fear.

She should have known the job was too good to be true. A great salary along with a live-in position. She didn't need to find a place to stay or be worried about making it to work each morning. The tight security should have told her everything she needed to know. At the time, she figured she was working for someone important, maybe a political figure. Nope. For the past year she'd been working for a criminal.

“Please don't kill me,” she said.

“I'm not going to kill you. My car is parked out there. We need to make it without alerting the authorities or anyone else. I'm here to protect you but I can't do that if you're drawing attention to us. Got it?”

She had no idea who he was or why he'd saved her. Clearly, someone was looking out for her. She nodded and

gave him a tight smile.

“Do you have any belongings?” he asked.

Skye shook her head. She didn't exactly have time to collect her things after witnessing her employer commit murder. No, she'd been terrified, and if it weren't for the son she'd been taking care of, she'd have never known the secret hideouts or shortcuts he'd shown her one day.

She was so stupid. There were so many warning signs to what she was getting herself into, but rather than take note of them, she'd carried on doing a job she loved. She adored children and one day hoped to have many of her own, but that was never going to happen.

“Let's go.”

He still held her arm tightly, but Skye didn't fight him, even as she knew his grip would leave bruises later. She had to get out of there. They left the motel room, stepping over what was left of the doorframe.

“I have to return my key,” Skye said.

Maybe she could sneak out the back of the reception area. Not going to happen, as this man didn't let her go and within seconds she was being marched across the parking lot.

The car he drove surprised her. She expected something fancy, but instead, it was a tiny car with only two doors. He shoved his backpack behind the seat and pushed her into the passenger side. When she didn't think he was looking, she tried the door handle, hoping for a way to escape.

This man was not there to save her. The ink, the scar, the fact he was terrifying, gave her all the clues she needed to know that this man was fucking dangerous. Maybe he was worse than the men he'd killed.

He climbed behind the wheel, turned over the ignition, bringing the car to life, and then it didn't matter. She was alone in a car with a stranger. When had her life gotten so complicated?

Skye ran her hands up and down her arms, trying to get warm as a sudden chill hit her, which made no sense in the boiling-hot summer temperatures.

“Who are you?” she asked.

Silence.

“Who do you work for?”

More silence.

“Thank you for ... doing what you did back there. I don’t think those men deserved to die. They were probably doing their job, but thank you. I guess they were going to kill me.” She hated these kind of silences. Her nerves always got the better of her, and rather than keep quiet and deal with it, she had to keep talking. “I’m not a bad person. I haven’t done anything wrong.”

“Do you ever shut up?” he asked.

“Do you have a name? Should I call you *my hero*? My ... *muscle-bound savior*?” Her cheeks were starting to heat up. She shouldn’t be looking at his tattoos, or any part of him.

He was a good-looking man.

The scar didn’t make him ugly—not to her. Of course he didn’t seem to smile either, and the hat stopped her from seeing his hair and a clear view of his eyes. His body, though, it was like he stepped out of a sexy dream. All hard muscle and heavily inked.

Was this why she ended up in the position she did? She was a sucker for some ink. Ugh, maybe people should just kill her now. She got herself into this mess. She had to be the one to get herself out of it.

Looking out the window, she didn’t know where they were going. None of the signs made sense to her. Nibbling her lip, she tried to focus but that wasn’t happening.

“Galen.”

“What?”

“That’s what you can call me. Galen.”

“Oh, well, I’m Skye.”

“I know.”

“How?” she asked.

“Because I know your name.”

“You were sent to save me?”

“Actually, Princess, I was sent to kill you and was just about to take the shot when your fucking boss decided to stiff me out of my money. I don’t like that, so you’ve just become one of the luckiest women in the world. You’re now worth more to me alive than dead.”

Fear raced down her spine and she felt a sickness twisting her gut. As far as speeches went, it was one of the worst she’d ever heard. She was hoping he’d say he was there to save her but that would be too lucky.

“You’re going to kill me?”

“Not anymore. Don’t you listen?”

“I don’t have to listen to you.” She clenched her hands into fists, wanting to hurt him, to attack him, do anything but allow herself to succumb to her situation. She wasn’t a coward.

“If you want to live, you’ll have to listen. Do you think those men will be the last that come for you?” he asked. “Trust me. Your boss is sloppy but he wants you dead, which tells me you’ve got a whole lot of important information in that pretty little head of yours.”

“I don’t know anything.”

“You know something, or you saw something.”

“Please, let me go.” She hated the fact she was starting to cry. Whenever her emotions went haywire, the tears came, and she hated looking so weak.

Right now, she didn't feel weak. She felt angry. No, she was pissed off. That's what she was. She was just a nanny, trying to make the lives of children easier, helping parents. The last thing she ever wanted to see was someone being murdered, or hearing their screams. She'd have to relive that night for the rest of her life.

That evil bastard was alone with his son and daughter. She had wanted to go and get them, to run, but she knew she'd been seen, and now there was no way out for her.

"I never should have taken that job." She slammed her hand against the front dash.

"The car is not at fault."

"It was too good to be true but I took it anyway. Earning six figures a year to take care of two of the nicest kids. Now I know exactly what their father is capable of."

"Hold on. Kids?"

"Yes, kids."

"What are you? A mistress?" Galen asked.

Skye snorted. That would have been hilarious. Her employer, or ex-employer now, had been good-looking, but she didn't like him that way. There was something in his eyes that had repulsed her and now she knew what.

"Hell, no, I never had sex with him." She was a virgin and twenty-five years old, but she wasn't going to tell him that. He wouldn't believe her.

Dating men, talking with them, didn't come naturally to her. They were like an alien species, and she didn't go out of her way to get attached to them.

"Then what the hell are you?"

"Besides being a woman who very much wants to live, I'm a nanny."

Silence filled the car. She loved being a nanny and those kids, whenever their father wasn't around, were the sweetest

pair she'd ever gotten the privilege of knowing.

“You’re a fucking nanny? You don’t smuggle drugs? Guns?”

“I don’t cheat. I don’t steal. I’m honest about everything. I love kids.” She growled. “Now my life is a complete mess.”

End of sample chapter

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