

*Destined*  
A DIRTY SOULS MC SPIN OFF  
UTAH BOOK 2

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**EMMA CREED**

# DESTINED SOUL

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DIRTY SOULS MC - UTAH

BOOK 2

EMMA CREED

Destined Soul

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# AUTHOR NOTE

***\*\*Warning\*\****

*Destined Souls and all books in the Dirty Souls Mc series are a work of fiction and contain adult content. Due to the nature of the series you should expect to come across various subject matter that some readers may find disturbing, and it is intended for readers 18+*

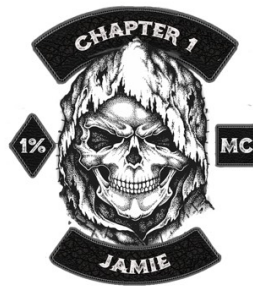
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**'Bound not by blood but loyalty.  
We live, we ride,  
and we die by our own laws'**



Have you ever looked at somebody and thought that, right there, is the one?

I don't believe in all that bullshit, but sitting here and watching her, makes me question if I'm wrong.

She makes the dive bar, where I'm drowning my sorrows with my best friend, seem brighter. The whiskey tastes a little less watered down, and the way she's dancing makes the music more tolerable.

I wonder what brings a girl like her to a place like this as I rest my elbows back on the bar and admire her. She's shaking her hips and lifting her hands up through her long, blonde wavy hair. Dancing like no one's watching. This girl's here to have a good time, and right now some carefree laughter is exactly what I could do with.

"She's out of your league," Evan's voice makes me pull my eyes away from her.

"No harm in looking...You never know, she may be looking for a med school flunk, with no prospects. Jesus Christ, Evan, you're supposed to be here to cheer me up." I snigger at my best friend and finish what's left in my glass.

When I look back over to the dance floor I notice one of the bikers, who have been sitting in the corner since we got here, get up and move towards her. He looks intimidating, but when he grabs her arm and tries to pull her down from the table she's climbed on, she shows him no fear. Her soft, pretty face scowls at him as she tries to wriggle her wrist from his grip.



“Here’s your chance to step up and be a hero,” Evan chuckles.

But when I go to stand up, he quickly snatches at my shirt and drags me back.

“Whoa... Are you crazy? Dude, I was kidding. You do *not* want to pick a fight with that crowd,” I look back at him and see how serious he looks.

“You never heard of The Dirty Souls?” he stares back at me.

“You forget I’m not from round here, should I have?”

“They aren’t just bikers, Jamie, they’re outlaws... and it looks like she came here with them.”

I watch as she crouches down to listen to what the guy says to her, then rolling her eyes she gets down from the table and moves with him to join the rest of them. “If you wanna keep your eyes in your head I suggest you find yourself something else to look at.” Evan shakes his head, before ordering another round.

I don’t listen to his advice, the girl’s far too pretty not to look at. Sitting on the edge of the booth with her arms folded like a disgruntled child, her eyes finally meet with mine, I don’t look away. I let her see that I’m staring, and when her lips turn up into a daring smile, I wink at her before I get back to drinking.

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I’ve only been on the road an hour and already that feeling of dread has crept into my stomach.

Nobody wants to go home and tell their parents that they fucked up on two years of med school and wasted all the money they spent to get them there.

I’ve been selfish, I’ve been stupid, and now it’s time to face up to the consequences.

I figured out a whole year ago that I didn't want to study medicine. The lifelong dream of becoming a doctor was never really mine. It was my parents. When your dad is a top vascular surgeon and your mom is the mother-fucking-Teresa of paediatrics the expectations to become something great are high. I enjoyed the practical, my time spent working in the ER almost made me believe I could get through it, but the assessments and the exams were all too much.

I'm young, I want freedom. I didn't want to spend my evenings studying, and writing papers. I wanted to party, and that's exactly what I did.

It's also the reason I flunked for the last time, and now I'm gonna have to tell my parents that the son they're so proud of is, in fact, a failure.

I'm driving along the freeway, trying to think of the words I'm gonna give them, and suddenly I wonder If my eyes are playin' tricks on me. There's a hot, blonde girl pulled up on the side of the road, checking inside the hood of her car. When she turns around and folds her arms in a strop, I see that she looks identical to the girl I saw in the bar last night. As I get a little closer and realize that it *is* her, I make an instant decision to follow my instinct. Slowing right down, I pull in a few yards ahead, having no idea what I'm expecting. Surely, the fact we're both here at the same time is something more than a coincidence. I may not be much of a believer in fate, but if someone, somewhere, decided to put me and her here at the same time for a reason, who am I to cancel their plans?

I cut my engine and take a deep breath before I open my door and step out.

The girl does a double take when she notices me, then narrows her eyes as I walk toward her.

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" she asks.

"Having some car trouble?" I look her up and down. She looks like the devil's temptation in those tight jeans she's wearing.

“I’m pretty sure it’s the radiator,” she tells me, as I move past her and stick my head inside the hood to check it out.

I spent a lot of summers working in my uncle’s garage when I was a kid. In fact, I’m kinda hoping he’s gonna be the one who takes pity on me when I get back home. I’m gonna need a job if I’m gonna stand a chance of paying back my parents for those wasted college fees.

From what I can see, the girl’s got it right, it is her radiator that’s fucked.

“You need a lift somewhere?” I don’t know if we’re heading in the same direction, but for this girl, I’ll happily take a detour.

“I already called for backup...and I don’t take rides from strangers.” She raises one of her eyebrows at me as she smiles.

“And so you shouldn’t.” I nod my agreement, before finding a spot in the grass verge and making myself comfortable.

“What are you doing?” She laughs a little nervously.

“Well, stranger or not, I’m not gonna leave a nice, vulnerable girl like you alone on the roadside,” I take a smoke out of my jacket and balance it between my lips, then offer the packet out to her. I already know she smokes, I remember watching the way she made it look so hot last night.

“Believe me, I’m not vulnerable, or nice...” She helps herself to a smoke, pulling a Zippo from the back pocket of her jeans and lighting up. She tosses it at me when she notices me feeling around in my pockets for mine.

“You know, Skinner could be a while, I wouldn’t wanna hold you up from where you’re heading.” She takes a seat beside me, close enough for her shoulder to touch mine, and stares out at the road.

“Believe me, I’m in no rush. You’re actually doing me a favor.”

She nods her head and sucks at the end of her cigarette. I can’t help watching the way her lips pucker and her cheeks

hollow. The girl is perfect.

“So, what are you avoiding?” Laying back on the grass verge, she looks up at the clouds.

“It’s gonna sound pathetic,” I warn, resting back to join her.

“Hit me with it.”

“I’m going home to tell my parents that I flunked my final year at med school.” I figure, there’s no harm in telling the truth, I’m never gonna see the girl again, and maybe she can offer some better advice than Evan.

“That’s steep,” she agrees, blowing a smoke cloud into the air above us. “How d’ya think they’re gonna take it?”

“It’s gonna hit ‘em hard, they’re both doctors and have always had high expectations.”

She nods as she takes in what I’m saying and then when she twists her body to face mine, she rests her cheek on the hand that’s propped up by her elbow.

“It’s a good job you’re handsome, huh?” The seductive smile on her face makes my lips twitch into a smile of my own.

“What’s that got to do with it?” I laugh, shifting my body so it mirrors hers.

“Well, you may be a failure to your parents, but at least with those drag-a-girl-to-bed, brown eyes, and that boyish smile, you’re a good-looking failure.” Her hand ruffles the front of my hair and I stare into her pretty, blue eyes, wondering what it might be like to kiss her. Just as I’m about to reach forward and test it out, a loud horn sounds from behind us.

“That’ll be Skinner.” She smiles at me before jumping up off the ground, and I stay rooted to the spot, watching as she wipes her hands on the back of her jeans and starts walking towards the huge tow truck that’s just pulled up.

The huge guy who gets out looks me up and down judgmentally.

“He bothering ya?” he asks her while keeping his stern glare fixed on me.

“No, actually he was offering to help.” The girl whose name I still don’t know, explains, as he continues to look at me like he wants to kill me.

“Well, then he can be on his way,”

I figure he isn’t gonna stop eyeballing me until I do, so admitting defeat, I stand up.

“Good luck with the radiator,” I tell the girl as I pass her on the way back to my car. She looks embarrassed, maybe even a little disappointed.

“I got it taken care of,” the guy assures me sarcastically, and when I get to my car and open the driver’s door I hear her voice call out to me.

“Wait...” I turn around to see her rushing after me. Her hand reaches out and touches my arm and I feel my skin prickle.

“Good luck with your folks, handsome.” She winks at me, the same way I winked at her last night in the bar, then turning her back, she quickly runs back to the guy who came to help her.

Before I pull back out onto the road, I watch her climb into the cab of the tow truck in my rearview mirror.

I should have asked for her number, or at least tried to find out her name or where she’s from.

I guess some things just aren’t meant to be.



“Can I get a word with ya?” My brother Declan clears his throat when he interrupts the conversation I’m having with my best friend, Beth. It isn’t until I notice her and her boyfriend, Levi, staring at me that I realize I’m the one he wants to talk to.

“Get the boys ready to ride out to the Steadman Ranch, I’ll join ya in ten,” Declan instructs Levi, before his attention returns to me and he gestures his head toward the stairs that lead to his office.

I don’t jump to attention, like everyone else around here does for him. I take my time, finish what’s left in my glass and then get up to follow him.

My brother took over as President a few years ago after Daddy retired. Yes, he can be overprotective, but I know it only comes from love. I don’t claim to be an easy person to look after. I know my own mind, and in the past, that’s gotten people hurt. The picture he’s got of him, Levi and their friend, Ryan, on his desk is a reminder of that every time I step into this room.

“You got that serious look on your face.” I sit down in the chair opposite his and await what’s coming. If this is a lecture on how I acted at the bar last night, I’m ready for it.

“It’s good seeing Levi and Beth happy, ain’t it?” He starts, and I can already sense this is leading to something I won’t like.

“Yeah, it’s great.” I nod in agreement.

“You ever think about settling down yourself?” He tries too hard to make the question sound casual, and the fact he

pulls out a bottle of tequila and two glasses from under his desk proves this is about to get deeper.

“One day, maybe. If I find the right guy.” I shift uncomfortably in my chair.

“How about you?” I deflect his question.

“Me? Nah, I’m married to the club. I don’t wanna be the kind of husband Pa was.” He pours us both a generous measure before handing me the glass.

“Skinner came to me a few nights ago, and asked how I’d feel about him taking ya out.”

I laugh so hard that I spray a mouthful of tequila all over my brother’s desk.

“C’mon now. Skinner ain’t a bad guy.” When I see the seriousness on my brother’s face my laughter instantly stops.

“Skinner? Dec, he’s like, fifty.”

“He’s thirty-one.” Dec shakes his head at me and tops up his glass. “And I, for one, think it’ll do ya some good.”

“And what the hell makes you think that? What happened to the whole *nobody touches my sister* code that you’ve been ramming down your brothers’ throats since I spouted a pair of titties?” I knock back my drink and slam the glass on the table

“Yeah well, I figured if anyone is gonna be doing any touching I’d rather it be someone I trust.” The way he shrugs his shoulders and pouts his lips make me want to throw the glass at his goddamn face.

“This is about Ryan, isn’t it?” I stand up and get to the nitty-gritty. “Ever since I told you what really happened that night, you’ve blamed me for him being dead.” Tears almost choke me and the weight of guilt clusters like a heavy fist in my stomach.

“I don’t blame you at all. Ryan was protecting you, which is exactly what I’d expect any one of my club brothers to do.”

“But he wouldn’t have had to protect me if I wasn’t with them.” I say out loud what I know he’s thinking, and the sad

look he hits me back with confirms I've hit the nail on its head.

“This ain't about the past, Mia. It's about the future. Skinner would take care of you. He'll protect you and he'll treat you with respect. It's what I want for you. It's what Pa wants for you and it's what *you* should want for yourself.” His words sound final, but he should know me better than that.

“What I *want*, is to be with a man who I love.”

“Well, in case you haven't noticed, this is a small town and you ain't leaving it. There ain't many men out there who could handle you, and if you found one who could, who's to say I'd let him.” He folds his arms across his chest and waits for my next comeback.

You're being a dick, you know that?”

“I'm being a big brother,” he answers flatly, knocking back his drink. The red rims around his eyes suggest he hasn't been sleeping, and just lately I've noticed how edgy he's been. I know my brother, he's a reasonable man, and this behavior is out of character.

So, being the understanding, kind sister that I am, I decide I'll play along. At least, until I figure out what's happening.

“All I'm asking is for you to give him a chance.”

“Fine!” I spit out the word like it tastes bad.

The way my brother lifts up his head and his eyes swell with shock proves he was expecting more of a fight.

“But you can tell Skinner, if he wants to take me out, he's gonna have to find the balls to ask me himself,”

I head for the door so I can get the hell out.

“Where you going?” Dec calls after me.

“To get a drink from somewhere that ain't here.” I slam the door behind me and take the back exit so I don't have to explain myself to anyone else.





**Y**ou're a pussy, Jamie Anderson. I hear my own voice in my head, as I stare at the drink I'm clutching at the bar.

I only managed another forty minutes of traveling after leaving the girl. When I saw the sign for Springdale, I told myself I'd only stop for a coffee and toilet break. But here I am, four hours later, sitting in the bar next to the motel I checked into, debating if I should drink myself numb, or get back in my car and continue my journey home.

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you're stalking me." When I hear that sweet, sexy voice I quickly spin my head around and she's there. She's standing right beside me with lips I still wanna kiss and hair I'm desperate to touch.

"What are *you* doing here?" I can't help sounding shocked, one chance meeting with this girl was strange enough, but two? That's pure fucking fate.

"This is my town, handsome. And since you still got that sad look on your face I'm taking it you bottled it on telling the folks." Her eyebrows raise disapprovingly.

"Figured I'd give them one more night thinking they had a son to be proud of." I'm fully aware of how pathetic I am. I need to get off the subject.

"Now, I already know you don't take rides from strangers, but do you let 'em buy you drinks?" I lick my bottom lip as I watch hers rise into that smile I haven't been able to get out of my head.

"We ain't strangers no more, we're friends now." She nudges me with her shoulder before I signal the bartender to pour two more bourbons.

“You know, of all the places you could have picked to stop off at, you picked a pretty boring town.” She twists her body so her back’s against the bar and looks out into the barren barroom.

“It’s not looking so boring from this angle,” I tell her, wondering how the bourbon would taste on her lips.

“Smooth.” She nods her head at me like she can tell what I’m thinking, and the smile on her face spreads a little wider.

“You get your car fixed?” I ask, quickly finishing up my drink to catch up when she downs hers in one swallow.

“It’s in the garage, should be ready in a few days.”

“And how are you getting home tonight?” I check, already deciding that I need to know everything there is to know about this girl.

“I’ll walk my ass across the street to my brother’s clubhouse.” She tips her head at the bartender to order us another round.

“So, that guy who picked you up today was your brother?” Explains why he was looking at me like he’d happily do time just for the privilege of breaking my bones.

“No, that was one of his club brothers. Declan’s the president, he doesn’t do any dirty work, mainly spends his time drinking at the club.”

“Must be a cool way of life.”

“Sometimes it can be, but on nights like tonight it ain’t.” The girl suddenly looks lost in her thoughts and I decide that tonight is gonna be all about having a good time. We can pick up whatever mess we have to deal with in the morning.

“What’s your name?” In my head, I’ve given her about a hundred, but none of them seem good enough.

“Let’s not do names.” She places herself in front of me and draws her finger along my bottom lip.

“I thought we were friends,” I point out, rubbing my lips together as that finger of hers lowers its trail onto my chin.

“You got a room here, handsome?” she asks, and despite being shocked at how forward she’s being, I manage to slowly nod back at her.

“Will ya take me to it?” Her blue eyes stare up into mine, and I swear hell could evade the earth and it wouldn’t stop me.

I pull a twenty out of my wallet and leave it on the bar then, taking her dainty hand in mine, I lead her out the door and to my motel room.

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“I need you to fuck me.” Once we’re inside she pushes me against the wall and, when her hand slips under my waistband, I press the back of my head against the wall and look up at the ceiling.

Her fingertips brush over me, and the way she wraps her palm around my cock, has me worrying I’ll bolt my load before we even get started.

“Steady,” I laugh, taking her arm and pulling it away. If I’m only gonna get one night with this girl, I’m gonna make sure I appreciate every second of it.

She looks a little disappointed until I take her by the back of her thighs and lift her body onto mine. I kiss her the way I wanted to at the side of the road earlier. I kiss her like I’m never gonna kiss her again, and keeping our lips connected I carry her over to the bed and slowly lay her down.

She pushes me back, holding my jaw in the arch of her hand to keep the distance.

“Don’t look at me like you’re about to make love to me. I told you I wanted to be fucked,” she orders, pulling hard on my t-shirt and forcing my lips back onto hers.

And this time, I’m the one to tear us apart.

“What if I don’t want to fuck you? What if I wanna make love to you?” When I hear my own words, and how stupid they sound, I wonder who the fuck’s talking them.

“You can’t fall for me.” She’s wearing a smile on her face, but the sadness in her eyes breaks my heart.

“Tell me why?” I could give about ten reasons of my own, but I want to hear hers.

“Well, we just met for a start, and you may have unintentionally found yourself here, but you don’t belong in my world, handsome stranger.” Her hand slides through the front of my hair like it did earlier, at the roadside.

“My daddy was a biker, my brother’s a biker. It’s the only life I know, and it’s the only one I’ll ever have. I may not wear the cut, but it’s in my blood.”

A vibration comes from beneath us and she takes a long, deep sigh before reaching under her ass and taking her cell out of her pocket.

When she answers I can’t quite hear what the person on the other end of the phone says but they sound distressed, and I watch her pretty flustered face suddenly turn white.

“I’m on my way.” She moves to get up so fast that we almost bump heads.

“What is it?” I block her from getting to the door.

“I have to go, it’s important.” She tries to get past me, but I stand firm.

“Out of my way jerk!” She shoves me hard in the shoulder, but I still don’t budge. I won’t have it end like this. I’ve spent time with plenty of girls, I’ve even tried having relationships with a few of them but none of them have come close to making me feel like she has.

“Tell me what’s wrong.” I take her in both my hands and hold her still.

“My brother’s just been shot, and I need to get to him.” She looks like she’s about to cry and the panic on her face makes her look vulnerable.

“Where is he?”

“He’s over at the club because he won’t go to hospital. I need to see how bad it is and try to convince him otherwise.”

“Then I better come with you.” I slowly release her, and when her tear-filled eyes look up at me and she nods her head, I realize that if we do just get that one person that was made for us, she is undoubtedly mine.



“What the hell happened?” I barge past where the prospect, Joel, is standing at the clubhouse doors. The whole place is in chaos, and my brother looks like he’s about to do some serious damage to Cobra, whose hands are covered with blood as he pokes around at his shoulder.

“Who the fuck is that?” My brother hisses through his teeth as his eyes settle over my shoulder onto my new friend.

“Will someone just tell me what happened,” I ignore him and look to Levi for an explanation.

“We went to bust the Steaderman place, and they were waiting. Someone was hiding in the trees waiting to pop off shots.” Levi looks mad at himself, and he should be, he’s my brother’s Sgt at Arms, if anyone’s taking bullets it’s supposed to be him.

“I’ll ask you one more time, Mia. who’s the fucking dick, brave enough to step into *my* bar with *my* sister.”

“The *dick’s* a doctor.” I’m shocked as hell when the handsome stranger steps in front of me. “Well, almost. I know how to take out a bullet and stitch up a wound, which I’m figuring is the kind of help you could use right now.”

I watch my brother’s eyes flick between the two of us. He doesn’t look happy, but he’s also not in the position to be judgemental. When he eventually nods his head I stand back and watch the cute guy, I just met, take charge of the situation.

“You.” He turns his attention straight to Joel. “Grab a bottle of the strongest shit you got.” Joel takes his order and dashes off behind the bar while Handsome moves closer to my brother to assess the damage.

“You got a dislocated shoulder,” he tells him.

“I did it when I fell off. Ain’t the first time it, should slip right back in,” Declan assures him.

“You might wanna get one of those to hold me down though.” He gestures his head toward Skinner and Levi.

“Why’s that?”

“Because I know it hurts, and I’m gonna use my good arm to swing at that pretty-boy face. I don’t want ya to be knocked out before ya get this bullet outta me.”

“Gotcha.” My new friend laughs to himself. “How about we make it a two-man job, just to be sure?”

Skinner throws me an unimpressed look as he helps my brother onto the pool table where Beth has already laid out some blankets. He holds down my brother’s legs, while Levi takes the upper half of his body and I close my eyes and wait for the loud crack.

“*Fuck!*” Declan hisses after it comes, snatching the bottle from Joel and knocking it back.

“Get some more of that shit down your neck, and if you guys stock any blow around here, I’d get some of that in you, too. Anywhere I can find a sterilized needle?” he asks.

“We keep a first aid kit in the kitchen, and I can boil you some water. Follow me.” Beth quickly leads him through the back door and into the kitchen.

“Who is he, Mia?” My brother keeps a firm eye on me as he knocks back a huge swig from the bottle and waits for Joel to finish tapping him out a line on the tray they keep under the bar.

“He’s just some guy. That’s not important right now.” I move towards him to take a look at the damage. I can just about see where the bullet’s wedged, and he’s lucky it hit where it did.

“He was the guy waiting with you, earlier.” Skinner opens his big mouth.

“Yes, he was, and he’s just passing through. I was being friendly.” I snap back, pissed at the fact I have to explain myself.

“Well, you just make sure that his version of friendly matches up to yours,” my brother warns and when Beth returns from the kitchen, with the *almost* doctor following behind her, the room falls silent. Levi and Skinner retake their posts and hold my brother down while he gets to work and removes the bullet

It doesn’t take him long to get it out and stitch up the hole and my brother at least shows his gratitude by offering him a drink after.

“You gonna tell me who he is?” Beth sits beside me while I watch the stranger talking with my brother and mixing with the rest of the club.

“Don’t give me those dopey eyes, he’s just passing through.”

When he glances over his shoulder at me and smiles, my stomach actually flips.

“Oh, my god.” The volume of her voice and the amusement on Beth’s face has me quickly hushing her.

“You are *so* into him.” She laughs.

“I am not. He’s just a nice guy. He’s sweet and handsome. And he’s moving on in the morning so I’ll never see him again.”

I’m surprised at how much that thought hurts me.

“You know, it is okay for you to be happy. It’s what Ryan would—”

“Don’t.” I prevent her from finishing that sentence, it’s the last thing I wanna talk about right now.

Instead, I grab myself a bottle of vodka and watch as the guy relaxes around my brother and the people I call family. I allow myself to wonder how it might have felt to have him make love to me because now I’m seeing him in my world, it really makes me want to keep him here.



He eventually comes over to the table where I'm sitting, and I notice the way my brother stares me a warning.

"Time for me to say goodnight, Mia." He smiles at me, and when I realize he said my name I frown curiously.

"How did you...?"

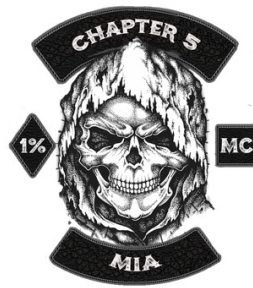
"Your brother thanked me for helping him, then told me if I laid one hand on *Mia*, I'd be stitching up my own throat after he slit it. Since there ain't no other women I can see here who I'd wanna put my hand on, I take it he meant you."

"Pleased to meet you..." I hold out my hand, and he turns his head to look at my brother, then waits for his nod of approval before he takes it.

"Jamie, and for the record..." He leans in a little closer.

"I think you'd be worth the risk." He lowers his voice before placing a kiss on my cheek, and I watch my brother throw his good arm into Skinner's chest to stop him from marching over.

"Goodnight, Mia." I watch the handsome stranger walk out the bar and when the door closes behind him, despite being in a room full of people, I suddenly feel very lonely



I t's been a week, and I still can't get Jaime out of my head.

When I look at Levi and Beth now, there's a hint of jealousy and, despite how pathetic it is that he made such an impact on me in such a short time, I can't help feeling sorry for myself.

I pull up outside the garage and prepare myself for what's coming. Skinner texted me this morning and asked me to stop by so he can check my tire pressure and I know he's going to ask me out. I made my brother a promise and now I guess it's time for me to see it through. I'm agreeing to a date, it's not like I'm going to marry the man.

Getting out of the car, I paste on a smile and cloak myself with my bravado.

"Morning," I call out over the noise of the stereo, and when Skinner pops his head up from under the hood he grins at me awkwardly.

"I wasn't expecting you so early." He picks up a rag and wipes off his hands, then heads straight towards my car.

"You know, I am capable of checking my own tire pressure," I point out, watching him move from wheel to wheel and check each one with his machine.

"Yeah, I know that, but I like to know you're safe for my own peace of mind." His eyes linger on mine for a little too long when he says that, and I quickly look away and change the subject.

"So, you got much booked in?" I glance over the appointment book that's open on the workbench beside me, willing for this to be over.

“Yeah, heaps and I’ve got a suspicion Joel’s not gonna be around much longer to help out.”

He lifts the hood and checks my oil next.

“What makes you say that?” He’s got me curious now, Joel’s a good kid, he seems to be doing okay.

“Things have been going missing around here. The cash tray was fifty short last week and since he’s the one who helps out most around here, I figure it’s him.”

“You don’t know that just because he’s new doesn’t mean —”

“I wanna take ya out.” Skinner blurts out the words, and although I knew they were coming they still take me by surprise. “Like, just the two of us kinda out. I squared it with your brother and he’s cool with it. So, you wanna get a drink tonight?” The big, bad biker has clearly gone shy on me, he can’t even look me in the eye, and I can’t help smiling to myself,

“Sure, we can get a drink,” I reply casually and Skinner looks shocked by my response,

“I’ll pick you up around seven.” He’s smiling when he closes my hood and he keeps the grin on his face as he rubs those hands in his rag again.

I can’t imagine those hands ever touching me, and I don’t care how big or mean-looking Skinner is, if he tries to be anything less than a gentleman tonight, he’ll choke on that fucking rag.

“I’ll meet you at the bar,” I tell him, before getting behind the wheel and reversing out of there.

Skinner isn’t bad to look at and he’s never given me a reason not to like him. But I have no attraction to him, and I have no idea why my brother would encourage us together. But maybe I’m the one getting it wrong here.

I’ve always been a fantasist, and I’ve learned the hard way. I thought I could date a guy from a rival club, and that got

someone dead. The least I can do here is try, Skinner's not a bad person, he's just not a person I can see myself with.

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I get to the club bar around six-thirty, figuring I'll have a drink before my *date* with Skinner. It's already busy and Darcy pours me a vodka, neat, and places it on the bar without me having to ask. I'm nervous. I figure that's not because I'm looking to make a good impression. More than likely it's because I don't want tonight to be awkward. What if he moves in to kiss me? The thought of it makes me swallow fast and order another drink.

"Holy hot rod!" Darcy's eyes widen when she looks towards the door, and I turn my head, almost expecting to see Skinner dressed up in some kind of suit. I almost fall off the bar stool when I see Jamie, instead.

"You!" I gasp, using all my strength to keep me from running at him. He looks every bit as handsome as I remember, and as he moves closer to me and rests his arms on the bar, I feel my insides melt.

"What brings you back into town?" I ask, trying my best to keep the huge smile off my lips.

"We're friends, aren't we?" His low, husky voice and the sexy smirk on his face sets that fizzle in my tummy off again. It also makes me want to scratch Darcy's eyes out for staring at him. "And I wanted to check on your brother's wound. See that it's healing okay."

"How efficient of you." I raise my eyebrows over the top of my glass before I knock it back.

"You ready?" A hand that comes from nowhere weighs down my shoulder and when I turn my head I realize it belongs to Skinner.

"Ummm, sure. You remember Jamie, right?" I try my best to make this not awkward, but it is.

“Yeah, I remember him. Wondering what he’s doing back here, though.” Skinner’s eyes narrow and his grip on my shoulder tightens.

“I actually came to see your boss, got something I wanna discuss.” Jamie stands up a little taller, refusing to be intimidated.

“Prez is bus—” Skinner goes to answer but Jamie cuts him off.

“I’ll wait.” He smiles.

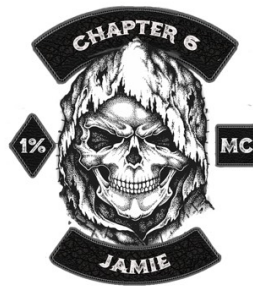
I stare between the two of them, feeling my cheeks heat.

“Well, you can *wait* outside.” Skinner starts stepping forward and when Jamie actually frames up to him I quickly place myself between them.

“Skinner, that ain’t no way to treat a guest,” I remind him with a stern look. When he eventually backs down I turn to face Darcy.

“Go upstairs and tell my brother there’s someone here to see him,” I instruct her before looking back at Jamie. He’s as tall as Skinner but nowhere near as bulky, the last thing he wants is a brawl because here, you mess with one, you get ‘em all.

“Come on darlin’ let’s get out of here.” Skinner takes my hand and starts leading me to the door and as I look over my shoulder I don’t know if it’s hurt or confusion that my handsome stranger is staring back at me with. Either way, it makes me want to go to him.



“What brings you back to my club, Doc?” Declan asks with an unimpressed look on his face.

“I ain’t no doc,” I remind him, thinking back to the look of disappointment on my parents’ faces when I finally faced up and told them. They offered to help me get back in, wanted to pull all the strings they had, but when I told them it wasn’t what I wanted, that’s when the devastation really kicked in.

Growing up, money was never an issue> My parents have always had it, but they also raised me to have principles, and that’s why I’m here. Well...it’s part of the reason why I’m here.

“What do I have to do to get in?” I ask, and despite the serious look on my face, Declan laughs at me.

I don’t react, just wait for him to finish, and when his mouth turns straight again and he stares hard at me, I make sure he knows I’m serious.

“I need money, I need a purpose and I want in.”

“And this has nothing to do with my little sister?” he questions, knitting his brows together.

“I got a debt to pay, I wasted a lot of my parents’ money. I wanna be useful somewhere. I could be useful to you.”

“And how d’ya figure that?” Declan lights up a smoke and throws his lighter at the table.

“I don’t just know how to fix up people. I can work with engines too. I want you to give me a job; and when you do some of that illegal shit, that brings in the big bucks, I want

you to bring me in on that too.” I manage to keep the confidence in my tone.

“You realize what you’re asking here?” He looks at me like he’s unsure what to think. “Prospects don’t get to flunk tests. You fail, you die. We ain’t motorcycle enthusiasts, we’re outlaws. We run drugs, we run guns, we get shot at, and some of us die for the cut we wear.” His eyes drop to the picture on his desk and I see a fraction of weakness in his eyes.

“I understand that. I’ve done my research,” I assure him.

“Research.” He laughs at me again and it’s really starting to piss me off. “Boy, there ain’t no research gonna prepare you for the things you’ll see, or the things you’ll have to do. My club is full of good, honest men, but all of them have the touch of psycho inside them. It’s what brings ‘em here and it’s what keeps ‘em here. Do yourself a favor. Go find another way to pay your folks back.”

When he stands up and walks towards his door, like he’s about to see me out, I take one last stab at it, this time risking it all.

“Dane Brightman.” The name rolls off my tongue and I feel nothing.

“That name supposed to mean something to me?” Declan stares back at me hard.

“No, I doubt you’ve ever heard of him, but I can tell you where he’s buried because I put him there.”

The look of shock on the man’s face tells me I got his attention and when he sits back down, I explain.

“I spent six months of my internship working in the ER, and every couple of weeks the same woman would come in. She’d be beaten black and blue, and she always refused the rape kits the nurses offered her, told them it couldn’t be rape when the man doing it to her was her husband.” Declan shows he’s got morals when his face scrunches up in disgust.

“That last night I saw her, I told her not to go back to him. I tried putting her in touch with a women’s shelter. I even offered her cash to help her get out of town, but she told me

he'd always find her. She told me that the only way she'd ever be free of him was if he was dead."

"What you tellin' me?" Declan leans forward on his desk, his eyes full of curiosity.

"I'm *tellin'* you, I got that man's address from her records. I followed him to a bar and watched him drink, and then I made sure he never made it home to hurt her again.

I got her free, and I did all that without a single ounce of remorse. Is that touch of psycho enough for you?" I rest back in my chair and let him take in what I just told him.

"Get yourself to the garage for a 7 a.m. start," he tells me, tipping his chin toward the door and letting me know it's time to leave.

"I won't let you down," I assure him, trying to keep the smile on my face as I head out.

"And, Dr fucking Jekyll..." I turn back around when he calls me back. "Don't fuck with my sister," he warns.

"Sure thing boss." It's a promise I can keep. I got no intention of fucking with Mia. In fact, I'm here to do the opposite.

She said I don't belong in her world, and I'm here to prove to her that I do.





“So, how’s it going?” I ask, slamming the box I’m carrying on the workbench and admiring how hot Jamie looks in overalls.

“Good, what’s in the box?” He jumps up from the floor and wipes his oily hands on his legs. Now those are some hands I can imagine touching me. In fact, I’ve thought about them touching me. A lot.

“Security cameras. Some of the Souls from Colorado just got into town and Jessie’s old lady is hooking us up. She’ll be over in a minute,”

“And she couldn’t carry these over herself?” Jamie glances inside the box before looking at me suspiciously.

“If she did I wouldn’t have got to see you.” I decide there’s no harm in a little flirting and when Jamie flashes me that boyish grin, it’s hard not to stretch up on my toes and kiss the hell out of his lips.

“Skinner’s looking forward to your second date, tonight.” he douches me with a cold bucket of water, and what makes it worse is the fact there’s no bitterness in his tone.

“He’s just headed out to pick up some parts if you were wondering where he is.”

“How’s the bike building going?” I change the subject, looking across to the corner where the chassis he’s working on is propped up, Club rules dictate that all members must have built their own bike before they make the cut, and Jamie has shown he’s keen by getting straight to it.

He’s working on it after hours and, although my brother hasn’t officially offered him a prospect role yet, I’m sure he’s

gonna get one.

“She’s coming on nicely. I’m gonna work on her some more tonight.”

“You ride?” he asks me.

“Yeah, I can ride. Not got a bike of my own though. My brother won’t allow it...”

“We’ll have one there, and another facing here.” Maddy’s voice comes from behind me and I watch Jessie, the VP of our Colorado charter, listen to her instruction, then look blankly at Jamie.

“Well, you heard the lady, get ‘em fixed up,” he orders.

“I promised Skinner I’d have this gearbox changed by the time he got back,” Jamie tells him.

“Leave Skinner to me, and do what my girl here tells ya. Mia, can I talk to you?” Jessie grabs my arm and steers me out of earshot,

“I heard ya steppin’ out with Skinner.” He lights up a smoke and stares back at me seriously.

“Stepping out?” I look back at him and smirk. When did he turn into an old fucking man? “We’ve been on a date and he’s taking me out again tonight.”

“Well, your brother seems okay with it, which I’m surprised at, and if it’s what you want—”

“It ain’t what I want. But something’s going on with Dec, and I figure this is the best way to find out what it is.” I know Jessie well, his daddy used to be Prez before mine took over. We used to hang out at the club together when we were kids and I always had a little crush on him. After his daddy died, he moved away to live with Jimmer Carson.

“Sometimes, I worry that you’re too smart for your own good.” He sniggers at me. “It ain’t my place to go over your brother’s head, but be careful and if ya need anythin’...”

“I got your number.” I roll my eyes and kiss him on the cheek, grateful for the way he’s always looked out for me. It’s

hard to believe that a man, as kind and beautiful as Jessie Donovan, could be so brutal. But I've heard the stories, and there's nothing kind of beautiful about those.

We head back inside the garage where his old lady has Jamie up on a step ladder fixing a tiny camera to the wall, "Since Skinner isn't here I'll have to explain to you how it works." She tells him, typing way too fast on the laptop she's brought with her, and when Jamie's finished he steps down and listens intently to the instructions she gives him.

Jessie heads over to check out Jamie's bike project and nods his head like he's impressed.

I don't know why, but I find myself hanging around and waiting for the two of them to leave so I can be alone with Jamie again.

He takes the laptop Maddy left behind and puts it in the office, then lingers at the door, staring at me like he wants to say something.

"Why are you here Jamie?" I beat him to it because it's the question that's been burning inside me since he came back. I want him to tell me that it's because of me. I can't remember ever feeling as desperate and needy for anyone as I do when I'm near him.

"There's a few reasons." His hair flops in front of his eyes as he stalks toward me. When he's standing in front of me, close enough to touch, I have to clench my fist to stop my fingers from running through it and pushing it back. I watch his teeth graze over his bottom lip, like he's thinking about kissing me again and I instinctively reach up to be closer to them.

The rumble of a truck engine comes from outside and we both pull apart.

"I should get back to work." Jamie's voice comes out growly and his fingertips skim mine as he steps back towards the car he's working on.

"Oh, hey darlin'." Skinner looks happy to see me, but his eyes scowl when they look to the floor, where Jamie is back at

work. “Come to see what time I’m picking you up?” He sounds so confident, which is a sharp contrast to how he was on our date a few weeks ago. I’ve put off a second one for as long as I can manage, but I ran out of excuses when he asked me again last night.

“I’ll get to the bar for eight,” I tell him.

“I could come get ya,” he offers,

“I’d rather meet you there.” When I go to walk away he grabs my arm and tugs me closer.

“Wear that pretty, little pink dress with the flowers on,” he whispers, loud enough for Jamie to hear him, and when I risk a glance in his direction I hate how disappointed in me he looks.

“I’m not a dolly you can dress, Skinner,” I point out, before turning on my heels and heading out.

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The bar across the street from the club is dead, which makes sitting here with Skinner even more awkward.

“I was thinking about taking a trip out to Nevada next month. Maybe, you could come with me,” he’s suggesting, and when the door swings open I immediately get distracted when Jamie steps in alone and heads for the bar.

I wonder why he’s here. He works for the club, he seems to get on with everyone, and he can get a much better drink in the club bar. Skinner has his back to the room so he hasn’t noticed him yet and the sly smirks Jamie keeps giving me over his shoulder, while I try to listen to Skinner, makes it hard for me to keep focused on what he’s saying.

I watch him knock a few back. The barmaid tries to flirt with him, but his eyes remain fixed on me, and all I can think about is that kiss I missed out on earlier,

Skinner is telling me all about some guy he fucked up while he was serving time in county and when Jamie finishes

the last of his drink and tosses some bills at the bar, I follow him to the door with my eyes.

“You ok, you seem distracted?” Skinner looks over his shoulder to see what I’m looking at, but Jamie’s already gone and I have the most overwhelming urge to go after him.

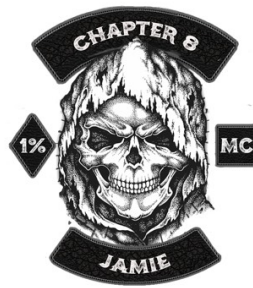
“I’m not feeling myself, I should probably go home.”

“Sure, I’ll take ya.” Skinner finishes his drink and stands up.

“No, you get back to the clubhouse. I’m going to drive myself and get an early night.”

He agrees easier than I thought he would and when he walks me out to my car, I notice the light on in the motel room where Jamie is staying. I politely kiss Skinner on his cheek and get into my driver’s seat. He stands and watches me for a while as I pull off and head toward home. And I watch in my rearview mirror until he finally backs away and heads into the clubhouse.

I make a sharp right, and back around on myself, driving through the back street of town and parking beside the dumpsters that are lined up behind the motel. I can’t risk going around the front and being seen, so I count the tiny bathroom windows until I figure which one is his, then climb up onto one of the trash-filled dumpsters and knock.



I lie on my bed, drinking a bottle of Jim Beam and staring at the blank TV screen. I'm starting to regret coming back here. Skinner's making it clear who Mia belongs to, and he's got the whole club on his side, including Mia's brother.

I got jackshit. Trust has to be earned and there's not enough time to do it, not when all I wanna do is touch her.

I want to know what Mia is doing entertaining this guy. He doesn't make her eyes sparkle the way I do.

She doesn't smile when she's around him unless she glances away to look at me. I can't think of a way for me to get her without kicking up dust and plucking out feathers.

The sharp, loud tap that comes from my bathroom has me getting up to check it out, and when I notice a shadow on the other side of the frosted window, curiosity has me opening it.

"Jeezzz, how long did that take?" Mia rolls her eyes as she starts to squeeze her body through the tiny window, and despite being a little shocked, I take her hand and help her onto her feet.

"What are you doing here?" I laugh to myself, not only is it good to see her, but the effort she's gone to is flattering.

"We're friends, aren't we?" She smiles, and deciding that I ain't gonna waste another second wondering, I grab her by the waist, tug her onto my body and see if her lips taste as good as I remember.

I lift her by her ass and balance her on the basin, kissing her neck and feeling her through the tight t-shirt she's wearing.

“You still want me to fuck you?” I ask, sliding my hand between her legs and cupping her through her jeans. The way her hand tugs my belt answers my question, and I let her unleash me, taking me in her palm and pumping me through her fist.

“You got a rubber?” she asks, shocking me when she pushes me back through the door into the bedroom. Another hard shove of her palm has me falling back onto the bed and she climbs on top of me, sitting back on my thighs, so I can watch her get back to pulling me through her fingers.

I nod my head and reach over to where my wallet rests on the nightstand. Taking out the rubber, I rip it open with my teeth and slide it over my hard shaft. I watch her stand up, strip out of her clothes, and straddle me again. She’s got that dirty smile on her lips, and I wait for her to line my cock up with her pussy, ready to take me before I flip her onto her back and take the control away from her.

“You asked me to fuck you, remember?” Gripping her soft, blonde hair between my fingers, I slowly push myself inside her, taking pleasure in every inch she takes. She arches her back and moans when I’m fully inside her, and I swear I ain’t ever felt a more satisfying feeling.

I realize as her eyes meet mine, and glisten with that same satisfaction, that I don’t want to just fuck her. I want to give this woman everything.

“What?” She smiles at me like she’s about to laugh.

“You’re fucking beautiful,” I tell her, keeping a serious look on my face and not caring if she mocks me for it. I love Mia’s sense of humor, but there are some things she should take seriously. The way I feel about her is one of those things.

I bury my head into her neck, kissing her skin while I continue to roll my hips against hers. Not too fast, not too slow, just enough to keep us both on the edge and when I feel her body start to tremble and her pussy start to pulse, I make my thrusts hit a little harder.

She grips my arms so tight I swear her nails cut my skin, and when she screams my name and pulls me down so she can bite my shoulder, I feel my whole body stiffen as I release myself. I stare down at her as I try and catch my breath back, and when I realize what it is I'm feeling for her, it scares the crap out of me.

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"I came back for you," I confess to her, sliding my fingers through hers and staring at our hands as I answer the question she asked me back at the garage, more honestly.

"I'm glad you did." She twists her head to look up at me and I kiss the smile on her lips because right now, in this moment, it feels like it belongs to me.

"What's the story with you and Skinner?" I know I'm gonna regret asking, but I have to know.

"He likes me, and my brother seems to think I should date him." She tries brushing it off, but I'm not buying that shit.

"You don't strike me as the kind of girl who does as she's told, so what's the real story?"

"I could tell ya, but it'll ruin the moment." She shifts her body so her chin rests on my chest.

"Impossible." Taking a strand of her hair, I slide it between my fingers, and she sighs before she starts.

"A few years ago I acted up. I was fed up of being the president's daughter, and I hated that I had no freedom...So I rebelled."

"Now *that* sounds more like you." Mia doesn't return my smile, instead, she drops her eyes from mine like she's ashamed.

"I started hanging around in Greenwood, I got to know some of the bikers from the Fallen Saints and I started to date one."



“Your father and brother must have been pretty angry about that.”

“They didn’t know. And when I found out that the only reason that boy was interested in me was because he wanted to hurt the club, it wasn’t either of them I called.”

“Skinner?” This kinda makes sense if she feels like she owes him something. But it still ain’t right.

“No. Ryan.” I don’t know who he is, but the way she says his name with such fondness makes me jealous of him.

“He was my brother and Levi’s best friend, and deep down I always sensed he had a thing for me. It felt like a hopeless cause because the club has rules. He would never have been able to have me.” I take in what she’s saying despite being confused. Declan doesn’t seem to have a problem with Skinner sniffing around his little sister.

“Ryan always came through for me. And when I got into trouble I called him to come and get me out of it.” There’s tears in her eyes now, and when I wipe one of her cheeks with my thumb she shakes her head at me.

“He died, and it was all my fault.” When she breaks I wrap my arms around her and tuck her head under my chin, and as her tears trickle onto my bare chest I hold her as tight as I can without hurting her.

“Levi blamed himself and left town, it broke Beth’s heart. I had to watch my brother fall apart too. My choice that night fucked a lot of people’s lives up, and Ryan would still be here if it wasn’t for me.

“That’s not true.” I shake my head.

“You ain’t gonna say anything to make me feel differently.” Mia quickly wipes away her own tears and puts her front back on.

“I don’t know what it is that’s going on with Declan right now, but I can tell he’s got enough to worry about. I won’t be the reason he gets distracted. He wants me to date Skinner, so I’ll do as he asks. At least, for now.” The smile she gives me tells me she doesn’t want to feel sad any more.

“You realize, if he knew you were here he’d kill me?” I smile at her playfully.

“Then I better make sure I really am worth the risk.” Mia’s head drops to disappear under the covers and when she takes me in her mouth, she proves that she most definitely is...



“I need to talk to you.” Skinner comes storming into my office, slamming the door and looking pissed as hell.

“What?” I’m having a shit-enough day without having to deal with his bullshit.

“You know exactly what. I’ve been moving in on your sister for over a month now and I haven’t even got to first fucking base!” He’s so wound up, I swear if he had hair he’d be tearing it out of his scalp.

“That sounds more like a ‘you’ problem than a ‘me’ problem. And are base stages even a thing, anymore?” I laugh when I think about how hard Mia’s making him work. Good, the fucker deserves it.

“The fact I know all about your old man makes it a *you* problem!” He slams his fist on my desk, quickly reminding me of the mess I’m in.

“Whatcha want me to do, Skinner, force her to fall in love with you?”

“She don’t have to love me to get on her knees and take my cock.”

I stand up from my chair and he shows he’s got some fucking balls when he shoves me back down.

“Sit down, Prez, you ain’t gonna do jackshit because these walls around you could crumble down with just one slip of my tongue.”

I snarl at him because he’s right. What he knows would undoubtedly cost me everything.

“It’s him, the new guy. He’s got to go.” Skinner takes a seat.

“Who, Jekyll?” I laugh. “What’s he done?”

“Jamie,” he corrects me. “You gotta be a member to have a road name, and clearly you ain’t seeing the way she looks at him like he’s fucking god or some shit. She wants him. He wants her, and for that reason, he’s got to go.”

“He’s good for the club. The guys like him, and since you insisted I get rid of Joel, we could use the help in the garage.”

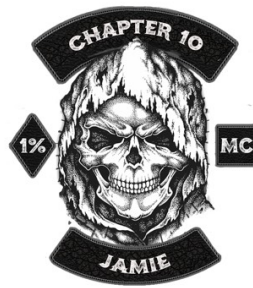
“I want him gone by tonight. Or I might just have to take a ride out to Colorado and run my mouth to Jessie Donovan and Jimmer Carson.” It takes all my strength to hide how furious I am. This club is built on trust and loyalty. I feel bad enough about keeping a secret from the men I call brothers and the fact Skinner is willing to use the sins of my father against me, makes me want to hang him from the rafters.

He wants me on my knees begging, but I don’t care how much he has on me, that ain’t happening.

“Don’t you think that if you two were meant to be together it wouldn’t be this hard?”

You could go downstairs and take your pick from any club whores. They’ll worship at your feet for the chance to be an old lady.”

“You’re missing the point, Declan. I don’t want one of them. I want your sweet-assed sister. I have for as long as I can remember. You send *Jekyll* back to where he came from or you lose your gavel.” He stands up and smirks at me, before walking out and I pick up a glass and throw it at the door after he’s closed it.



“So, when are you taking me for a ride?” I’m polishing the tank of my cycle when I hear her voice come from behind me and since we’re alone, I waste no time, snatching at her hips and lifting her onto the work counter.

“If Skinner catches you you’ll lose your job, and your cock.” Her eyes glance up to where the camera is.

“I don’t even think Skinner knows about them,” I shake my head back at her. “He never asked, so I didn’t tell him.” I take her lips again before she can ask me why.

I’m past denying that, in the short time I’ve known her, I’ve fallen in love with this girl. Now all I gotta do is figure out how I can have her.

She pushes me away and hits me with those curious eyes.

“You were supposed to show him how they work.”

“Yeah, but Skinner’s been too distracted trying to impress you, and since Joel already left, he hasn’t bothered asking about it.”

The time I get with Mia is precious. I don’t want to spend it talking about him.

I get why we’ve had to sneak around these past few weeks, but I’m over it. I want to be the one who walks into a room holding her hand. I want to take her for a ride through the mountains with her holding on to me, and I want everyone to know she’s mine.

“I want you to stop seeing him.” The words blurt out of my mouth, and her eyes instantly drop from mine.

“Jamie, we spoke about thi—”

“No, we didn’t. You told me you were seeing him to keep your brother happy, but what about you? You deserve to be happy. I want to be the person that does that. I want to be more than just your dirty little secret.” The way she’s looking at me, tells me I’m fighting a losing battle.

“It’s only a matter of time before he wants more from you. What ya gonna do then?” I ask, just the thought of him touching her makes me murderous.

“I don’t know, Jamie. Right now, I’m just doing what I think is right. Dec’s stressing over something, and I can’t help thinking Skinner is behind it in some way.”

I agree, which is exactly why I haven’t mentioned those cameras to him.

“So, you’re dating him.” I laugh bitterly.

“Keep your enemies close,” she points out with a clever smile.

“I don’t like him being close to you.” I pull her closer, looking down at her body and pressing my forehead into hers.

The sound of whistling forces me to pull away and when she leaps off the counter, Skinner stares between us, suspiciously.

“What are you doing here?” He asks her.

“Came to see you.” She smiles sweetly, and even though I know she’s lying, it still fucking hurts.

“Prez wants ya.” Skinner tips his head at me with a smug look on his face. “Come on, I have to ride out to Salt Lake City in a few. I’m taking you to lunch before I go.” He turns his attention to Mia and when he grabs her ass and squeezes it, I swear I could pick up a wrench and slam it into his fucking face.

“I thought you were eating at the club?” Mia’s eyes switch from his to mine and I do nothing to hide how pissed off I am.

“Nah, I’m taking you to the bar. I want to talk to you about that trip to Nevada.”

When he notices her looking at me, he follows her eyeline.

“Are you still fucking here?” He snaps.

“Just leaving.” I snatch up my jacket and head out.

I find Dec standing at his office window, staring out onto the town square and looking unnerved. I don’t know what he wants, maybe now my bike’s finished he’s gonna offer me that prospect jacket. But before I accept it, I’m gonna have to have a man-to-man talk with him about my intentions.

In the short time I’ve been here I’ve grown, not just to respect the man, but to like him too. I may not understand all this Skinner shit, but I do know how much Mia means to him, and I don’t want to go behind his back.

“You need to pack your shit and get out of town.” His words come as a total shock, and he doesn’t even have the decency to turn around and look at me.

“What... why?”

“I don’t need to give you a fucking reason. I want you gone.” Dec cracks his knuckles before he takes a seat behind his desk.

“I ain’t leaving until you tell me why.” I stand firm, all this has come out of nowhere. Last night, I was drinking with this man and he was telling me how well I was doing.

“Who do you think you’re talking to? This is *my* town and when I tell you you’re leaving it, you pack up and ship out.” At least he’s looking at me now, even if he is scowling a warning.

“I want a reason.” I hold my ground, I’m not going anywhere, not unless she’s coming with me.

“Ok, I’ll give you one. If you don’t leave I’m gonna make sure the police find out exactly what happened to Dane Brightman.

You can either leave here on that bike you built or leave in a police car. You think your parents are ashamed of you now? Imagine how they’re gonna feel when they know they got a cold-blooded killer for a son.”

“That’s not how it was and you know it. Don’t fucking use that against me, there’s not a man in this club who hasn’t taken a life.”

“You’re right, but there’s a difference between you and them. They’re in and you’re not. I want you gone by three pm, and I’ll be watching. If I catch you within smelling distance of my sister, I swear to god I’ll kill you.”

“You’re making a mistake. You think she doesn’t know what’s going on.

I may not know your logic behind it, but we both know she’s gonna get hurt. Skinner ain’t the man for her.”

“And you’re telling me that you are?” Declan’s looking at me the same way my father did when I told him I didn’t want to be a doctor. I got no words because I can’t let them down any more than I already have. And I can’t protect Mia from behind bars.

“Get out of my town.” Declan nods his head at the door to dismiss me.

“I really hope this club is worth it because one day it’s all you’re gonna have.” I leave him on that, walking out and slamming the door behind me.

As I walk across the street to my motel room, I think about stepping into the bar where Skinner’s took her for lunch. I want to tell her that I love her, I want to beg her to come with me. But I’ve learned in the short time I’ve been here, that Declan is a man who doesn’t bluff.

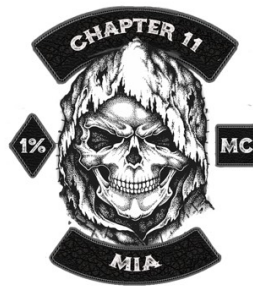
Throwing the little I have into my holdall, I head straight for the garage and stare at the bike I built.

I didn’t build it just to get into the club, I built it for us. Mia told me how much she wanted to ride, and we were supposed to do it together.

I grab the phone pad and a pen and scribble her a note, then ripping it from the pad I take the keys to the bike and shove them both in an envelope.



I leave the garage and head to where my car is parked around the back of the motel. I got one last stop to make before I head out of town.



“What’s the big emergency?” I ask Beth when I walk through her front door. Her calling may have gotten me out of a spot with Skinner, but I can tell from the look on her face that something’s wrong.

“Jamie left town. I don’t know why, or what happened. But, he asked me to give you this.” She slides an envelope across the table and I try not to let what she’s just told me affect me as I rip it open and find a set of keys and a note.

*Mia,*

*Sorry I had to leave, I’m even sorrier I couldn’t say goodbye.*

*The bike is yours, I won’t be needing it anymore.*

*Stay strong. Stay free!*

*Jamie*

“He’s really gone.” I stare at his words and it isn’t until my tears drip onto the page that I realize I’m crying.

“Why would he leave?” I read the words over and over again.

“He’s fallen for you hard, anyone can see that. He was in pretty bad shape when he came here.”

“I’ve got to speak to Declan.” Shoving the keys in my pocket, I storm out of my best friend’s house and rush to my car.

My tires screech when I pull to a stop outside the clubhouse and rush inside. The bar’s empty but I find my brother in the back room packing guns with Levi and Locke.

“What the fuck happened, why has he left?”

Declan looks to the others and nods for them to leave us.

“He left because I told him to, he doesn’t belong here, Mia.”

“You’re wrong. He fits in, he’s been working his ass off. Don’t bullshit me any more. What’s going on with you?”

“Move on, Mia,” he warns, continuing to pack his weapons and trying to ignore me.

“I’m done playing around, I’m done acting up to Skinner. This club is built on loyalty and trust. And right now, I can’t even trust my own flesh and blood.” I turn around and start to walk out, but his voice makes me halt.

“You remember the night Brian Denton died?” he asks, his voice is scratchy and when I turn around to look at him, he looks shattered.

“What the hell has that got to do with anything?” I was so young back then, but I remember how much of a hit it was to the club.

“Our dad is part of the reason he’s dead.” Dec grips the crate he’s packing in his fists.

“How? He wouldn’t...” I shake my head.

“Pops told the man who killed Brian, where he would find him that night, and he did it because he wanted the power over this charter for himself.” Dec stares at the guns in front of him to avoid looking at me. “Do you know what Jessie would do to

him if he found that out? Do you know what that would mean for me...?"

"What's this got to do with Jamie?" I interrupt, I can't even think about my dad being the reason Brian died. He was a great leader and loved by everyone, he still is.

"You're the price, Mia. Skinner knows and if he has you he stays quiet." I step up to my brother and stare at him in disgust.

*"You're using me!* You were prepared to have me be with him..."

"You're stronger than that. I just needed you to go along with it while I figured something out. I had to tell Jekyll to leave. I did it for his protection, as well as ours. And you're doing a real shit job of hiding what's going on between the two of you. If Skinner found out you were sneaking around behind his back, he'd kill him."

"Fuck you!" I slap my brother's face and storm out.

"Where are you going?" he calls after me.

"I'm not gonna be the solution to your problem, Declan. I'm going to be with the man I love." I rush out of the club and over to the garage. Skinner won't be there; he'll be on his way to Salt Lake City with Bulletproof and Cobra. I try the door but it's locked up. Luckily, I know where Skinner keeps the spare key.

Stretching up on my toes I feel behind the outside light until the keys are in my hand, then using all my strength I open up the shutter.

Jamie's bike is in the corner, and I smile through my tears when I think that he wants me to have it.

"You ain't getting away that easily, handsome," I say to myself, as I grab the bars of the bike and push it out onto the road.

"What are you doing, Mia?" Levi comes charging across the street at me, and I hop on the saddle and kick-start the engine.

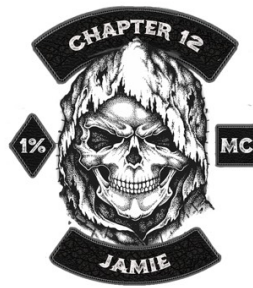
“Stop! Your brother’s gonna kill you,” he yells over the noise of the engine, and I manage to flip him off before I pull the throttle and take off.

I head out for the freeway, assuming that Jamie will be heading straight home. I don’t know his address but I’ll find it out. I can pull over and call him, once I’m out of this damn town. I’m not gonna be anyone’s price for silence.

Pulling on the throttle I feel the front of the bike start to shake. I’m not all that experienced in riding. I learned to ride on the street outside my house, and I’ve never been further than a few blocks from our avenue.

The bike feels heavy and hard to handle, and after I hear a loud clunk, I lose control of the handlebars.

The front wheel wobbles like it’s come unbolted and I try to brake before I crash, but it’s too late. All I can do is try to swerve towards the grass verge and avoid any oncoming traffic. Then, as I hit the ground and everything goes black, I can’t help wondering if I’ll ever see him again.



“Have you got a death wish?” Beth meets me at the hospital doors and stands in front of me.

“Where is she?” I can barely breathe, the thought of her hurting and it being my fault is too much to take.

“She’s stable, Doctors say she’s gonna be ok, but she took a nasty knock to the head and has some serious road rash.

“Shit! I shouldn’t have left her that damn bike.” I punch my fist into the brick pillar beside me.

“You shouldn’t be here right now, if Declan catches you he’s likely to kill you.”

“Then you shouldn’t have called me. What did you expect me to do?”

“What the *fuck* is this piece of shit doing here?” Levi spots me when he comes out the door, ready to light up a smoke. He drops it to the ground and marches over, grabbing me by my throat and shoving me against the glass window.

“Levi, stop!” Beth screeches, tugging at his huge arm and attempting to drag it away.

“I called him. Mia was going to him, she’s in love with him.” Levi narrows his eyes into slits and stares into mine.

“*You’re* the reason she’s lying in that bed.” He slackens his hold, and although he still looks pissed as hell, I can see he’s worried about her too.

“I gotta see her.” I shake my head, wishing his words weren’t true.

“It ain’t gonna happen, and if you value your life I suggest you hit the road.”

“I’m not leaving until I’ve seen her. I love her. Would you let anyone stop you from getting to *her* if she was hurt?” My eyes flip toward Beth and I watch the huge, hard-ass bastard soften right in front of me.

“Declan’s with her, they’re waiting for her to wake up. He’s mad right now. If he sees ya here, you’re dead.”

“I wanna talk to him, if he wants to kick the shit out of me that’s fine. Ain’t nothing I don’t deserve. But I’m not leaving until I’ve seen her.”

“Your fucking funeral.” Levi shrugs his shoulders and takes a step back.

“She’s on the second floor, She’s got a private room, just off ward 8,” Beth informs me, and I gratefully nod my head at her before marching through the doors.

There’s a cop talking to Declan out in the hall when I get out of the elevator, and I watch as he stares at the floor, nodding his head as he takes in what he’s saying. When his head lifts up and he spots me, he looks murderous.

“You son of a bitch!” He comes storming toward me. Slamming his fist hard into my face and knocking me onto the floor.

“She could have *fucking died*, and it’s all your fault!” He continues to lay blow after blow into me until the officer, and one of the hospital staff, pull him away.

“The front wheel wasn’t bolted properly, it came loose while she was riding. You left her a fucking death trap.”

“No.” I shake my head. “I checked those bolts, they were solid,”

“Not fucking solid enough!” Dec hisses as his finger jabs into my face

“I need to see her, just once then I’ll leave, I swear.”

“You’re not going anywhere near her,” he warns.

“Declan, I got a whole lot of respect for you, but when it comes to her, I will fight, and I won’t stop. I don’t know what

happened, but I know I fixed that wheel properly. You have my word. I'm in love with her. Why would I want to hurt her?"

Declan shoves the cop, who's holding his shoulders, away.

"You got five minutes," he whispers, shocking the hell out of me. "Then I want you out of this town and I never want to see your face again." He runs his hand through his jet-black hair and moves to sit on one of the seats in the waiting area with his foot tapping impatiently on the floor.

"Follow me, I'll take you to her." A nurse smiles awkwardly as she leads me down the corridor and into Mia's room.

"It looks a lot worse than it is," she tells me once we're through the door, and when I see Mia lying in the bed, with bruises on her face and a bandage wrapped around her head, I feel like I've been stabbed in the chest.

I take the seat beside her bed and pick up her hand. Beth was right, her arm is scraped to fuck, but despite all the bruises on her face, she's still beautiful.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left town and I shouldn't have left you that damn bike." Her eyes remain closed and I wonder if she can hear me.

"I'm not leaving you, this time. You're gonna wake up, and I'm gonna tell you that I love you. Then, as soon as you can get out of this hospital bed, we are gonna leave this town together.

You were wrong when you said that I don't belong in your world. See, what you don't know about me is that when it comes to something I care about I can be savage, and I can be ruthless.

Your brother doesn't scare me. His club doesn't scare me. The only thing that scares me is being without you."

"What you doing here, handsome?" Mia's eyes remain shut, but her lips hitch into a tiny smile.

"You're awake?"



She moans in pain when I wrap my arms around her and squeeze too tight.

“Shit, I’m sorry. You had me worried there for a minute.” I quickly release her so I can check her over, and when her big, blue eyes stare up at me, I feel my heart swell with relief.

“I should get that nurse back in here.” I go to move toward the door but she shakes her head at me.

“Just stay here for a few more minutes. Shit, my mouth’s dry.”

I quickly grab the jug beside her bed and pour some water into a cup for her. Bringing it to her lips, I help her take a sip.

“Why do you look like you’re about to cry?” she croaks.

“Because I’ve just realized that I can’t be without you.” I kiss her, carefully holding her bruised cheek in my hand.

“You gonna tell my brother that?” She manages a laugh. “Something was wrong with the bike Jamie and he’ll find that out. When he does, he’s gonna want you dead.”

“He already knows, and I swear to you, Mia, I would never have left you the bike if I didn’t think it was safe,” I promise, keeping my eyes fixed on hers so she sees that I mean it.

“What are you saying?” She looks back at me confused.

“I’m saying, I think the bike was tampered with and that I think I was supposed to be the one laying in this hospital bed.”

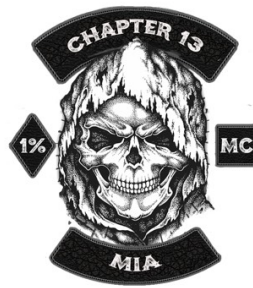
“Skinner?” She looks shocked and worried at the same time.

“Get some rest, I’m gonna figure it out,” I tell her, stroking my thumb over her bottom lip.

“Don’t leave me again.” Her hand squeezes around mine, and her eyes beg.

“Trust me, I’m not going anywhere.”

I kiss her lips one more time, before I leave the room to tell the nurse she’s awake, and face up to her brother.



“S top pacing the floor, I’m fine,” I tell Declan, he’s uptight and mad as shit. Beth and Levi are both sitting by the window, looking nervous too.

“You could be dead, Mia. I warned you about riding motorcycles, you haven’t got anywhere near enough experience.” He shakes his head at me.

“To be fair, it wasn’t really her fault. If the front wheel wasn’t fixed right—”

“She shouldn’t have been on the damn thing in the first place!” Declan cuts Levi off.

“Calm down, this isn’t good for her.” Beth stands beside my brother and strokes his arm to try and cool him down.

“I can’t believe what he’s saying is true. Skinner wouldn’t do this.” Levi shakes his head, looking confused.

“You’d be surprised at what Skinner will do to get what he wants.” I put a little pressure on my brother, making sure my eyes are fixed on his when I tell them that.

He looks up at the ceiling and lets out a long, deep sigh.

The door bursts open and when Jamie rushes inside, he places the laptop he’s carrying on the bed tray in front of me.

“It’s all there. Your proof.” He looks at Declan and then waits until we’re all crowded around the screen before he hits play.

The video is clear and shows Skinner crouching down and loosening the front wheel of Jamie’s bike.

“When was this recorded?” Dec asks, scrubbing his face and looking even angrier than he was before

“8:30 this morning, before I got into work.” Jamie points to the time in the corner of the screen.

“And before he came to see me to tell me you had to leave.” Dec shakes his head and walks over to the window.

“*Told* you?” Levi stares at his President in shock. “Since when has *anyone* ever told you what to do?”

“Since he’s been blackmailing me,” Declan confesses, and I see the shame on his face.

“Mother fucker!” Levi shakes his head in disbelief.

“I’ll explain it all to ya, but right now we gotta make things right. Beth, you stay with her.” Declan starts moving toward the door, and Levi kisses a worried-looking Beth before he follows.

“I’m coming with you,” Jamie calls after them, and they both stop and turn around at the same time.

“This is club business,” Levi informs him, but my brother holds up his hand to cut him off.

And as he steps closer to Jamie, I can’t read the look on his face. I hold my breath when he takes one of the guns from the shoulder holster he wears under his cut, and shoves it into Jamie’s chest.

“Come on, Jekyll, let’s go.” He nods his head toward the door and Jamie quickly rushes back to kiss me before he follows after them.

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The time they’re gone seems to drag on forever. Last we heard, Skinner rode out to Salt Lake City, so I guess that’s where they’ve headed and I can’t help worrying about Jamie being with them. Skinner’s a hard bastard. I’ve heard a lot of stories and seen him in enough fights to believe they’re all true.

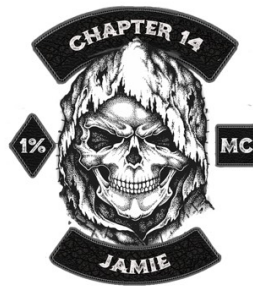
“I hope they skin that bastard alive!” Beth breaks the silence, hopping onto the bed and lying beside me.

“I’m scared,” I admit. I hate showing weakness, even to my best friend but I need to talk this out. “Look what happened last time a guy tried to protect me. I can’t lose Jamie too. I know it’s only been a little while, but I love him. I love him so much, it hurts.” I swallow down the sick feeling in my throat.

“He’ll be fine.” Beth wraps her arm around me and pulls me closer. “And on the plus side, your brother didn’t seem all that mad at Jamie when he kissed you earlier.”

“I don’t care about what Declan thinks, Beth. I’m gonna be with Jamie. Whether it’s here or not.”

“I know ya are.” She laughs. “But I don’t think it will come to that. Your brother loves you, he’s been so worried. There’s no way he’ll risk losing you again. You’re gonna get your happily ever after.” She kisses the top of my head and we both settle together and wait for our men to come back to us.



“How we handling this?” Levi crushes the cigarette, he’s finished, under his boot as all three of us stare at the trailer in the scrap yard. We’re watching from a distance, but since Skinner’s bike is parked outside, and there’s a light on inside, I figure the plan to get him here worked.

Dec called Skinner a few hours ago and ordered him to stop here on the way home and wait for a drop-off.

He’s alone, and we’re in the middle of nowhere. I can really make this bastard suffer.

“He’s gotta die.” I grip the handlebars of the bike I’m riding. Dec proved he’s got some respect for me when he offered to let me ride one of his Dad’s old bikes out here.

“We all agree on that.” Levi nods his head. Before we left, Declan explained what hold Skinner has on him. I get why he was trying to protect himself but I’m mad that he was prepared to put his sister’s happiness on the line to do it. Me and Levi both swore that the secret will die with us. Dec’s old man is bedridden, there’s no life left in him. God can judge him on what he did. And Declan shouldn’t have to suffer for it. He’s a good leader, and picking at old wounds ain’t good for no one.

“I wanna be the one to do it,” I tell them, hoping that Dec is gonna let me have it.

“He nearly killed my sister. He’s been blackmailing me. Tell me why I should let you have the privilege,” Dec speaks up, his eyes remaining focused on the trailer.

“Because I could have lost her too. And since I watched that footage of him being the cause of the pain she’s in right now, all I’ve thought about is making him hurt.”

“You really love her, don’t you?” He turns his focus on me and narrows his eyes.

“Yeah.” I let him know I’m serious.

“I’m gonna give you my blessing, but only on one condition.”

“Name it.” I wait for his terms.

“I want you to patch in. I want you to swear your loyalty to me and this club, and I want you to promise that you’ll never take her away from me.” He stares right through me and I see how much she means to him.

“I can promise you that, you know I want in, but I thought I had to prospect for a while before I patch in?” I look back at him, confused.

“Swear to me, you’ll take care of her, that you’d die to protect her and that as long as you live you’ll never hurt her. And you can consider killing that bastard your initiation.” Dec keeps a serious look on his face, while he awaits my answer.

“You got my word.” I hold out my hand to him and he grabs it firm and shakes before getting off his bike and leading us toward the trailer on foot.

We’re about 300 yards away when Levi holds out his arm to stop us.

“You smell that?” He sniffs at the air.

I take a deep inhale through my nostrils and smell gas.

“Son of a bit...”

**BOOM!**

I drop to the floor and Levi jumps across and covers Declan as the trailer explodes and bursts into flames. All I can hear is ringing in my ears as I stand back on my feet and check the others.

“Holy shit!” Dec manages to stand up after Levi gets off him and all three of us stare at the burning trailer. The ringing continues and I realize it ain’t in my ears anymore when Levi pulls his cell out of his cut and answers it on loudspeaker

“Levi, it’s Locke. I think someone should head over to the scrap yard.” I hear a panicked voice.

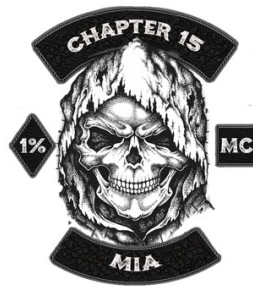
“What makes you say that?” Levi glances at us, suspiciously.

“Well, Skinner’s out there waiting for a drop-off and I just called him to tell him what happened to Mia, and he didn’t take it too well.”

Dec hasn’t let any of the other members know that Skinner was responsible for Mia’s accident yet. He didn’t want Skinner getting word that he knew and skipping town before he got his justice served. I figure him hearing from Locke about what happened to her, made him feel guilty enough to serve it, himself.

“Tell everyone I want a church meeting in an hour,” Dec speaks down the phone before Levi hangs up.

“Guess in his own fucked-up way, he really did love her.” Dec shakes his head and turns around, heading back toward his bike.



“I’ve been worried sick, where were you?” I breathe a sigh of relief when Jaimie opens the door and steps inside. He’s got black marks on his face, but I don’t care. He’s here, he’s alive and that’s all that matters.

“Sorry, your brother called church and I had to attend.” He’s got a smirk on his face, and I suddenly notice that he’s wearing a leather cut.

“Did he...?”

“He did.” He grins back at me then, rushing to my bedside, he grabs my face in his hands and kisses me so hard I feel my head spin.

“But how? You have to prospect first, and that takes time.”

“I made him a promise,” Jamie pulls away to explain, his eyes fixed on mine and making me want to get out of this bed and do dirty things with him.

“What kind of promise?” I swallow the lump in my throat. There are rules that the club takes very seriously, becoming a member is never easy.

“I promised him I’d take care of you, and that I’d never take you away from him.”

“What about the others? There has to be a vote.” I shake my head, trying to understand it all. I’ve known Prospects go years without getting the cut, some never make it.

“There was, and I made them all the same promise as I did your brother.”

I’m never one to cry and I blame the head injury for the tears that fill my eyes.



“So, you can stay and we can be together?” I bite my lip, thinking the words sound too good to be true.

“Yeah.” He nods his head before he kisses me again.

“Wait.” I push him away from me and shake my head in disbelief.

“Do you realize what you’ve signed up for? This club, you can’t be in and out. Once you’re a member, you’re a member for life. That’s a big commitment to make for a girl you hardly know.”

“It is, but I already know me and you are gonna be together, forever.” He’s got a clever smile on his face that makes him look even more handsome.

“And how d’ya figure that out?” I laugh.

“Well, it started when I saw some crazy-ass girl dancing on a table in a bar. I thought I’d have to keep her in my dreams, and then I saw her on the side of the road looking like she was in trouble—”

“May I add that I was never in trouble? I had it handled.” I interrupt before he suggests I was the damsel in distress in his little story.

“I stopped in a town I’d never heard of because I was scared to face what I had to go home to, and when that same girl walked into the bar where I was drinking, I started believing.”

“Believing in what?”

“In fate.” He shrugs his shoulders.

“You believe in fate?” I laugh. Jamie may have seemed a little softer to the guys I grew up around when he first came here, but I’ve seen a change in him. I saw the look on his face when he left here earlier to find Skinner, and I don’t know what’s happened yet, but the fact he’s wearing a Dirty Soul cut proves my brother’s seen that change too. Dirty Souls don’t believe in fate, they write their own future.

“Well, I’m a believer in it, and if that’s what brought me to you...” He leans closer so his lips touch my ear. “...I’ll

fucking worship it too.” His whisper makes my body tingle with excitement, and I grab his face in my hands and kiss the hell out of his lips. Taking his hand in mine, I guide it under the covers and place it over my pussy.

“Mia, I am not fucking you in a hospital bed, while you have a concussion. Your brother may be understanding about this, but if he catches us, he’ll send me to hell,” he warns.

“I like the way this looks...” I take the lapels of his leather cut in my hands and drag him closer.

“You’re gonna be the death of me.” He shakes his head, and the smile he gives me tells me I’m gonna get exactly what I want.

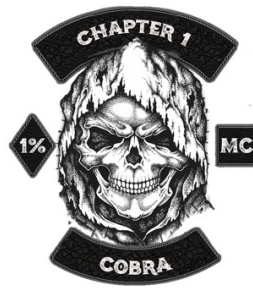
“Don’t blame me, Jekyll. Blame fate.” I wink, before I drag him all the way to hell with me.



Keep reading for a sneak peek of the third instalment in the  
Dirty Souls MC - Utah charter,

**REKINDLED SOUL**

REKINDLED SOUL  
DIRTY SOULS MC - UTAH  
BOOK 3



“What the fuck is that?” Jekyll looks at the broken-off, high, shoe heel I accidentally put on the bar while emptying my cut pockets to look for my keys.

“It ain’t nothin’!” Snatching it back up, I quickly tuck it away again.

“I probably left my keys upstairs in my apartment, anyway.” I change the subject, patting down my jeans and cursing myself for being so careless.

“Was that the heel of a woman’s shoe? Whatcha use that for? A weapon?” Bulletproof’s laugh causes more unwanted attention.

“No, I don’t use it as a fuckin’ weapon.” I roll my eyes.

Ain’t no way I’m tellin’ ‘em, where I got it from or why I keep it. They’ll think I’m pathetic.

I *am* pathetic. But as I reach back into my pocket and touch the heel, just to check if it’s still there, I think back to a time I never want to forget...

*I hold my grip firm until his body stops struggling, and his pulse stops beating against my palms. Then, finally releasing him, I stare into the eyes of a soulless man.*

*Ed tried running, but it was impossible for him to hide. Not from us, and not from justice.*

*No one but us know he’s here. I’ve watched him come and go from the abandoned apartment above the closed-down*

*pâtisserie. It could be weeks before anyone finds his body, and today, I figured it would be the perfect place for him to meet his end.*

*I take the burner phone out my pocket and call my Prez back in Utah and when he answers I keep things as brief as possible.*

*“It’s done,” I inform him, looking down at Ed’s limp, useless body.*

*“Clean?” Dec checks.*

*“Ain’t it always?” I laugh a little smugly as I check around the room, ensuring I’ve not left any evidence behind. It looks as though Ed was traveling light, but then, he did have to get outta Utah pretty fast.*

*“Any chance on gettin’ my return flight outta here any sooner?” I’ve only been in Paris three days and I’m already done with city life. I miss my bike, and I miss the open roads I can ride it on.*

*“I’ll see what we can do. In the meantime, just sit tight and do ya best to stay outta trouble.” Dec hangs up the phone, and after I tuck it back in my jeans, I do one last sweep of the place before I pull my hood back up and head out.*

*The rain’s really coming down now, and taking off my leather gloves to avoid looking suspicious, I check the coast is clear before I step out from the passage onto the cobbled street.*

*Keeping my hood up over my head, I watch the rain splash against the cobbles and decide to make a dash through it and head toward the main street. Squinting through the blanket of rain, I see a petite figure rushing right at me, and the red dress she’s wearing strikes bright among the dullness of the sky and the dark, narrow walls surrounding us. She makes me stop on my feet, just so I can appreciate the way her dark, brown hair soaks to her shoulders, and when I watch her stumble on her matching red heels, for some reason, my arm instinctively reaches out to catch her.*

*“Thanks.” Her whisper is only just loud enough for me to hear through the downpour. A loud growl of thunder echoes the buildings around us, and when she stretches up her neck to look up at the sky, I watch how the raindrops slide over her delicate throat. She looks back at me and smiles, her long, thick lashes batting wildly to beat those raindrops away, and I swear I feel something inside me weaken.*

*“Shit.” She looks down at her shoes and quickly reaches down to pick up the broken heel from the ground. “I’ve only had these a week.” She sighs.*

*“Real-life problems, huh, princess?” I snigger back at her before I move to head off. This pretty, little thing has innocence written all over her and I did not travel all this way to get myself into that kinda trouble.*

*“WAIT!” She calls out a little desperately, her perfectly manicured hand reaching out to my chest so she can balance, and my hands automatically grip her waist so I can hold her steady. There’s a trace of fear in her eyes when I drag her a little closer, but not the same kind I saw on Ed when I was turning his lights out. No, this is different. This is fear laced with thrill, and it looks damn fuckin’ hot on her.*

*I can see the girl’s privileged, a million miles apart from the girls we got back home. Despite the fresh smell of the rain, her expensive perfume still lingers in the air surrounding us. She’s not prepared for the downpour, and the dress she’s wearing, which I would bet my life on being designer, is pretty much soaked right through.*

*“You’re bleeding,” Her eyes glance up at my forehead and when I touch my fingers just above my eyebrow, I realize she’s right.*

*Fucker must have caught me with that glass he launched at my head. My adrenaline was pumping too much to notice.*

*“Ain’t nothin’,” I tell her, wiping my hand clean on my jeans.*

*“It looks pretty deep, did you hit your head?” The girl seems genuinely concerned when she stretches up on her toes*

*to inspect it closer, and having her that close to my lips makes me want to kiss her. Which is real fuckin' strange because kissing women is something I don't make a habit of.*

*"No... I mean, I caught it on the door when I was getting out of a cab." I make up some lame-ass excuse, which she seems to accept.*

*"Listen, my hotel's a five-minute walk from here, I could clean that up for you." She offers, having no idea who I am or what I'm capable of.*

*"No!" I cut her off far too quickly, and I can't decide if she's just startled or offended when she frowns back at me.*

*"I mean, it's fine, it don't even hurt."*

*"You could have a concussion," Her thumb swipes over the gash on my forehead, and when her eyes focus on the blood, it collects, then flicks back up at me again; something about seeing the way it stains her skin turns me feral. Without thought or warning, I reach out and grab the girl's jaw in the arch of my hand, drawing her lips up to mine and kissing the hell into her. The rain doesn't seem to hit so hard as I back her into the nearest doorway, and I'm surprised when she doesn't do a thing to stop me. This girl's different to anything I've held in my hands before, she feels like the forbidden fuckin' fruit, and as my tongue explores her mouth I decide that she tastes fuckin' spectacular too.*

*I figure she must have come to her senses when she forces me back, and for a few heartbeating seconds, we stare at each other, catching our breaths, while the rain pelts down against us.*

*"You still wanna clean it up?" I break the silence. My cock is stretched uncomfortably in my jeans, and when she nods her head back at me submissively, I step aside so she can lead the way. She smiles devilishly as she slips her other shoe off and crouches down to pick it up off the ground; then, taking my hand, she leads me down the cobbled street, running barefoot.*



“Cobe,” Bullet slaps my back and brings me back to the present.

“We kinda lost ya for a while there, ya good?” He’s looking border-line worried.

“Yeah, I’m fine. We doin’ this pickup or not?” I growl impatiently.

“Your keys?” Our new prospect, Jekyll, reminds me.

“Yeah. I’ll meet ya out front.” I tell ‘em both, heading to the door behind the bar so I can run upstairs and grab them. When I’m alone, I take the heel back outta my pocket and stare at it for a while. Is it sad that after nearly a year, I still carry it with me?

*Yes.*

But it’s my reminder that what happened was real, and for that reason, I ain’t ever gonna part with it.

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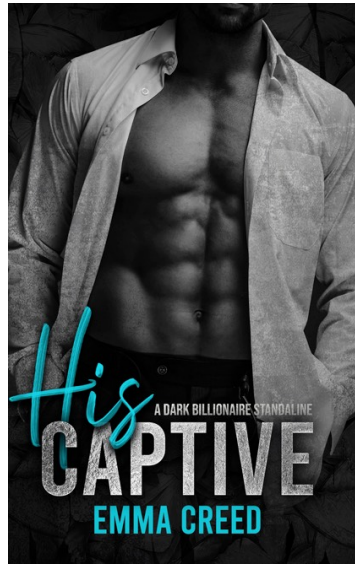
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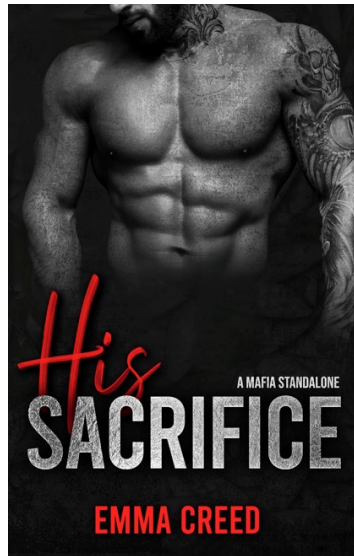
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